

MSc Thesis

The informal sector of Kampala

Return Migrations and other Livelihood
Strategies in response to the Covid-19
Crisis



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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 crisis had a particularly negative impact on informal workers. In general, these workers have little to fall back on and work on a day-to-day basis. Lockdown like measures, aimed at containing the novel virus, forced them to stay home, making it difficult for informal workers to provide for themselves and their families. This research focuses on the impact of, and reaction to, the Covid-19 crisis on informal worker in Kampala, Uganda.

Uganda, a country where informality dominates the economy, implemented a particularly strict lockdown, which put a halt to all economic activity between March and May 2020. This crisis -the lockdown and the new economy reality, shaped by this crisis- made this demographic especially vulnerable and insecure. Due to this crisis, their livelihood security has been severely compromised, as it prevented them from buying food, from paying rent, from sending their children to school, from engaging in social activities, or paying for medical expenses. In response to all this, informal workers devised a series of livelihood strategies of short-term and long-term nature to alleviate the pressure on existential needs and rebuild assets. Furthermore, a significant number of workers chose migrating back to their rural origins -return migration- as their livelihood strategy. While with no doubt the time during strict lockdown between March and May 2020 had the greatest impact on the wellbeing of informal workers, the general effects, the Covid-19 crisis had on the Ugandan economy, and the problems that emerged from this changing economic environment, still persist. Workers in Kampala are facing a growing competition for certain activities, a decrease in demand, a limited capacity to rebuild businesses and the pronounced hand to mouth functioning of interactions. This new economic landscape is challenging both those who originally stayed in Kampala and those who left, to come up with effective and innovative strategies to adapt to this new reality.

KEYWORDS

Covid-19, Informal workers, Informal economy, Kampala, livelihood strategy, livelihood security

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List of abbreviations

FDG	Focus Group Discussion
HE	Household Enterprise
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPDPM	National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management
NRM	National Resistance Movement party
RoU	Republic of Uganda
SARS-CoV-2	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus-2
UBOS	Ugandan Bureau of Statistics
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Point of departure

Covid-19 has affected numerous countries and communities around the globe. Government reactions have been equally as numerous and include travel bans, mobility restrictions, countrywide lockdowns, financial aid packages, or social distancing, to name a few. Covid-19 has spread rapidly since the first cases were confirmed in Wuhan in late 2019. The virus is transmitted from person to person and “can be quite lethal, especially in the elderly and those with comorbidities” (Damm, et al., 2020, p. 1). It is safe to say that this crisis has affected many people, livelihoods and economies around the world in the global north, as well as in the global south. The impact the virus has had and will have, both in terms of health and socio-economic consequences, will vary due to the geographic, cultural, demographic, social, and economic condition of the affected country and its communities (International Monetary Fund, 2020). More than 90% of the Covid-19 cases can be attributed to urban areas (The Sustainable Development Goal Report, 2020) and, not surprisingly, among the people most affected by this global crisis are the ones already battling major socio-economic challenges; the ones depending on informal livelihoods.

Urban informal livelihoods are determined by a complex and dynamic interplay of social, environmental, political, and economic factors, and the constraints and opportunities emerging within this setting (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2020). Informality can have different shapes, though may generally include informal dwellings, informal identities (undocumented people), and up to informal employment (Rains & Krishna, 2020). As stated in the Sustainable Development Goal Report (2020), the global pandemic and its impacts will 1) be felt more drastically by those depending on informal livelihoods and 2) aggravate their vulnerabilities. This suggests that vulnerable groups, particularly the ones relying on informal employment, demand attention.

Following this line of thought, an important question to answer is why people employed in informal activities -informal workers- are at high risk in regard to Covid-19. As outlined by Chen et al. (2016) informal employment is very likely to take place in environments that due to demographic and infrastructural factors such as high population density and the reliance on

public (crowded) transport systems, are already vulnerable to the novel virus SARS-CoV-2 (Molina-Betancur, Martínez-Herrera, Pericàs, & Benach, 2020). This low resource environment, as well as insufficient housing conditions exacerbate transmission (World bank, 2020; Brito, et al., 2020). Most significantly, though -and central to this research- are the challenging social and economic conditions that make this demographic especially vulnerable, not only to contracting the infection, but to indirect consequences of the novel virus, such as the ineffectiveness of the implication regarding lockdown-like measures (Patel, 2020; Corburn, et al., 2020; Islam, 2020; Pereira & Gratao, 2020; Haddout, Priya, Hogueane, & Ljubenkov, 2020). Why is that? These workers depend on the daily earning of their living and will – when forced to stay home and not move freely - “suffer the twin debacle of the Covid-19 pandemic and excruciating hunger” (Iwuohaa & Aniche, 2020, p. 631).

