



COVID-19 AND URBAN-BASED INFORMAL VENDORS IN GLOBAL SOUTH: A REVIEW OF ASSOCIATED LIVELIHOOD THREATS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper examines the threat of COVID-19 to the livelihoods of urban-based informal vendors in the global south and recommends policy alternatives to support them to improve their health and economic conditions.

Design/Methodology/ Approach: Through desk research, the researchers reviewed different literature to capture and answer the needs of the study. Data extraction format was structured around the sustainable livelihood framework notably how Covid-19 had threatened livelihoods assets of the vendors. content analysis strategy was used to organize and analyze data by using the MAXQDA 10.

Findings: Findings show that vendors working conditions, expose them to the risk of contracting the virus. Also, living and working in informal places with fewer hygiene standards and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) makes them more vulnerable. Vendors lack financial inability to access PPE, have inadequate information about COVID-19, they lack health insurance in particular, and that their informal status disadvantages them from acquiring community health support. Lastly, vendors are unable to benefit from the economic stimulus programmes owing to their informal status.

Research Limitation/Implication: The study focus on COVID-19 to the livelihoods of urban-based informal vendors in the global south.

Practical Implication: The study recommends improvement in policy options to include improvement of hygiene status in living and working places, improvement of hygiene and PPE utilisation in public transport, ensure access to social protection as well as access to relevant COVID-19 related information.

Social Implication: mitigating the risk and the effects of this pandemic in these poor communities must combine social isolation with the protection of livelihoods through free access to clean water, adequate shelter, food security, and the provision of context-based information to local communities about the disease and how to protect from it.

Keywords: *Coronavirus, informal sector, urban. vendors. Tanzania*

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

COVID-19 pandemic is a severe acute human respiratory condition caused by the Coronavirus that was first identified in Wuhan China in the last quarter of 2019; and has rapidly spread to Europe, America and later on in Africa but with more alarming effects in Italy, Spain, France, Britain and the United States of America (Africanews.com, 2020; WHO, 2020). The pandemic has infected over 7 million people and resulted in over 419,524 deaths worldwide so far (WHO, 2020; Worldometer, 2020). Causes of the virus are still debatable, however common symptoms of the disease include fever, cough, fatigue, breath complications and loss of smell with some severe cases progressing to viral pneumonia and multi-organ failure (WHO, 2020). The virus is spread, through small droplets produced during coughing, sneezing, or talking. People are infected by touching their faces after touching a contaminated surface or object (Africanews.com, 2020; Mehtar, Preiser, Lakhe, Bouso, TamFum, Kallay, & Nachega, 2020). Preventive measures from acquiring the disease, include hand washing using soap and or alcohol-based sanitisers, avoid touching faces with unwashed hands and maintaining social and physical distancing from others (especially those with symptoms) as well as the use of face masks (Mehtar et al., 2020; WHO, 2020).

To present, the pandemic has caused massive socio-economic consequences across the globe ranging from a decline in tourism and hospitality, transport, the general service industry as well as livelihoods for various vulnerable groups and National GDPs (ILO, 2020; Mehtar et al., 2020). Indeed, the United Nations (UN) has expressed concern that the COVID-19 crisis will lead to a reversal of decades of progress in the fight against poverty; emphasizing that the existing high levels of inequality within and between countries will be further exacerbated (IGC, 2020). Stringent lockdown and social distancing measures in most of the world's advanced economies have inevitably resulted in significant declines in GDP growth (Africanews.com, 2020; UNU-WIDER, 2020) and as predicted by the ILO unemployment may rise to 25 million in 2020, with losses in labour income in the range of USD 860 billion to USD 3.4 trillion (IGC, 2020).

Although this crisis has hit workers across the globe, it seems to pose more adverse effects on those working in the informal sectors, with limited access to adequate health and social protection (IGC, 2020). Considering that many developing countries are characterised by informal economies dominated by urban street vending mainly among young people with the age bracket of 15 to 40 (World Bank, 2017). Statistics around the world confirm that the informal sector contributes around two-thirds of all the employed individuals, and its contribution to different countries' GDP is highly recognized (Dell'Anno, AnaMaria, & Balele, 2018). The informal sector contributes between 50-75% of employment and has attracted a wide range of individuals from different social

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backgrounds and most especially in the developing (Dell'Anno et al., 2018). According to statistics prevalence of the informal economy in Sub Saharan Africa is estimated at 80% and it represented 88% of employment growth in Tanzania, between 2002 and 2012 (URT, 2019).

