

NOT JUST CITIES:

URBAN DWELLERS need Nutritious food all the time



Uganda's just like Africa's cities and food markets are rapidly expanding mainly in a non-planned manner. They continue eating up in agricultural land. With an urbanization rate of 23%, National Population and Housing Census 2014, 18% of Uganda's total population was living in urban centers and the number growing by 4.5% per annum. These vibrant hubs comprise an ever-growing number of consumers, diversity of

incomes, diversity in diets, and therefore diversity in demand for food. Similarly, this food is being provided in an ever-growing number of ways, whether directly from farmers' markets, a growing number of mini- and super-markets, food delivery services to a household door to door, and a burgeoning restaurant and emerging food truck scene for people at varying income levels. C

On the one hand, as the population moves into cities, food poverty and malnutrition moves along with them in the cities. Most Uganda’s urban centers have some of the largest concentrations of poverty, unemployment and underemployment, and people seeking basic food security.

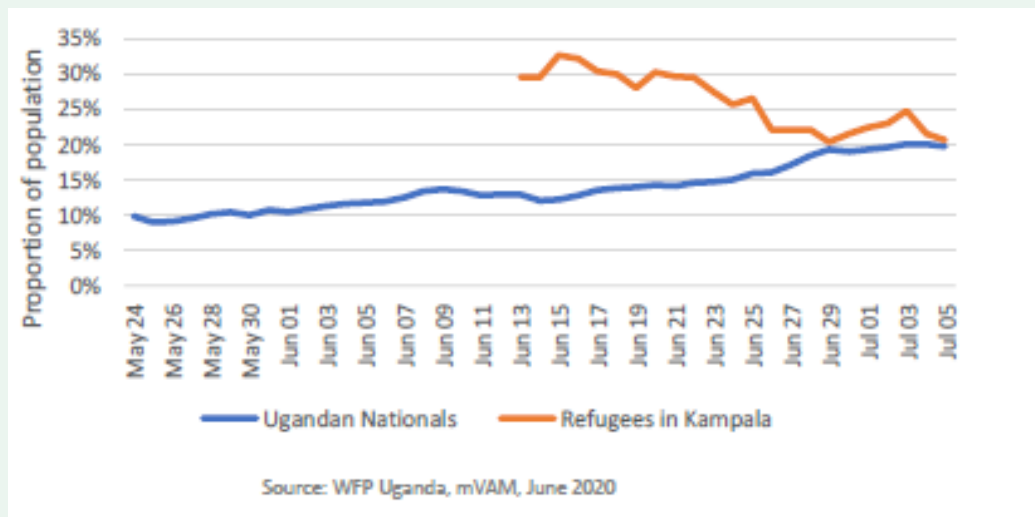
Millions of these individuals don’t own land and can’t produce food themselves, so they need to access it and at the cheapest price. With COVID 19 and related measures to control its further spreading the situation has turned from bad to worse.

Situation Update

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Uganda imposed restrictions to economic activity and physical movement from the 18th of March 2020. This exacerbated the food and nutrition situation which was already lacking. According to WFP, 2020, the proportion of urban nationals with

poor or borderline food consumption increased from 11 percent in May 2020 to 16 percent in June 2020 as indicated in Figure 1. Household food consumption deteriorated steadily since May, despite a relaxation of pandemic containment measures.

