



Hunger Crisis in Kenya: Urgent Need for Targeted and Equitable Policies

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July 2023 / No.GPIR-PB-CC004

Key messages

- Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it should be acknowledged the future of humanity's food and nutrition security cannot be taken for granted.
- Households adopted coping strategies (e.g. non-food consumption, delaying payment obligations, and purchasing credits) but



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required an increase in wealth to achieve food security levels, similar to those who did not adopt coping strategies.

- There are discrepancies across gender and socio-economic groups in achieving food security, emphasizing the need for targeted and equitable policies.
- The policy brief aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Good Health and Well-being, Zero Hunger, and Decent Work and Economic Growth, emphasizing the need to ensure food security for all and promote equitable economic growth.



Photo credit: poco_bw, 26 September 2022.

<https://www.istockphoto.com/photo/hungry-kids-gm1424278002-469053838?phrase=food+Africa+children>

What is the issue?

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant loss of jobs and income in Sub-Saharan Africa, causing food insecurity and hunger for many households. The timing of the epidemic added stress to already fragile food security and distribution networks. Food security was already threatened by conflicts, natural disasters, and climate change on a transcontinental scale before the spread of COVID-19. The study reveals that coping strategies, such as reducing non-food consumption, delaying payment obligations, and purchasing credits, are not enough to ensure food security for all.

These coping strategies require an increase in wealth and household expenditures to equalize the food security levels of households with those who have not adopted any coping strategy. The findings highlight the need for targeted and equitable policies to address the discrepancies across gender and socio-economic groups and achieve food security for all.

Why is this important?

Sustainable food production for the world's population has emerged as a top priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a hunger crisis in Kenya, particularly for the most vulnerable socio-economic groups. Coping strategies such as reducing non-food consumption, delaying payment obligations, and purchasing credits are not enough to ensure food security for all. Considering this fact, policymakers must take urgent action by designing and implementing targeted and equitable policies that address the hunger crisis in Kenya. By doing so, we can achieve SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, and build a more inclusive, sustainable, and resilient food system for all.

Policy recommendations

This policy brief calls for urgent policy action to address the hunger crisis in Kenya. Policymakers must design and implement targeted and equitable policies to ensure food security for all, particularly the most vulnerable socio-economic groups. The following policy options and recommendations are critical in addressing the hunger crisis in Kenya:

1. Proclaim food production, marketing, and distribution as essential services everywhere to ensure the smooth functions of vital facets of food systems worldwide. Protecting workers and keeping trade corridors open within and among nations is essential.
2. Strengthen and extend near-real-time food security monitoring systems to provide timely and geospatially indicative data to track the unfolding consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and gain a better understanding of who is experiencing hunger and malnutrition and in which areas are located.
3. Ensure fiscal stimulus packages provide relief and reach the most vulnerable socio-economic groups. Policymakers must design and tailor social protection programs, considering the potential benefits of various transfer modalities such as cash and in-kind transfers, vouchers, and community-wide food distribution initiatives that provide access to balanced and nutritious meals.

4. Invest in a more inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and resilient food system. Policymakers must focus on immediate impacts on livelihoods and prepare for future pandemics by building a food system that offers better protections for all.

Acknowledgements and funding

This policy brief presents independent research funded by the African Economic Research Consortium (AERC) under the Collaborative project on “Re-examining the Growth, Poverty, Inequality and Redistribution relationships in Africa (GPIR). The views and opinions expressed by authors are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the AERC.



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To strengthen local capacity for conducting independent, rigorous inquiry into the problems facing the management of economies in sub-Saharan Africa.

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