Conversely, despite the importance of the informal sector to individual livelihoods and the national economy, street vendors are considered to be at a higher risk of experiencing both health as well as economic challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic due to the nature of their activities (Mburu, 2020; Mehtar et al., 2020; Munishi & Casmir, 2019). Street vending business requires the vendors to work in congested places and hence exposing them to a higher risk of contracting the disease in the overcrowded environment they work from (Mehtar et al., 2020). Further, vendors' economic inability forces them to work from the streets for long hours to realise their daily needs, a situation that is further considered to expose them to the risk of contracting the virus (Mburu, 2020; Mehtar et al., 2020). On the other hand, banning vending activities through guidelines such as social distancing and lockdowns may render the vendors incapable of meeting their daily needs notably obtaining house rent, food thus keeping their lives going. In Nairobi Kenya, for example, the ban on food hawking during the coronavirus pandemic has worsened the situation of informal traders (Mburu, 2020). In this context “[vendors] face a horrible choice to keep going to their informal jobs and risk contracting or spreading the virus, or stay at home and risk their family starving?” (Haldevang, 2020, p. 1). Several health-related measures have been enacted, however, these measures substantially disrupt vendors' livelihoods on the one hand, but which are required to save lives on the other hand, as long as testing and contact tracing are not available (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020). This suggests that a careful examination of ways in which Covid 19 threatens the informal business as well as factors that fuel the threat is required (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020).

Currently, there are very few scientific studies that relate COVID-19 outbreak and street vending in urban areas. The available studies (Wegeriff, 2020; Price, 2020) are generic in their approach in the sense that studies focus on the informal sector and small scale informal sector in general. Similarly, these studies were out of the Tanzanian context. In the available studies, one cluster of research has focused on street vending and technology (Mramba, 2015; Mramba, Apiola, Kolog, & Sutinen, 2016); another one characterizes street vendors (Adhikari, 2017; Martínez, Short, & Estrada, 2017; Mazhambe, 2017), while the other one focuses on various problems facing the vendors (Kirumirah, 2018; Munishi & Casmir, 2019). Some little existing literature is neither scientific, specific nor systematically and directly associated with this particular subject matter. The study focused on the urban setting of developing countries of the south which have attracted informal and street vending in particular given their low level of development (Munishi & Casmir, 2019). This work envisages informing researchers and policy-makers concerning the effective



ways of strengthening resilience strategies of the urban street vendors by providing fresh insights into this debate. Indeed, an understanding of the threats COVID-19 on the urban street vendors could facilitate improvement of the existing interventions as well as formulate more effective and context-specific interventions to strengthen the vendor's capacities in coping with the COVID-19 threat and its consequences.

Subsequently, the objective of this study is to get a better understanding of specific ways in which COVID-19 threatens the urban informal sector, factors that further expose the informal sector workers and the street vendors in particular to the threats and ultimately to recommend relevant policy interventions specifically looking at how health and the urban street vendors are and the business vending is constrained by the COVID-19 outbreak and recommend appropriate policy implications.

2.0. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK (SLF)

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF), is a framework used to analyze the capability and endowments of individuals and households (Carney, 2002; Scoone, 1998) which normally condition the environment in which they live and determine their livelihood choices and welfare outcomes (Mensah, 2012). The framework informs those poor societies are vulnerable to different conditions and thus, use multiple resources and strategies they own to achieve their livelihood. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework, emphasizes the individual or household's capacity to maintain its wellbeing [overcome the vulnerability context] without eroding the resources base (DfID, 2000). The Framework identifies five broad categories of resources from which individuals maintain their possibilities of achieving their livelihood in moments of shock and other challenges (Mensah, 2012). Such categories of assets include natural, physical, human, financial and social capitals. Human assets encompass skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health, while physical assets include basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water and energy) and communication facilities. Social assets entail social resources (networks, membership of formal and informal groups, relationships of trust, and access to wider institutions of society) that people draw upon in pursuit of livelihoods. Financial assets include cash, savings, supplies of credit or regular remittances and pensions, while natural assets include aspects such as land, water, wildlife, biodiversity and other environmental resources (Mensah, 2012).

Depending on these assets and the level of the endowment of such resources, individuals try their best to make use of these resources to make a meaningful livelihood from different strategies that would yield optimal returns in welfare outcomes such as increased income and well-being, reduced vulnerability to economic shocks and natural disaster, improved food security and sustained use



of available natural resources. In this study, it is assumed that individuals in the informal sector during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, assets have been vulnerable to shocks and disturbances caused by the pandemic. The analysis is based on how Covid-19 depletes the livelihood of the vendors as well as how lack of certain livelihoods assets incapacitate them to effectively cope with threats the covid-19 threats. This is because the objective of this study is to get a better understanding of specific ways in which COVID-19 threatens the urban informal sector, factors that further expose the informal sector workers and the street vendors in particular to the threats and ultimately to recommend relevant policy interventions. It is expected that the framework is in a better position to explain the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on vendors' ability to use livelihood strategies to maintain their human, physical, social, financial and natural assets. The framework has been widely used by different scholars (Mensah, 2012; Pandey, Jha, Alatalo, Archie, & Gupta, 2017; van Rijn, Burger, & den Belder, 2012), to study different phenomena including impact assessment, corporate social responsibility and climate change.