In view of this, the Covid-19 crisis is to be understood as a shock and disruption to people’s lives, and had -not just due to health reasons- an enormous effect on informal livelihoods (Pereira & Gratao, 2020; Molina-Betancur, Martínez-Herrera, Pericàs, & Benach, 2020; Corburn, et al., 2020; Islam, 2020). Informal workers are at high risk of suffering negative externalities in this regard, as the resulting effects have worsened people’s financial and general wellbeing (Molina-Betancure, et al., 2020).

Inevitably, informal workers came up with mechanisms to cope with this crisis and devised new livelihood strategies to keep making day’s end and avert negative externalities in the best way possible. Following this line, one recurring livelihood strategy has been to leave the city behind, traveling back to the village of origin (Kumar, et al., 2020), meaning that the novel virus and everything it entails, has had an impact on the mobility of informal workers (Rajan, Sivakumar, & Srinivasan, 2020; Awasthi & Mehta, 2020). The aim of this research is to further analyze how exactly informal workers were affected by the global pandemic and its implications, how the informal workforce dealt with this multifaceted crisis, that seems to have triggered (amongst other things) a return migration, and examine to what extent and how, this crisis is influencing the dynamics of informal sector employment and the behavior of the people involved.

The east African country Uganda accounts for one of the least developed economies in the world (Ikoja-Odongo & Ocholla, 2005), heavily relying on the informal sector, which due to increasing rural-urban migration, retrenchments within public service, an increasing number of

school dropouts, lay off in formal enterprises and the increasing participation of women and children, has been growing since 1995 (Katabira, 1995). Nowadays, Uganda's informal sector accounts for estimably 80% of the workforce (Young, 2019). In addition, the Ugandan government implemented one of the strictest lockdowns (March-May 2020) within the African continent. These actions included the complete shutdown of almost all productive activities, heavy restrictions on mobility and the establishment of a curfew, which persists up till the date of writing. This crisis, and the resulting changing economic environment, prevented the majority of Ugandan informal workers from making an income and securing their livelihoods. Consequently, considering that the governmental structures -for the most part- were not able to provide any social benefits, many livelihoods within this demographic were substantially endangered.

Therefore, this research focuses on urban informal livelihoods in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, to further analyze how exactly the Covid-19 crisis affected informal workers in their possibility to keep working and secure their livelihood. Moreover, we evaluate the livelihood strategies employed by said demographic in response to this crisis, taking a closer look at the return migrations. Covid-19 is taken as an entrance point, though in essence is nothing more than the cause of a crisis; a health crisis of course, but additionally one that severely endangered the socio economic wellbeing of the people -in the case of this research- Ugandan informal workers.

1.2 Thesis outline

This study is organized as follows: to begin with, we give an overview on relevant theory and concepts to this research. We discuss the informal sector by defining it and taking a closer look at how it behaves during a crisis. Furthermore, we outline the sustainable livelihood approach applied to an urban context, mainly focusing on the concept of vulnerability, the notion of context and the further understanding of livelihood strategies. We also give a brief overview on relevant literature regarding the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on the informal sector and its workforce. The theoretical chapter is followed by the conceptual framework. In chapter 3, we explain the methodology. We organized this section in two parts: first, we describe the research design and process, followed by clarification on methods and techniques applied within this research. In our regional framework, we give a general overview on Uganda and the Ugandan

economy, as well as briefly discuss some general characteristics of the informal sector of Kampala. We also provide a detailed overview on the Covid-19 context, outlining measures and the response to this crisis, taken from January 2020 to May 2021. We briefly give an overview on administrative policies and practices, related to Covid-19. This part is followed by the research questions and objectives. Our empirical chapters start with a detailed overview on how the crisis affected the different sectors within the informal economy and the effect of this crisis on informal workers livelihood security. Secondly, we outline the livelihood strategies that were employed in response to this shock, distinguishing between short-term and long-term strategies. Lastly, we take a closer look at return migration as a livelihood strategy. Chapter eight attempts to give an answer to the main research question, while discussing the most relevant results and showing how they fit within existing knowledge. Lastly, in chapter nine we present the main conclusions in a summarized manner.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter, we will give an overview on theory and concepts relevant to this study. To begin with, we will give an overview on the informal sector. Secondly, we will give a brief overview on the sustainable livelihood approach, focusing on the concept of vulnerability, the notion of context and livelihood strategies. In a third part, we will assess relevant literature, which concerns itself with the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on the informal sector and workforce.

