

Impacts of covid-19 pandemic on rural livelihoods and food security: potential strategies to enhance resilience

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Outline

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Introduction



Photo: M. Chitakira

- Covid 19 impacted many aspects of life beside health.
- Developing countries struggled to cope.
- Marginally placed people in societies have suffered the most - elderly, women, children, those involved in farming and informal business sector (Cooperazione International, 2020; Ebrahim, 2020; Chirau, 2016).
- COVID-19 induced hunger and malnutrition can kill or incapacitate more people than Covid-19 itself (Fanzo 2020; HLPE 2020a, 2020b; UN 2020).
- Communities with weaker social safety nets are more vulnerable.

Introduction



Photo: M. Chitakira

- Prolonged lockdowns in RSA exposed societies (especially rural ones) with weak and vulnerable economic foundations (Ebrahim, 2020).

Objectives

- The objectives of the study are to:
 - compile the impacts of covid-19 pandemic on rural livelihoods and food security (from literature & then from surveys),
 - evaluate the response mechanisms used (individual and institutional)
 - establish and recommend sustainable response strategies to enhance resilience of rural communities in South Africa.
- NOTE: This presentation will address only part of the objectives – it's work in progress.

Methods

- Case Study design – rural communities in South Africa
- Qualitative approach:
- First part of study: Review of documents/literature;
- Later part of study: In-depth interviews.
- The RSA among top 5 countries in terms of number of COVID-19 cases in the world.



<https://mg.co.za/article/2020-04-30-rural-retreat-allowing-people-to-return-home-during-lockdown-could-turn-a-tide/>

Results and Discussion:

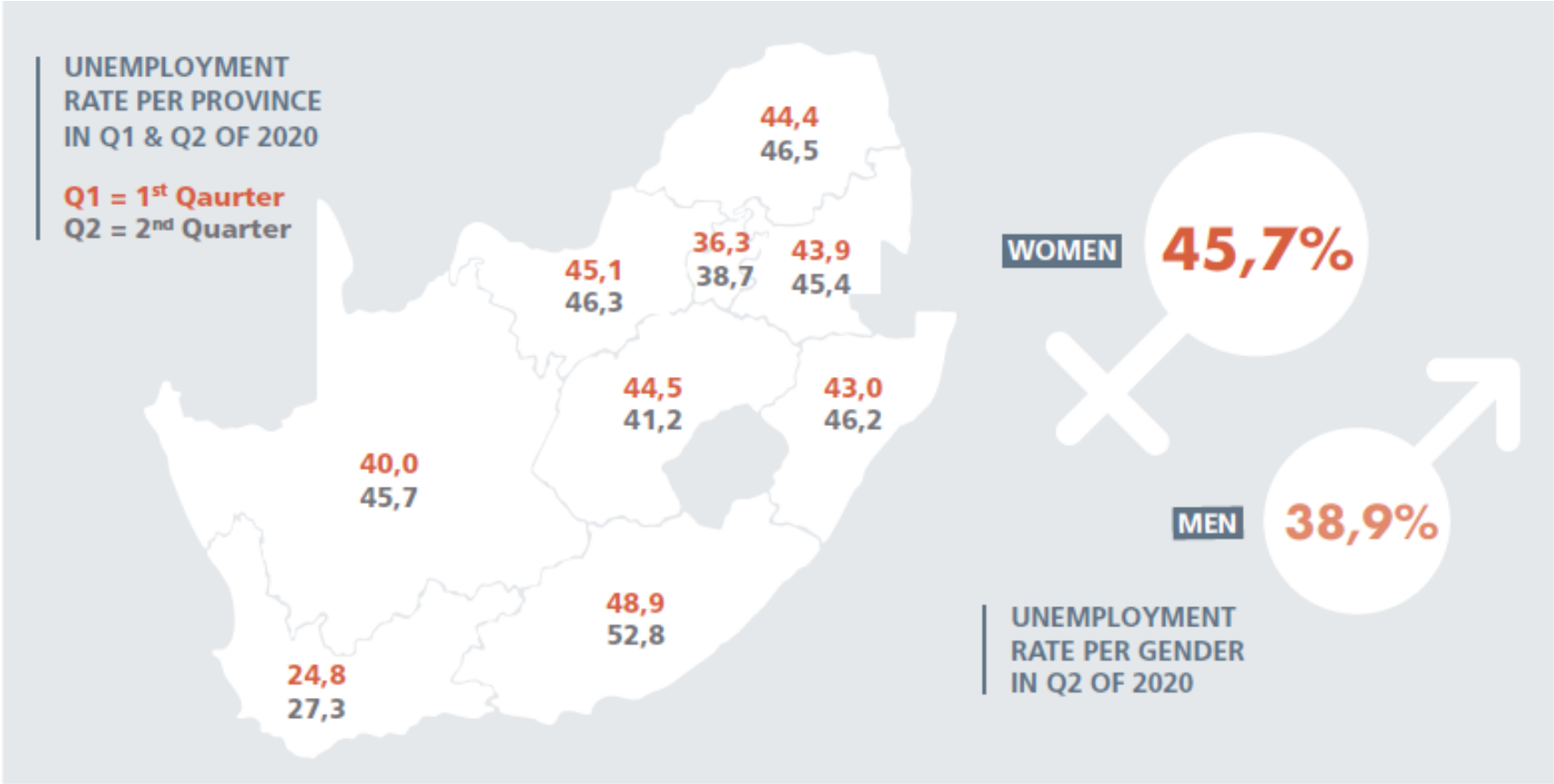
COVID -19 pandemic challenges on rural livelihoods