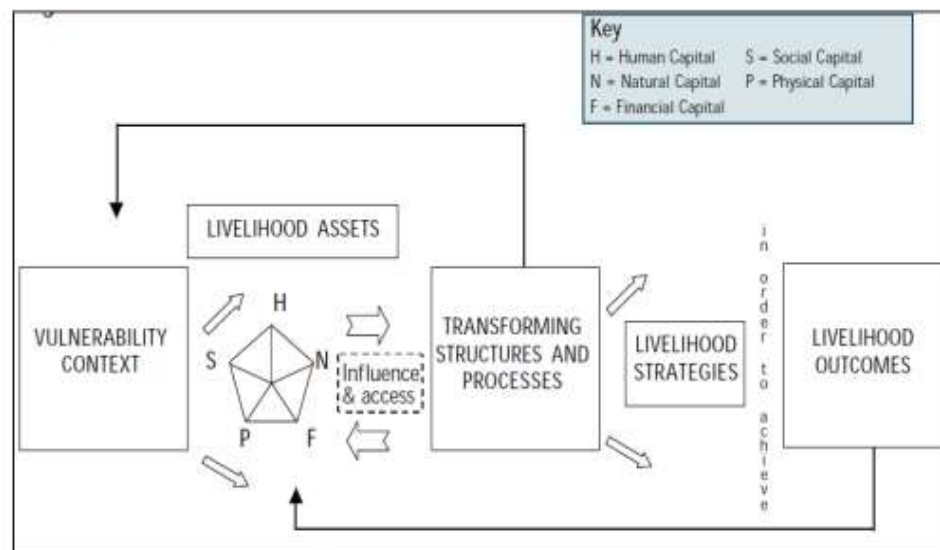


Figure 1: Sustainable Livelihoods framework based on the (DFID Scheme)

Source: Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance (Dfid, 1999)

3.0. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A literature search was conducted using different journal databases including JAMA, science direct, CellPress, Lancet, the bmj, Wiley and Google scholar search engine with the search term ("COVID-19" OR "coronavirus") AND ("urban vendors" OR "street vendors") AND ("livelihood" OR "income" OR "source of income") AND ("global south" OR "Africa" OR "Sub Saharan



Africa”) restricting findings from September 2019 to June 2020. Using the search term, researchers obtained many articles, however, most of which were not relevant to the topic. Table 1 explaining the number of studies is indicated below

Table 1: Number of results per search engine

No.	Search engine	Number of results	Relevant
1	JAMA	0	0
2	science direct	2700	7
3	CELLPRESS	48	1
4	LANCET	0	0
5	THE bjm	0	0
6	Wiley	24,219	6
7	Google scholar	29	7

We screened the search results according to the title and abstracts, and only 21 articles were found to be relevant for full-text screening according to the eligibility criteria. Further, all 21 articles were screened and found relevant for further analysis. A dual screening process was used, whereby two authors (EJM and KMH) were involved in both title/abstract and full-text screening. Any disagreements were resolved by consulting a third reviewer.

The eligibility criteria included the following:

- The population should include street vendors
- The setting should include global south
- The exposure should include the COVID pandemic

The 21 results included all studies conducted in the global south, with many of them being from Sub Saharan Africa (17 studies) while others were from Asia (4 studies) and Latin America (1 study). Studies conducted in Africa were from countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and with only one study of the same category being registered in Tanzania.

To supplement the obtained articles, researchers added other grey documents from reputable multinational organizations. These documents were in form of reports from UN organisations notably WHO, UNICEF, ILO, WFP, UNDESA and other UN agencies starting from the last quarter of 2019 to the present. Nineteen reports from other health organisations and higher learning institutions were also consulted.

Data extraction format was structured around the sustainable livelihood framework notably how Covid-19 had threatened livelihoods assets of the vendors notably natural, physical, human, social



and financial, of the urban-based informal vendors in the global south and what are the policy alternatives to support them to improve their health and economic conditions?