Fig. 1. Proportion of households with poor or borderline food consumption



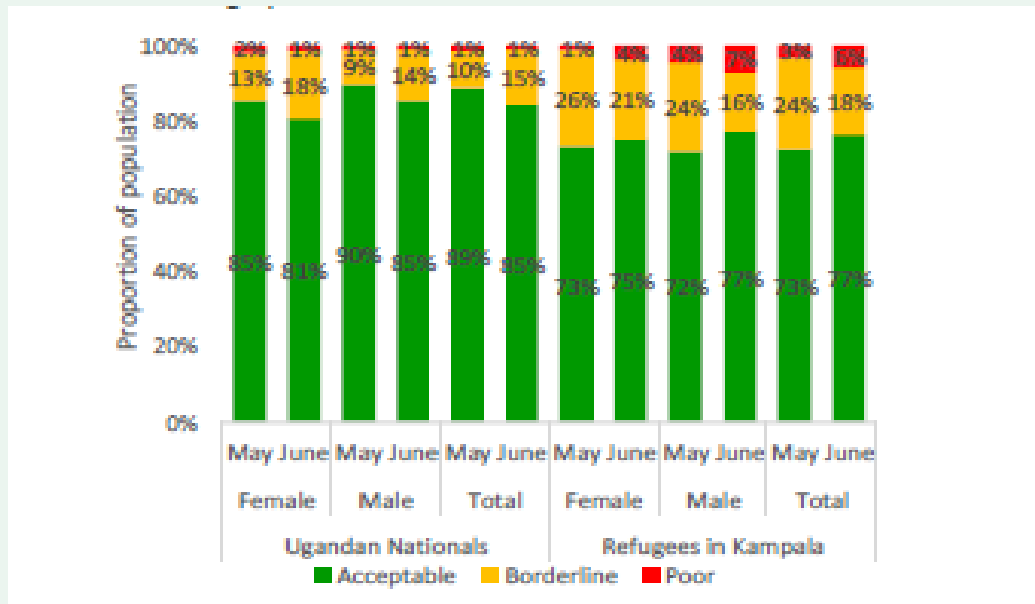
In June, about 16 percent of urban nationals in urban areas reported having poor or borderline food consumption, a slight deterioration compared to May 2020 (11 percent). Compared to May

2020, among urban nationals, more female-headed households had poor food consumption outcomes compared to male-headed households. Overall, 24 percent of refugee households

in Kampala had poor or borderline food consumption which was a slight improvement compared to May 2020 (27 percent). Prevalence of insufficient food

consumption was higher among urban refugees compared to urban nationals (24 and 16 percent, respectively).

Fig. 2: Proportion of households under each food consumption category

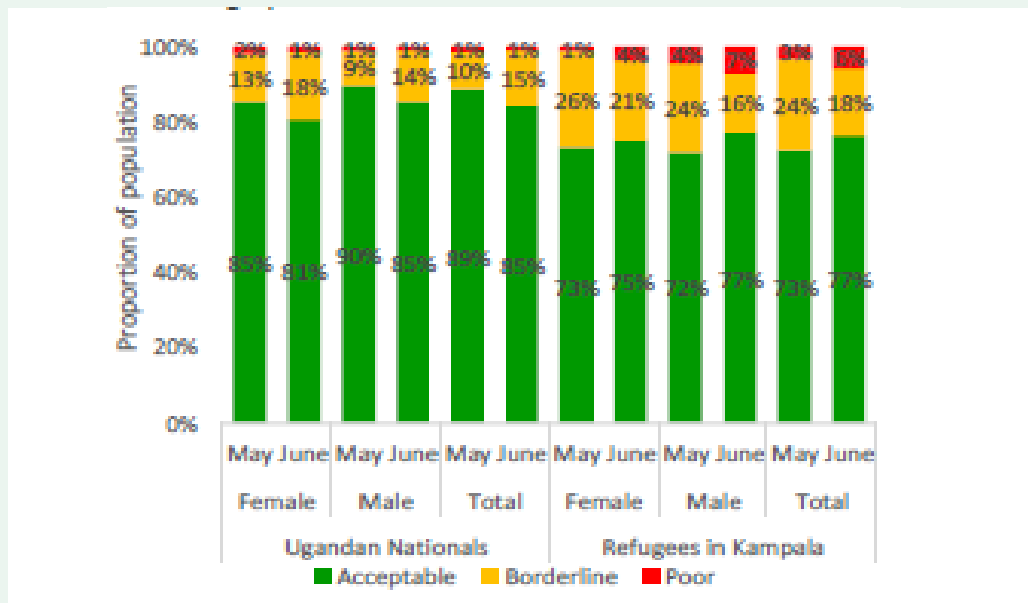


Where are the food insecure located?

According to WFP, 2020, most of the affected people live in townships in all districts, thus the more the urbanization a particular district, the more the effect of urban and nutrition insecurity during the lockdowns thus; Wakiso, Arua, Jinja, and Mukono had the largest population with poor and borderline food consumption as indicated in Figure 13. Wakiso, Kampala, Arua, Jinja and Mbale had

the largest population using medium and high food based coping strategies. Wakiso, Kampala, Arua and Kasese had the largest population using crisis and emergency livelihood coping strategies. Within Kampala, Rubaga, Makindye and Kawempe divisions had the largest population with poor food consumption, medium and high food-based coping strategies, crisis and emergency livelihood coping strategies.