- RSA lockdown was one of the strictest - strict curfews & informal sector closed - food system and flow of goods significantly affected (Paganini et al. 2020).
- Hunger and unemployment became more severe – nationally, 34% went to bed hungry (HSRC, 2020)
- Farming business temporarily closed / slowed down - Commercial farm workers (often from local villages) lost income.
- informal sector workers lost income - urban and rural areas affected.
- No market - business stalls closed due to lockdown.
- female-headed households affected most - nearly 50% of female-headed households did not have an employed person in 2020 (HSRC, 2020).
- Increased theft of farm produce not yet harvested;



<https://lastmoyothesis.wordpress.com/gender-and-womens-policy-concerns-in-agriculture-and-rural-livelihoods/>

Rise in Unemployment in 2020



Results and Discussion: Impact on rural food security

- Pillars of food security affected, including availability, access, utilization.
- Decline production of staple crops (maize, dry beans, soybeans) despite suitable rains (Mthembu et al. 2022).
- Some positive impacts reported but negative impacts were predominant.
- Absence of extension services had negative impact on food production and supply.



<https://theconversation.com/covid-19-in-south-africa-a-critical-assessment-of-the-first-90-days-151107>

Results and Discussion: Impact on rural food security

- Feeding program for needy children in schools disrupted - nine million children affected. (https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_south-africa-lockdown-deprives-needy-children-food/6192840.html).
- Rural people forced to eat less or skip meals; women affected more than men (25% and 22%, respectively). (Gender Perspective South Africa, 2020).
- Increases in food prices triggered changes in household diets (Panganini et al 2020).
- National average percentage of people facing severe food insecurity increased to 23,6% in 2020 (StatsSA, 2022)



<https://www.dreamstime.com/schoolchildren-having-lunch-school-south-africa-small-village-santa-lucia-kwazulu-natal-khula-village-south-africa-image136524992>

Results and Discussion:

Response by farmers

- Farmers looked for new markets – e.g. in Cape Town, township communities and neighbourhoods became main markets for farmers.
- Farmers established neighborhood WhatsApp marketing groups; also resorted to advertise produce by word-of-mouth (Panganini et al 2020).
- Some resorted to selling more produce door-to-door in neighbourhood – increased sales reported.
- Farmers also adopted by:
 - Sharing food in community via neighbourhood WhatsApp groups;
 - limited food intake;
 - bought food on credit;
 - growing more food.



Results and Discussion:

Institutional Response

- Government support included:
 - COVID-19 relief grants – but limited number of farmers accessed this (Wegerif, 2022);
 - new social protection grants; food parcels; other cash and supplies for prevention (Gender Perspective South Africa, 2020).
- Lack of effective mitigation of the impacts of lockdown on farmers.
- A more structured approach to enabling and sustaining farmers required, especially black farmers, considering existing racial inequalities (Wegerif, 2022).
- Making efforts to improve vaccine uptake - vaccine hesitancy a challenge (Ueckermann, 2021).

Conclusion: Potential Strategies recommended

- Empower women to reduce overdependence on men. (Ndinda, Ngungu, .Adebayo,Moolman, Chimbwete, Lynch, Shozi, 2020).
- COVID-19 policies and legislations that are sensitive to the conditions of poor rural communities are needed.
- Small-scale farmers need to reduce vulnerability through social safety nets; improve resilience through increasing their adaptive capacity.



https://www.google.co.za/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vectorstock.com%2Froyalty-free-vector%2Fsocial-safety-net-services-state-includes-vector-30297012&psig=AOvVaw0-1zcjPTY1Vs_r1rZng0T_&ust=1652022358787000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=2ahUKEwj5yl-A1c33AhXfA50JHThKAesQr4kDegUIARDTAQ

Conclusion:

Potential Strategies recommended

- Improving the adaptive capacity of small-scale farmers is not enough – should holistically address the weaknesses inherent in the food system.
- Limited literature / reports on rural experience. More research recommended.

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Acknowledgement



- University of South Africa for funding and logistical support.

Thank You

Comments / Questions?

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