Generally, a content analysis strategy was used to organize and analyze data by using the MAXQDA 10 [VERBI Software, Marburg, Germany]. Relevant qualitative research ethical guidelines were adhered to, and all necessary aspects of reliability and validity of handling secondary data were considered. This included but was not limited to consultation of authentic sources meaning the inclusion of only correct and approved information to ensure accuracy of the data. Accordingly, data clearing, as well as the transparency on the missing data as well as the declaration of data shortcomings, were made clear (Oluwaseun, Ibrahim, & Abayomi, 2019; Ruggiano & Perry, 2017).

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present the findings in light of the sustainable livelihood framework focusing on the ways in Covid-19 threatens the informal workers' livelihoods assets of the vendors notably natural, physical, human, social and financial assets of the urban-based informal vendors in the global south and what are the policy alternatives to support them to improve their health and economic condition. Findings presented in this section emanate from 21 articles and other 19 pieces of grey literature obtained from different search engines. Findings in this section provide that informal workers including street vendors stand a greater chance of contracting the disease since they work from congested places, mainly use public transport which exposes them to the risk, and their risk is escalated by their exclusionary stance which leaves them out of social security and health insurance scheme. It is also clear that due to their low income, they are unable to provide themselves with PPEs, and at times lack genuine information about the pandemic. These situations expose them to being more vulnerable to the risk of contracting the virus as explained in the subsequent section. The part also indicates the way the COVID-19 outbreak threatened the vendors' business by showing that the lockdown and social distance measures barred vendors from participating in their economic activities thereby threatening vendors' assets. The part also presents policy recommendations and government organs to take these recommendations have also been highlighted. Findings are presented objective wise in the subsequent parts as follows;

4.1 How the Informal Sector Workers stands in the high chance of contracting COVID-19.

Generally speaking, it has been confirmed that urban-based informal sector workers and the urban-based street vendors, in particular, stand at the higher risk of being infected with the coronavirus



compared to other sectors owing to the context in which they operate; notably working in congested places, use of public transport and living and working in informal places where hygiene is significantly compromised and there hardly exists Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Mburu, 2020; Mushi & Milanzi, 2019). This situation is infuriated by a lack of social protection and health insurance in particular. Indeed, owing to their informal status street vendors are disadvantaged from acquiring community health support, and financial as well as unable to access PPE (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020; Martínez et al., 2017). This reality is more elaborately discussed in the following paragraphs:

(a) Working in congested places: Firstly, wide literature shows that the urban-based street vendors are at risk of contracting Covid-19 disease considering that most of the vending operations take place in congested places such as bus stand, road sites and in open markets where they are exposed to physical contact with each other and their customers as well as in places with compromised hygiene and sanitation. In some urban areas of Kenya and India for example, it has been confirmed that the risk of infection was the highest among the people living in congested areas due to the sharing of utilities, and the inability to practise social distancing (Mburu, 2020; UNU-WIDER, 2020; WIEGO, 2020). The above findings simply suggest that working in congested places is characterised by compromised hygiene and sanitation-related to a lack of physical capital. Accordingly, it further suggests lack of this particular aspect of livelihood [physical capital] in form of an inadequate hygiene environment incapacitates the vendors from successfully coping with the Covid-19 threat.

(b) Use of public transport: Another factor that puts the vendors at the risk of contracting the disease is through the use of public transport. In a similar vein, due to their low economic capacity, street vendors are the ones who commonly use public transport to and from work (Mburu, 2020; WIEGO, 2020). Traders often migrate daily to city centres on minibuses and via other forms of public transportation, and work in very close proximity to each other, and cannot take time off work if they feel sick (Resnick, 2020). This means that the incentive for them not to adhere to the rules or go to a hospital even when they are symptomatic is high (Mburu, 2020; WIEGO, 2020). In light of the livelihood theoretical framework, it can be argued that lack of financial assets force vendors to commute to work using public transport even when the Covid-19 situation was worse. This further suggests that empowering the vendors economically can help them to comply with social distancing as well as lockdown measures that would prevent them from commuting as well as exposing themselves to contraction of Covid-19.

(c) Lack of social protection and health insurance in particular further renders the vendors powerless in coping with the pandemic. Most of the street vendors do not have any health insurance cover which makes it hard for them to access health services in case they fall victim to the



pandemic (Africanews.com, 2020; Munishi & Casmir, 2019)}. It is therefore unlikely the vendors will be able to do so on their own (IGC, 2020). In a study carried out in Kinondoni District Dar es Salaam Tanzania, it was noted that the majority of the vendors (82.9%) could not afford health insurance even though was vital for their survival. Major reasons attributed to this inability were financial constraints (45.7%) as their earnings were less than TZS 100,000 (equivalent to the US \$44.80) per month and lack of awareness and importance of the health insurance and how it works (63.4%) (Mushi & Milanzi, 2019). Moreover, recently, ILO established that about 55 per cent of the world's population are not covered by social protection, citing the coverage of informal workers is particularly inadequate (ILO, 2017, 2020).