Fig. 3: Proportion of households under poor and borderline food consumption by district



Causes of food insecurity in urban centers

Low and irregular incomes are the root cause of urban food insecurity: majority of urban dwellers in Uganda get their foods from the market yet they are doing odd jobs that only avail to them irregular incomes, with COVID 19 together with the government’s control measures put in place, these irregular jobs were all brought to a standstill yet in some cases food prices rose a little, this condemned urban poor to either no food or handouts from the government and other willing agencies.

Further, whatever cuts production short in rural areas cuts food supply to urban centers. Urban centers depend mainly on rural farmer’s production to feed. Failure to have a reasonable harvest often

translates into urban food poverty. The little food produced is often consumed by producer, the remaining much as it’s sold, it’s often at high prices not attainable to many especially urban poor.

The multiple effects of climate change, including the growing number of shocks and extreme weather events such as floods, greatly impact on urban areas and affect the primarily the urban poor, the places they live and their physical and economic access to food. The Greenhouse gas emissions as well contribute to the food insecurities in the urban centers of the country. A crucial challenge is how urban planners in the respective urban cities will integrate climate and environmental constraints in food systems planning and integrate food-related issues in the urban areas specifically the newly created cities.

The Exodus of cities, municipalities and town councils in Uganda mean to Food and Nutrition Security.

Uganda is experiencing rapid urbanization estimated are 20% and by 2050 will be among the most urbanized countries in Africa. Urbanization in the country has been looked at as a prerequisite for the country to achieve upper-middle-income status as per Vision 2040. Regardless of the population size, all district headquarters are urban areas by law because they are located in Town Councils and all Town Councils are urban areas. The Local Government (LG) Act Section 4 clearly state that a city is equivalent to a district. Furthermore article 197 of the constitution (GOU 1995) and section 79 of the LG Act state that a municipal or a town council shall be a lower local Government of the district in which it is situated. In spite of the benefits of the cities like job creation, infrastructure development, market expansion, there tends to be more inequality in urban areas compared to rural areas and many of the countless worlds' urban poor live in sub-standard conditions.

The growth and expansion of municipal councils and town councils in Uganda has over the years taken place without corresponding to physical and social economic infrastructure and activities in the areas. This is as a result in delayed upgrading of the governance structure of the cities and town councils respectively. In urban areas, unemployment rates are

high and most of the jobs in the informal economy are neither taxed nor monitored by the government. There are unregulated land markets, infrastructure and service provision. There are complicated settlement-governance arrangements, with weak local authorities and poor land-use management capacity, informal settlements and unregulated peri-urban construction. The operationalization of new cities requires office structures, staff and other administrative resources that are vital for daily operations. These come with a hefty price tag that can only increase public administration expenditure. Besides the start-up funds, the administrative units require operational funds to enable them to implement their mandate as stipulated in the Local Government Act, 1997.

Uganda's urban continues to grow and this comes along with the challenge of food availability in terms of evolving consumption patterns, food production and supply process. This rapid growth and increasing number of cities in Uganda being formed by the government implies that more food will have to be available to people live in an environment that has traditionally been perceived as inappropriate for agriculture. Majority of the Urban population in Uganda are net buyers if food, which is also more surprisingly, the case for small scale farmers; land poor households are often

the poorest of the poor because they do not produce enough to feed their families and are unable to sustain their livelihoods. Uganda's National Planning Document, Vision 2040, calls for "A transformed Uganda Society from a peasant to modern and prosperous country within 30 years".

Is also calls for rapid urbanization with a dramatic growth of the urban population from 13 per cent to 60 per cent? However the Vision 2040 sees a shrinking agricultural labor force from 66 percent to 31 per cent, whereby the remaining farmers will be involved in commercial rather than subsistence agriculture. Taken together, Vision 2040 has profound implications for the food systems in the urbanized areas especially food access. With the urban areas and cities. The PMA which envisions poverty eradication through a profitable, competitive, sustainable and dynamic agricultural and agro-industrial sector, with a mission of transforming subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture food availability and access for many cities will remain a

challenge. In a country where agriculture farming is predominantly subsistence, and for some reason commercialization of the sector is still hindered by absence of tenure rights, and access to finance for commercialization of agriculture.