2.1 The informal sector

In the last few decades, cities in the developing world have recorded a significant increase in population, on the one side, due to a chaotic urbanization and the “push and pull” factors between rural and urban areas (Harris & Todaro, 1970), and on the other side due to the natural growth of the population. This process of urbanization and population in many third world countries -despite contrary predictions (Frankenhoff, 1967; Turner, 1969; World Bank, 2009)- has not resulted in industrialization (Davis, 2006; Chen, Roever, & Skinner, 2016). This has led, therefore, to the fact “that the majority of urban workers in low-income countries earn their livelihoods in the informal economy” (Chen, Roever, & Skinner, 2016, p. 332), as formal economies are not able to absorb the increasing number of workers. The informal economy (Hart, 1973; Moser, 1978; De Soto, 1989; Castells & Portes, 1989) nowadays, employs more than half of the labor force worldwide and an increasing number of workers are pursuing their livelihood in conditions of informality (ILO, 2021).

2.1.1 The informal sector, in search of a definition

The informal economy is referred to by Keith Hart (1973) as the “world of economic activities outside the organized labor force”. In his paper about low-income activities in Accra, Ghana, he coined the term “informal sector”. Ever since, the term has been treated controversially in academic debates (Hart, 1973; Harris & Torrado, 1970; Castells & Portes, 1989; Moser, 1978; De Soto, 1989). Despite, or even perhaps the growing interest surrounding the concept and the understanding of the informal sector, the term itself has been subject to confusion, regarding its definition and exact meaning in academic debates. We have identified three criteria, which

we consider to be of importance for its definition; the status of labor (Gerxhani, 1999; ILO, The Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statistician, 1993; Harding & Jenkins, 1989; Renooy, 1990), the size of the activity (Cunningham & Maloney, 2001; Fields, 1975; Funkhouser, 1996; Maloney, 2004) and the professional status (Henley, Arabsheibani, & Carneiro, 2006; Hart, 1973) . Hence, we can affirm that the informal sector is mainly made up of small-scale operations and activities are uncovered, undeclared, and unprotected by any legislation. It is characterized by minimum wages and poor working conditions, commonly defined by the status of the individual, such as self-employed workers or own-account workers, “in conjunction with the characteristics of the employer” (Henley, Arabsheibani, & Carneiro, 2006, p. 6).

2.1.2 The informal sector in the face of crisis

A crisis refers to a situation, which is unexpected, unwanted, unprecedented, difficult to handle or manage, and cause of general mistrust and uncertainty (Boin, 2005). More concretely, a crisis is defined as “a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a social system, which -under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances- necessitates making critical decisions” (Rosenthal, Charles, & Hart, 1989, p. 10). A crisis can originate from economic or political issues, as well as a disaster (Shaluf, Ahmadun, & Said, 2003). These can cause severe effects and often result in tremendous economic damage and significant disruptions. Against this background, the pandemic is to be understood as a crisis.

There is a consensus that in times of crisis the informal sector acts as buffer, that financial shocks cause an important rearrangement of inputs and economic activity from the formal economy to the informal one and that informal activity increases in response to crisis (Colombo et al., 2019; Colombo et al., 2016; Blanton, et al., 2015; Skoufias, 2003). However, what can be expected are a loss in capital, an increase in unemployment (often persistent in time), and depressed wages. Furthermore, during a crisis the government will collect less revenue, inhibiting social spending and other public goods (Serieux, Munthali, Sepehri, & White, 2012; Ha & Kang, 2015). How the informal sector, as an individual unit, behaves in times of crisis, however, has received less attention in academic debates. Nonetheless, we think it is important to highlight the flexibility that seems to characterize the informal sector, in general, but also in times of crisis. Here we consider the easy entry and social networks to be of essence, as well

as the “autonomy [...] and freedom” (Gerxhani, 1999, p. 6), when it comes to modes of operating, as well as hours and days of working. Furthermore to emphasize in this context, is the variable of survival, pointing to the fact that the existence of informal activities is strongly related to the need of people to survive and gain their daily bread (Renooy, 1990; Gerxhani, 1999).

Many informal workers are amongst the most vulnerable in terms of livelihood security and in order to better understand their situation, necessities and motivations in regard to “gaining a living” (Chambers & Conway, 1992) and in response to crisis, we will take a closer look at the sustainable livelihood approach, which will help to gain an improved “understanding of the livelihoods of the poor” (Serrat, 2017).