(d) Inadequate information about Covid-19: Another challenge has to do with, limited access to Covid-19 related information by informal workers (Ozili, 2020; The Africa report, 2020). Firstly, vendors specifically do not have reliable access to information relating to the virus and how it spreads. Secondly, and consequently, vendors have been the victims of misinformation relating to Covid-19 (WIEGO, 2020). Informal street works lack structured ways of acquiring health-related information more specifically Covid-19 information. This owns in part due to poor technology and lack of proper information-sharing mechanisms at the local and central government levels suggest that the use of ICT would enable help in providing information and advice on various aspects including health (ILO, 2020).

Accordingly, in the context of SLF inadequate information about Covid-19 is related to lack of human assets simply because issues related to information, skills and education comprise the human asset as they empower a person to make informed decisions. Their low ability to human assets deprives them of accessing valid information about covid-19. Such information would have helped them to protect themselves effectively.

(e) Inability to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Another factor that puts the vendors at the risk of contracting the disease related to the inability to access PPE such as soap and/or clean water to wash their hands mainly due to financial constraints (Bodewig, Gentilini, Zainab Usman, & Williams, 2020) as well as their illegal status that does not qualify them to be provided with such items (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020). Their low level of financial muscles limits them to get protective gear to undertake their essential work and daily activities (Cities Alliance, 2020). Indeed, Governments' reluctance to support the informal sector vendors in acquiring the PPEs and the associated prices for the equipment such as masks, sanitisers and fumigation services has also been rightly captured in India (WIEGO, 2020), and in some different



parts of Africa where vendors may not be able to access the equipment in recommended quality (Mehtar et al., 2020) as further rightly captured by (Mburu, 2020, p. 3)

...access to water and basic sanitation products such as soap may as well be perceived as a luxury [by vendors] not readily available or affordable to them considering that some of them survive on less than two dollars a day an aspect that inclines the vendors not to adhere to the health rules or go to a hospital even when their symptomatic is high (Mburu, 2020, p. 3).

Drawing from the above findings it can be said that, the outbreak of COVID-19 has destabilized vendors financial and social assets, through reduced sales and restricted meetings in form of social distancing, hence setting them at more risk of the disease, as they cannot buy PPE and have information exchange. , in the actual sense, lack of financial assets denies the vendors the economic muscles to access PPE and the illegal status ascribed to them and their business incapacities the vendors qualifying for the PPE given by different charitable organizations.

(f) Working and living in informal settlement/places: Urban based informal workers work and live in the informal settlement where hygiene is significantly compromised and there hardly exists Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (Izar, Nyiti, Mbuya, & Mbisso, 2020; Mburu, 2020; Mushi & Milanzi, 2019). These places lack essential services such as access to water and sanitation, and adequate shelter, as well as food security which exacerbates the impacts of the pandemic on these most vulnerable communities (Cities Alliance, 2020, CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020, 2020, p. 1). Inability to live in a decent settlement is related to a lack of physical, financial as well as natural assets. The outbreak of the disease has escalated the situation thereby exposing the risk of contracting the disease and incapacitated them as far as coping with Covid-19 related threats.

(g) Psychological problems: Covid-19 is also said to have caused significant Psychological problems to the urban-based informal workers and street vendors in particular (WHO, 2020; WIEGO, 2020). Firstly, vendors are psychologically disturbed as they are worried about contracting the disease owing to the context in which they work (WIEGO, 2020). Secondly, vendors' fear, stress, worry and concern are related to financial constraints emanating from business unpredictability something that further adds to their psychological problems (WHO, 2020). Psychological problems are related to human capital. Relating this to SLF, it can be concluded that Covid-19 jeopardises informal sector workers' livelihood from the point of view of the human capital aspect.



4.2 Ways in which the COVID-19 outbreak threatens the vendors' business

4.2.1 Threats posed by social distancing and lockdown measures

(a) Inability to participate in livelihood activities: Firstly, social distancing and lockdowns measures posed by different countries have been consistently claimed to restrict vendors to effectively continue with business owing to the nature of their business that inclines them to work in crowded urban neighbourhoods and informal settlements as this is the only way in which they can access customers (Cities Alliance, 2020; CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020; WIEGO, 2020). This aspect is also observed in some urban centres in Kenya where social distancing, as well as guidelines such as staying at home to prevent the spread of the virus, have practically become harder to implement among the vendors due to economic hardships that force them to go out in search of their livelihood (African Business Magazine, 2020; Mburu, 2020). Such particular directives have jeopardised vendors' chances of working hence risking vendors' income which constitutes their financial assets. This further jeopardised other household capitals such as human capital which entail the inability to acquire household health and food and shelter supplies.

