



**POLICY BRIEF**

# **Effects of Russian-Ukraine War (RUW) on Gender and Food Security in Kenya**

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## Summary

This brief shows that RUW led to increased food insecurity, declining monthly wages, with disproportionate effects on women, particularly those residing in urban areas.

Domestic policies are better suited to mitigate the negative effects of the exogenous shocks (Russia-Ukraine War-RUW) on food security, but female headed households continued to suffer disproportionately.

## RUW, Gender and Food Security

RUW affected the global economy through financial sanctions, commodities price increases (fuel, fertilizer and food), and supply-chain disruptions (ILO 2022, OECD, 2022, Ndong et al, 2024), with negative effects on the global trade patterns creating economic uncertainty and market distortions, resulting in increased prices for energy, fertilizer, and food prices across the world (Ayaz et al., 2024; Arndt et al., 2023; Olatunji, and Ojakorotu., 2023). Between June 2021 and April 2022, the price of crude oil rose by 44% (34% in real terms) while real prices for natural gas and fertilizer rose by 88% and 101%, respectively (Arndt, et al, 2022). This was accompanied by increases in global prices of wheat, palm oil, rice, crude oil, natural gas and fertilizers but subsiding after April 2022. Between February and July 2022, global grain and oilseed trade from Ukraine was 78.2% lower than expected (Ahn et al., 2022) with diversion of trade in favor of mainly North American and European countries. The impacts of the crisis were transmitted and felt differently across various African countries, influenced by factors such as their trade patterns, production and consumption structures, government interventions, and other local considerations (Abay et al., 2023; Raga et al., 2024). Kenya's trade with Ukraine and Russia is modest and the impact of RUW was transmitted into Kenya through trade in fuel, wheat and fertilizer commodities with GDP contracting by 0.8% and agri-food systems by 1% (Arndt et al., 2023). Notwithstanding their small contribution to trade, wheat and flour are critical inputs for both the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. The disruption of these value chains resulted in increases in energy, wheat, and fertilizer costs which are key in the manufacturing and agricultural sectors (UNDP 2022).

A few studies have examined the impacts of the RUW on women in developing countries, Papadavid (2023) analyzed the transmission channels of the RUW on African women and identified their vulnerabilities related to women's intrahousehold bargaining power, agency in small-scale farming, and access to education, employment opportunities and financial resources. Evidence reveals that the poor and marginalized as well as those who were

experiencing pre-existing discriminatory norms and practices experienced disproportionate impact of the RUW (UN-Women 2022, Papadavid., 2023).

This study examined the effects of RUW on gender, or, how they affected different segments of the household considering varying demographic characteristics including income, education, location (urban and rural), and how domestic and international policies can mediate the negative impact of RUW on outcomes allied to women have been less examined (Olatunji, and Ojakorotu., 2023).

## Methodology and Findings

To examine the effects of domestic and exogenous shock (RUW) or policy on food insecurity experience and wages, a simultaneous equation regression model was estimated through a 2-Stage Least Squares (2-SLS) with tobit and ordinary least squares (OLS) used to test the sensitivity of the results. The food insecurity experience scale was computed through principal component analysis approach by employing seven sequential questions that sought to understand the experience of food security over the study reference period of February 2022 to April 2024. A min-max rescaling method was used to ensure that the food insecurity experience index lies between 0 (food insecurity experience) and 1 (food security experience) to make it easier for regression interpretation. The system of equations was further decomposed to take up the consideration of sex and household decomposition variables. Moreover, descriptive analysis of changes in the outcomes of interest, wages, income, changes in jobs, shift in the time spend on household chores were examined over the reference period of February 2022 to April 2024.

The data used in this analysis was collected from a random sample of 2,030 respondents between April and May 2024 using a structured data collection tool administered using through phone interviews. To assess the impact of the Russia-Ukraine War (RUW) on respondents' livelihoods, they were asked to recall specific information from February 2022, just before the crisis began in April 2022. For instance, respondents were asked to report their wage levels in February 2022, allowing for a comparison of their economic situation before and after the start of the crisis.

The effects of the RUW were evident on job changes, income and wage. Changes in jobs resulted in income changes. RUW resulted in job changes with a higher proportion of women reporting job changes than men. The job changes were more pronounced in urban than in rural areas. A slightly higher proportion 14% (n=1,360) of urban respondents reported changes in jobs compared to respondents in rural 13% (n=670). Private sector

employment contracted from 33% to 17% which could not be offset by the increase in employment in the public sector which increased from 6% to 14% with unemployment increasing from 12% to 30% between February 2022 and April 2024.

In general, the personal average net monthly wage declined from KES 37,455 in February to KES 35,351 in April 2024. However, the effects of the crisis were mixed when demographic decomposition was considered. Female headed households (FH) in urban areas experienced the highest decline with personal net monthly wage declining by 25% from KES 41,192 to KES 30,961. On the contrary, personal net monthly wage for rural Female Headed (FH) increased by 6%. Although wage inequality seems to have declined over the reference period, female-headed households depict more inequality in comparison to male-headed households. Although 35% of the respondents reported no changes in income between 2022 and 2024, changes in jobs were associated with an increase and decrease of incomes of between 1-25% of the income in Feb 2022 for 14% of the respondents. The proportion of respondents who experienced a decrease in income of more than 25% were more than twice those that experienced an increase of the same proportion.

Households increasingly depleted their savings to meet household food consumption and in addition reduced expenditures on non-food items which signaled a decline in investments in education, health and income generating activities. Fewer women compared to men could access loans as a mitigation measure to the crisis. Such depletion in investments affected investments in income-generating activities and in the face of increasing unemployment and those affected may find it hard or take a long time to recover from the negative effects of the shocks. Proportionally, more female-headed households also reduced expenditures on non-food items compared to male-headed households, although the difference is marginal.

Unlike women, men benefited from the domestic policies applied to mitigate the RUW. The study finds positive and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) effects of domestic policy on food security status for Males in Female Headed (MFH). Women did not benefit from domestic or exogenous policies. Their food security position worsened in the presence of the domestic policies and RUW. Women suffered from both domestic and international shocks emanating from the RUW. Domestic policies (including cash transfers targeted to the poor households and input subsidies such as fertilizers to agricultural producers) implemented to mitigate the effects of RUW and the shock from RUW worked to worsen the food security status of women in the community and particularly households headed by women.

## **Way forward**

The study recommends social safety nets deliberately targeted towards women and especially women headed households who suffered most from both the domestic and RUW policies, building the resilience of women in business and in waged employment, enhancing the financial position of women during crisis, building formal and informal financial institutions such as the Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) and capacity building to buttress the skills of women in business and income generating startups that can spur the income generation for women.

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