2.2 Urban livelihoods and livelihood security

Most of the development of the sustainable livelihoods approach has been directed towards rural livelihoods. Nonetheless, there have been some attempts to apply the livelihood framework to an urban context. A core concept of this approach is sustainability. Though -as this research entails an urban perspective, following the lines of Rakodi (2002)- we will refer to secure livelihoods, rather than sustainable ones (see Annex A, for further argumentation). This approach is applicable to individuals, households, or even entire communities. For the purpose of this research, we will consider livelihoods on a household level¹. A household -a group of people that live and eat together, benefiting from a joint economy (Rakodi, 1995)- has access to a portfolio of assets. These assets are commonly categorized in human capital (labor resources available to household of quantitative and qualitative dimension), social or political capital (social resources, such as networks, community relationships, access to institutions of society), physical capital (basic infrastructure, such as shelter, energy, water), financial capital, which in the highly monetized urban economy is essential to households, and lastly natural capital (land, environmental resources), which in an urban context is “less significant” (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002, p. 11).

¹ See (Wallace, 2002) for the advantages for households as a unit for analysis in regard to household strategies.

2.2.1 The concept of vulnerability

A livelihood is secure² when “it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and provide for future generations” (p.10) When talking about stresses and shocks an important concept is vulnerability, the opposite to security (not to be mistaken with poverty) which refers to the exposure and defenselessness to, and difficulties to cope with, risks and disruptions (Chambers, 1989). Moser (1996) defined vulnerability as “the insecurity of the well-being of individual, households or communities in the face of a changing environment” (p. 2). Stresses are forces usually arising in a continuous, cumulative and predictable manner, while shocks have an abrupt and unexpected character and include wars, civil violence, as well as epidemics and the collapse of the market (Chambers & Conway, Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century, 1991; Frankenberger & McCaston, 1998; Chambers, 1989) As Covid-19 is calcified as a global pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020), as well as has had compromising effects on the economy, this crisis -within the context of this approach- is to be understood as a “shock” to people’s livelihoods. Furthermore, vulnerability -understood in the face of changing *economic* environments- might be incremented by (though not limited to) decreasing employment opportunities, as the labor demand might decrease, income insecurity, reduced access to social services, worsening housing conditions, and an increase in crime and other social conditions (Frayne, 2004; Skoufias, 2003). Lastly to outline, is that the notion of vulnerability implies to have two sides; the external side of risks, shocks and stress a household is impacted by and an internal side; the ability or inability to cope with these, without unsettling their livelihood, or put differently the resilience of a livelihood to protect itself and its assets during crisis and hardship (Moser, 1996; Frayne, 2004).

2.2.2 The notion of context

The context (economic, social, and political), together with inherent policies, institutions, and processes, will “determine the vulnerability of households” (Meikle, 2002, p. 38). On the one hand the context will have an influence on stresses, but also on the ability of households to cope and respond to such impacts. The urban context is more complex -and in economic terms- an important aspect to highlight, is the fact that the economy in cities relies on cash transfers;

² This definition by Chambers and Conway (1992), who in their paper made reference to rural livelihoods, originally uses the concept of *socially sustainable* livelihoods. For the purpose of this research, we will use the concept of secure (see Annex A for further argument)

this means that essential goods such as water, food and accommodation, but also other aspects of life, such as public transport, healthcare and education have a cost and have to be purchased (Wratten, 1995; Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2002). This means that urban poor require higher cash incomes to survive in cities (Meikle, 2002). However, the economy in urban areas, and the perceived opportunities within, attract many people -migrants from rural areas- in search for employment and better livelihoods. Most of these end up gaining their living through various activities, which mainly take place in the informal sector (Meikle, 2002). Regarding the social context, we first must outline that especially during periods of crisis, social capital is a crucial resource for a household's wellbeing, and that the existence of social networks might make a household feel less vulnerable (Moser, 1996; Douglass, 1998). Nonetheless, in the urban environment, the debate is twofold; some believe the urban poor to suffer from little social integration and little solidarity between individuals (Moser, 1998), while others believe a strong household and community networks to be a common asset for poor livelihoods in and urban environment (Douglass, 1998; Dersham & Gzirishvili, 1998). Another aspect to emphasize here is the existence of possible links between the urban and rural which, as outlined by Tacoli (1998), especially in times of crisis and shocks people rely on each other for support. These "often neglected sectoral and spatial linkages and interdependencies between urban centers and countryside are often critical both for local economic development and for the livelihood strategies of the poor" (Satterthwaite & Tacoli, 2002, p. 52).

2.2.3 Understanding strategies

A livelihood is constructed on the basis of assets available to a household and within the socio-economic and physical context surrounding and affecting them. The strategies to mobilize resources and seek opportunities, adopted by households, produce outcomes, defined by greater or less well-being (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002).