(b) Closure of various social-economic activities: Lockdown and social distancing initiatives have been said to limit the number of informal trade customers due to the closure of various social-economic activities such as recreational centres, transportation, shopping centres, schools and universities (Cities Alliance, 2020; WFP, 2020). This further jeopardises the vendors' sales and profitability as a significant number of them were prepared to sell various goods and services around schools and universities (African Business Magazine, 2020; Tih, 2020). Specifically, the lockdown and social distancing rule mainly deny the vendors their daily income necessary for their survival as put forward by one of the vendors in Ethiopia. *"I cannot survive without coming to my job every day. [...] Total lockdown means an existential threat, as I am already losing my random customers from the streets"* (Tsegaye, 2020, p. 2). Therefore, closing socio-economic activities, incapacitates and increases the risk of vendors' assets right from human, financial, social as well as physical assets leading them to continuous losses. In general, the outbreak has deprived of vendors the ability to acquire household health and food and shelter supplies.

(c) Customers' fear to shop in crowded places: Another way in which social distancing and lockdowns affect the vending business is that some customers may not be interested in crowded markets anymore due to fear of contracting the virus as put rightly put by one of the vendors in South Africa: *"When they visit Soweto or Chisokone they are no longer at peace because of the fear to contract the Coronavirus making our members lose income,"*. Consequently, the demand for customers' foodstuff and other goods has been declining (HIVOS, 2020). In Ethiopia, it is estimated that given the uncertainties of the COVID-19 crisis, around 750,000 jobs most of them



in cities disappeared in a number of few months (Tsegaye, 2020). With such situations, customers' fear to shop in crowded places can be said to have directly endangered vendors' financial assets as they could no longer get their daily income. This further affected other household capitals such as human capital which entail the inability to acquire household health and food and shelter supplies.

(d) Vendors inability to meet daily needs: It has been also explained that Covid-19 has rendered the urban-based vendors incapable of meeting their daily needs owing to their inability to participate in livelihood activities, lack of customers due to closure of various social-economic activities and lack of customers due to fear to shop in the crowded places as rightly evidenced in some countries in Latin America, Tanzania, Kenya and South African Republic (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020). Indeed, it is rightly observed that isolation alone will quickly lead to starvation among the workers who solely rely on daily labour to put food on the table (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020). Even if isolation is not imposed, the slowdown in the economy and decrease in daily foot traffic has a significant impact on the earnings of the informal workers (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020). Findings indicate that lockdown measures led to business closure which incapacitated the vendors' physical and financial assets and obstructed them from acquiring their daily needs such as household health, food and shelter supplies.

(e) Vendors inability to benefit from economic stimulus and programmes: Literature further expounds that; urban informal vendors may be bypassed by various social-economic programmes extended to other formal groups such as financial bailout packages owing to their lack of legal recognition. The informal sector does not receive legitimate recognition as a key driver of economic activity despite the vulnerability it experiences and therefore has poor protection and a low level of resilience (Cities Alliance, 2020). Indeed, while financial bailout packages have been announced by some national governments, there is a risk that these will not reach the informal economy, given their institutional financial exclusion and a lack of a comprehensive database of informal workers (Cities Alliance, 2020). Consequently, traders usually rely on rotating credit groups and neighbourhood and funeral associations to offer support in the event of idiosyncratic shocks (Resnick, 2020). Simply, owing to their informal status, street vendors may not be targeted and thus benefit from the economic stimulus and programmes often associated with cuts in the fees and taxes citizens must pay to the government or banks (African Business Magazine, 2020; ICTD, 2020; The New Humanitarian., 2020). One source warns that *(...) if the stimulus package is implemented in its current form, large proportions of informal workers, who operate in mostly paperless environments and who depend on irregular daily wages with small safety nets to fall back on, will be left out in the cold to fend for themselves* (Brandt, 2020). Vendors' inability to benefit from economic stimulus and programmes can be related to vendors' lack of social capital. This means that vendors' lack of recognizable social status notably possession of illegal status



incapacitated them from effectively coping with the threat by denying them social privileges enjoyed by others such as economic stimulus packages and programmes.