Physical food access and availability, financial access plays an important role in ensuring food security. In this regard, residents in the cities tend to be more disadvantaged, than the rural residents since most often people in the urban areas purchase their food, which makes them dependent on food markets, and thus more vulnerable to potential food price spikes. The effects of the COVID-19 on the urban food systems, point to the issues in the food supply chain (Processing, transport, distribution, and retail). The restrictions on the movement of people and other containment measures in the country affected both food distribution and food availability in urban markets. The shortage of food was associated with panic buying which led to an increase in prices and hoarding.

New Cities Statistics

In 2017 USAID sponsored report 48.6% of Uganda's 2014 GDP was concentrated in Central Uganda in the districts of Kampala (22.5%), Wakiso (20.8%), and Mukono (5.3%) which greatly exemplifies the regional inequality that characterizes the country's development and the creation of these new cities will balance the economic balance in other regions. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2014 census notes that five of these new cities are among the 20 largest urban centers with populations of 195,160 people in Mbarara, 149,802 in Gulu, for Masaka 92,863 for Mbale and 76,057 people in Jinja. Arua and Fort Portal have estimated populations of 61,962 and 53,786 people respectively.

There is and there has been a rise in the urban population of Uganda from 1.7 million persons in 1991 to about 7.4 million in 2016. The urban population is project to rise to about 21 million by 2040. The potential growth in the rapid urbanization, calls for creation of conscious strategies to ensure that the fast growing and viable urban areas are elevated to higher and

better planned entities, however looking in the perspective of human security in all its form and variables(Economic Security, Food security, healthy security, environmental security, personal and community security, and political security) Law under the establishment of cities and integration of Food.

The constitution of Uganda Article 179(a) (GOU, 1995) and the Local Government Act, Section 7 (2a) of the Local Governments Act Cap 243 (GOU, 1997) mandate parliament to create cities through alteration of boundaries of the existing districts. Parliament on May 20, 2019 approved the phased creation of 15 cities across the country. The approved new cities are Arua, Mbarara, Gulu, Jinja, Fort Portal, Mbale, Masaka, Wakiso, Entebbe, Hoima, Lira, Moroto, Nakasongola, Soroti and Kabale. With the resolutions from the respective District Councils, The Ministry of Local Government presented bills in Parliament seeking a phased upgrading of some urban areas as shown in the table below.

Commencement Date	Cities to be created and Approved
July, 1 st 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jinja • Mbarara • Fort Portal • Masaka • Mbale • Arua • Gulu
July, 1 st 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoima • Lira • Soroti
July, 1 st 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entebbe
July, 1 st 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moroto • Nakasongola • Kabale • Wakiso

The National Urban Policy notes and classifies a city if an urban area should meet at least the following; population of at least 300,000 resident within a minimum area of 50 square kilometers, has an integrated City Development Plan in accordance with the National Urban Policy, demonstration of capacity to generate sufficient revenue to sustain its operations, has the capacity to effectively and efficiently deliver essential services to its residents as shall be provided for the urban Development law, has a capacity for functional and effective waste management system. The Local Government Act highlights that the roles of food and drug inspection, as well as agriculture and veterinary extension services are devolved from the city/municipal council to the divisions of the district.

As well subject to article 176(2) of the constitution highlighting the functions of the district and municipal council, are majorly focused on the social-economic infrastructural developments of (Education, medical and health, water services, road services, and all decentralizes services, of which crop, animal and fisheries husbandry are given priority. Given the critical role that food plays in the economy and social transformation of the urban areas, agriculture, food and nutrition should be given priority in the city councils and municipal councils respectively.

Local Governments and City councils, have to take into consideration of restrictive measures to ensure that food systems are protected during the creation of cities, making sure that the

food systems do not breakdown and the vulnerable groups are protected. The newly created cities and their city councils that mechanisms for monitoring food markets, both availability and prices, especially in cases of emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic, which saw food availability in cities being scarce and the food price went overboard.

Effective food distribution being on the agenda for the municipalities and cities, especially for the highly vulnerable people. These should include expansion of delivery services, establishment of food hubs, and direct distribution to the vulnerable population. The recent food distribution in Country during the Lockdown Period for COVID-19 greatly showed the importance of having effective food distribution strategies at the local government.