(f) Increased level of violence among vendors resulting from lockdown enforcement: COVID 19 is also said to be responsible for the increased level of violence against the urban-based street vendors. In India, police harassment of informal workers has been reported as they force them to comply with the lockdown and social distancing orders. These acts have also gone hand in hand with fines or physical violence and abuse of confiscations of the vendors' merchandise (WIEGO, 2020). It has been observed that violence resulting from the lockdown enforcements are more among women informal workers (WIEGO, 2020). The reality is that Covid-19 prevention measures eroded the vendors' human capital destructed their state of health which is an important aspect of the human asset among vendors.

(g) Losses resulting from the decay of perishable commodities: Due to decline in sales/drop in business, vendors incur significant loss resulting from decaying of perishable goods especially those engaged in selling fruits and vegetables. In some African cities, it has been noted that drastic stoppage of informal open markets due to lockdowns and social distancing has led to some food fruits and vegetables going waste and stocked goods may be leading to (HIVOS, 2020). Indeed, *"Unlike their formal counterparts, (...) informal sector businesses lost businesses overnight as a result of the forced quarantines and stay-at-home orders,"* (Brandt, 2020). Losses incurred by vendors lead to a decline in their financial assets. This is to say that losses resulting from perishable commodities relate to the erosion of financial muscles. The perishability of goods was essentially due to low sales as there were no customers hence leading to low profitability which practically rendered vendors broke.

4.3 Policy, Practical and Social implications

4.3.1 Strategies for alleviating the livelihood threats posed by the COVID-19 on street vending

(a) Improvement of hygiene status at vendors' working and living places. Vendors operations are naturally carried out in congested places such as bus stands, road sites and open markets which have been proved to be characterised by compromised hygiene and sanitation services (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020; ILO, 2020; WIEGO, 2020). Moreover, urban informal places where most of the informal sector workers live should be supplied with essential services such as access to water and sanitation, and adequate shelter, as well as food security which exacerbates the impacts of the



pandemic on these most vulnerable communities (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020). This is because the majority of the informal vendors live in informal settlements/places. To this end urban authorities in collaboration with the ministry of land, housing and settlements should come up with affirmative actions to support affected families mostly those in vulnerable and economic hardships in cities (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020).

(b)Improvement of hygiene and PPE utilisation status in public transport: Government and other relevant authorities to ensure that all preventive measures such as fumigations, washing of hands, use of sanitisers and face masks are effectively implemented in the public transport, which is often used by the vendors and as a factor that puts the vendors in the risk of contracting the disease. Accordingly, city authorities in collaboration with the ministry of health as well as the Land Transport Regulatory Authority (LATRA) should work jointly to improve hygiene and PPE utilisation status in public transport.

(c) Ensure access to social protection and health insurance by the vendors. This is because lack of social protection and health insurance in particular has been earmarked to render the vendors powerless in coping with the pandemic (ILO, 2017, 2020). Most of the street vendors do not have health insurance that may guarantee their treatment should they be infected with the virus. In this case, developing countries should invest in expanding social protection programmes (FAO, 2020). Various forms of social protection are said to be key to mitigating the direct economic impacts of the pandemic on households and communities: health-related costs (prevention, testing and treatment), reduced access to food intake and diverse diets, as well as loss of employment and income due to closures of markets and restrictions in movement (ILO, 2020). Social protection can also relieve the pressures facing households in terms of compliance with confinement and movement restrictions and protect them and the wider community from infection (ILO, 2020). Health insurance service may as well be extended to the vendors as a remedy to hardships created by this crisis, it is unlikely they will be able to do so on their own (IGC, 2020). Ensuring equitable access to social protection and health insurance can be successfully be implemented by the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) in collaboration with the city authorities. Although there is a package for vendors established recently by the NHIF, however, the coverage is very limited. Moreover, Tanzania Insurance Regulatory Authority (TIRA) can be tasked to work hand in hand with the many existing insurance companies to come up with a special health insurance package or product for the informal sector workers.

(d) Ensure access to adequate and relevant information related to Covid-19: This is because it has been confirmed that vendors have limited access to Covid-19 related information notably what is the virus and how it spreads (WIEGO, 2020). Informal street works lack structured ways



of acquiring health-related information more specific information related to Covid-19. This information should be supplemented with an empowerment on how to alleviate vendors' psychological stress resulting from vendors' fear, stress, worry and concern are related to financial constraints emanating from business unpredictability something that further adds to their psychological problems (WIEGO, 2020). Mobile phone technology may be the appropriate strategy for sharing Covid-19 related information given that a significant urban population has subscribed to mobile phone services as evidenced by the situation in Kibera Kenya where well over half of the population in the urban settlement have subscribed to a WhatsApp platform that provides information about the virus, the patterns of infection and what they should do to protect themselves and the community (Mburu, 2020).

(e) Ensure accessibility of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the vendors. This research has also indicated that vendors' inability to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Vendors have been explained to be at the risk of contracting the disease due to the factors related to their inability to access PPE such as genuine face masks, sanitisers, hand washing soap and/or clean and fumigations services owing to their looming financial constraints (Izar et al., 2020; Mehtar et al., 2020). This is to say that imposition of the COVID-19 restrictions should go hand in hand with helping informal food traders rather than persecute them (Resnick, 2020). This may be done through developing hygiene practices and clean water supplies with market associations, allowing more dispersed market sites during epidemics, and extending safety nets and health benefits found in informal markets to informal market workers (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020; Resnick, 2020). In Kebera Slums in Kenya, some non-government organisations have established hand-washing stations, community toilets, and clean-water kiosks in all access points, staffed by volunteers and a network of health workers (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020). Such examples should be emulated by other African Developing countries. In this case, both Public and Private sector organisations should consider extending Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the informal sector workers. This process however should be coordinated and regulated by the Ministry of health and relevant quality regulators such as the Tanzania Bureau of Standards (TBS) and the Tanzania Medicine and Medical Devices Authority (TMDA).

(f) Extensions of economic stimulus and programmes to informal sectors: Relevant authorities, notably central and local governments including financial institutions should consider extending relevant social and economic stimulus packages and programmes to informal sectors such as financial bailout packages that take into account the vendors' lack of legal recognition. Governments should consider establishing an incubation fund with relaxed conditions that will help and enhance informal worker's businesses. In Botswana for example, a wage subsidy totalling 1 billion pula (\$84 million) has been provided to small businesses as an incentive to retain their



employees during the shutdown. In addition, the government intends to contribute 50 percent of the basic salary of every furloughed citizen or permanent resident for 3 months, along with a subsidy of 1,000-2,000 pula (\$80-\$168) per month to meet basic needs. Stimulus packages should be grants as well as include compensating the self-employed, as well as family and micro businesses for their loss in earnings, should as well apply to the informal workers since they are also heavily impacted by the pandemic (IGC, 2020). Based on the above-discussed experience the Ministry of Finance and planning through the Bank of Tanzania should come up with appropriate economic stimulus package and programmes to boost operations in the informal sectors.

(g) Mitigation strategies should be gender-sensitive: Last but not list all mitigation strategies aimed to support informal vendors against the Covid-19 threats should be gender-sensitive meaning that they should be designed in such a manner that they will not discriminate against people based on their sexes, health, financial and orientation status. They should as well reflect social, cultural and geographical context (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020). This is because, closure of business further differently affects the various urban poor individuals who suffer reduced access to employment, health, education, public space and utilities such as electricity and water (Cities Alliance, 2020). Accordingly, mitigating the risk and the effects of this pandemic in these poor communities must combine social isolation with the protection of livelihoods through free access to clean water, adequate shelter, food security, and the provision of context-based information to local communities about the disease and how to protect from it (CityLab Dar es Salaam, 2020, p. 1).

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusively, this paper has primarily examined how COVID-19 threatens the livelihoods of urban-based informal vendors in the global south and recommended policy alternatives to support them to improve their health and economic conditions. Findings have generally contended that vendors are at a high risk of contracting the disease by the virtue of working in congested places, use of public transport and living and working in informal places where hygiene is significantly compromised and there hardly exists Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Other factors exposing the vendors to the disease include financial inability to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), inadequate information about Covid-19 among the vendors, lack of social protection and health insurance in particular as well as informal status that disadvantages the street vendors from acquiring community health support. Economically, Covid-19 has rendered the vendors unable to participate in livelihood activities, due to the closure of various social-economic activities and customers' fear to shop in crowded places. Consequently, the pandemic has further rendered the



vendors unable to meet daily needs. Lockdown and social distancing enforcement have further exposed vendors to violence as well as losses resulting from some of their perishable commodities. Lastly, vendors are unable to benefit from the economic stimulus packages and programmes owing to their informal status. Accordingly, policy recommendations to alleviating the Covid-19 threats on street vending include Improvement of hygiene status at vendors' living and working places mainly in urban informal settlements, improvement of hygiene and PPE utilisation in public transport, ensure access to social protection and health insurance as well as access to relevant Covid-19 related information. Others are ensuring accessibility of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the vendors, extension of relevant economic stimulus packages and programmes to informal sectors and finally, mitigation strategies should be gender-sensitive.

6.0 Declaration of conflict of interest

The authors wish to declare that they have no conflict of interest concerning this study.

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