Planning for Food and agriculture in the Physical Plans

Physical Planning in Uganda has been demanding for the years. Development projects particularly in infrastructure and services were a challenge due to the lack of a clear planned overall physical framework at the National Level. The National Physical Development Plan greatly resonates with the Uganda Vision 2040, and the National Development Plans to provide a framework for development of land uses. Land Use

Planning is greatly embedded in the Land Sector Strategic Plans, whereas the Physical Planning Act 2010 greatly identifies the respective plans; National Physical Development Plan, Regional Physical Development Plan, District Physical Development Plans, Urban Physical Development Plans, and Local Physical Development Plans. These plans all conform to the National Physical Development Plan, and the Physical Development Plans.

However the National Physical Planning and Standards Handbook, guides the country on the use of the land for domestic(Residential), commercial purposes, with the aim of achieving orderly, coordinated, efficient and environmentally social and economic development and to secure the proper use of land. The national Physical Planning and Standards Handbook, greatly focuses on the developmental aspect of the land, for both residential and commercial physical plans. The physical plans for the residential and commercial physical plans majorly focus on designs, car parking, and access to utilities, boundary fencing, ancillary uses, and Landscaping. However the aspect of urban agriculture and food is greatly missing in the physical plans guideline.

Much as the NPPSH hints on the land scapping aspect which entails maintaining trees, agricultural practices should have been given a priority

in the Physical Planning Standards especially under landscaping, encouraging the population for example, to include kitchen gardens in the residential physical plans, and urban road side parks to include growing of agricultural crops, which can feed people in the urban areas. The tree belts under the road standards of the National Physical Planning and Standards Handbook highlight and focus on the aspect of trees improving the appearance of the road, however, the tree belts should include agricultural crops, fruits and vegetables that can provide food to the vast majority that go hungry in the urban areas. Food is still considered as food, notwithstanding who has had access to the food.

Making Urban Area Food Self Sufficient

We need significant transformations in our food systems to achieve Uganda's goals laid out in agreements we assented to like; the Malabo Declaration and the SDGs by 2030.

- In the short run to enable vulnerable urban communities get out of the crisis, government needs to revitalize food reserves. These would collect and store food during times of plenty and release it during times of extreme need of the same by the communities. If done, on top of solving the food crisis problem, it would also help

farmers not to sale at almost no price during bumper. During times of food scarcity and subsequent food inflation, food in the national reserves is released on the food market to enable those at the verge of severely inability to feed themselves due to the high food prices.

- Further, in the short run, government can benchmark on what other countries do e.g. Support the establishment food banks which are, centralized warehouse or clearing house registered as a non-profit organization for collecting, storing and distributing food (donated/shared), free of charge, to front line agencies which provide supplemental food and meals to the hungry. Here, emphasis is on the notion of surplus food in the food production and retail system. It also says much about the relationship between surplus food and the hungry. This signifies that food banks intend to make food that would otherwise be dumped/wasted available to organizations that can put it to good use.
- Food the case of pandemics and other emergencies that may occur, effective food distribution should be recognized by the town councils and municipalities as a measure to improve access to food particularly to the vulnerable population in

the urban areas. Government and the Local Government with the town councils, municipalities, and divisions should ensure expansion of delivery services during crisis times, establish and maintain food hubs and direct distribution to the vulnerable populations.

- Investing in urban agriculture, as a trigger of improving the local food systems in the country. Much as urban agriculture, is not considered in the world and in Uganda respectively, as a priority but urban agriculture and the urban agricultural community in Uganda play a central role in fostering a food system in the country. The concept of urban-peri-urban agriculture requires and needs to be clarified and given priority in budgeting, since it has proven to be self-serving to the urban communities, ensuring food security to the urban population. State and Non-State actors, to actively involve urban food sufficiency through the promotion of Peri-urban agriculture, and

agro-ecological practices. As majority of the urban dwellers do not have enough land to conduct the agricultural practices required therein, through planting and growing resilient vegetables, that feed the urban poor, even times of emergencies.

- Improve food retail distribution, which is key in improving the diets of urban residents. This will greatly impact on access to nutritious food for all at all times, foster connection with local producers to the locally available market which has a never ending demand for nutritious foods, regulating the price of selected nutritious foods in retails as a means of ensuring food access to the urban population, institutionalizing and registering permanent and non-permanent food markets (evening food markets) in the country as well as formalizing the mobile street food vendors 'food carts' which could be an additional solution to increase access to fresh food, especially fruits and vegetables.

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