A household will make decisions on how, and to what end, their portfolio of assets is used. Hence, the household strategy adopted will depend on the assets held, the context, as well as the households' objectives and means to seek opportunities. This serves to "achieve a livelihood outcomes" (Serrat, 2017, p. 24), and generally entails making use of resources and composing a livelihood strategy, which for the most part consist of a mix of labor market involvement, savings, borrowing and investment, productive and reproductive activities,

income, labor and asset pooling, and social networking (Rakodi, 1995). Which one of these resources is employed, will depend on the households' characteristics, context, and past experiences. Strategies, as dependent on objectives set, can either be employed to improve the general well being or to respond to deteriorating economic circumstances, or as put differently by Chambers and Conway (1991), cope and recover from stresses and shocks, "by stinting, hoarding, protecting, depleting or diversifying the portfolio of assets" (Rakodi, 1995, p. 414). In this line, Beall (2002) distinguishes between betterment and survival, similar to Rakodi (1999), who refers to survival strategies as those, employed by households in very severe conditions of poverty, employed out of pure necessity and desperation. In a similar line Meikle, et al. (2001) make reference to long-term and short-term strategies, outlining that short-term ones are adopted out of necessity and long-term strategies are employed with the aim to invest and build up assets.

While referred to with different terminology, we can make out three relevant categories of strategies, that are employed to front decreasing economic circumstances; A) strategies, which serve to increase assets and income, B) actions that minimize expenditure, C) strategies that draw on social capital available to the household. Furthermore, strategies can be associated to the migration and change of location of households (Rakodi, 1995, 1996, 1999; Moser, 1996; Frayne, 2004; Beall, 2002; Chambers, 1997; Meikle et al., 2001). Lastly, we want to point to the debate surrounding the term "strategy". As pointed out by Crow (1989), who questioned whether the notion of strategy, which implies rational and active decisions, is justified. A relevant question here is whether the actions are consciously planned or not (Wallace, 2002).

2.3 Covid-19 and the informal sector and workforce

We have seen that Covid-19 and everything it entails is a crisis, that -against this background- is to be understood as a shock to people's livelihoods.

Initially, literature was directed towards the ineffectiveness of containment measures for poor urban livelihoods (Patel, 2020; Corburn, et al., 2020; Islam, 2020; Pereira & Gratao, 2020; Haddout, Priya, Hogueane, & Ljubenkov, 2020). However, the concerns in academic debates moved quickly to the general impact on the economy of developing countries (Morsy, Balma, & Mukasa, 2021; Rasul, et al., 2021; Ataguba, 2020), focusing on the sectoral effects of the

informal economy (Ranjan Aneja, 2020), the effects on poverty (Nonvide, 2020), the perception of covid measures by street vendors (Romero-Michel, et al., 2021), and the importance of adequate programs and policies for the recovery of informal workers (Ahmad, 2021). While the literature on this topic is growing somewhat quickly, addressing the impact on specific countries, the efforts stay rather general.

According to the ILO Brief on the Covid-19 crisis and the informal economy, which addresses the consequences of this crisis for the informal economy, informal workers are simply not able to rely on savings and income replacements to provide for their families, while staying home and not being able to work. Individuals and businesses of informal character, therefore, are very vulnerable to this specific economic shock, and the downscaling of economic activities, in response to Covid-19 containment measures will most likely have negative effects for capital and employment rates. This could trigger an increase of child labor and negatively affect school enrolment rates. Moreover, different sectors within the economy might be unequally affected, which could lead to a restructuring of the sectors and activities (ILO, 2020).

Yet another stream of scholars, mainly focusing on informal workers in India, connect the Covid-19 shock to mobility, and outline the phenomenon of return migrations, where urban informal workers facing impossible situations of livelihood endangerment have migrated from the cities back to their rural origins, in response to this crisis. Against this background, this type of mobility can be understood as a livelihood strategy, and as the way in which affected workers intended to cope with this crisis, as for many leaving the city was the only means of surviving. Recurring topics in their research are government responses to this new crisis of mobility (Nanda, 2020; Priyadarshini & Chaudhury, 2020; Srivastava R. , 2020; Mukhra, Krishan, & Kanchan, 2020; Awasthi & Mehta, 2020), social security policies (Srivastava S. , 2020; Basu & Basu, 2020) and the mental health of affected return migrants (Choudhari, 2020; Rajan, Sivakumar, & Srinivasan, 2020; Mukhra, Krishan, & Kanchan, 2020). Some believe these return migrants to be highly responsible for the spread of the disease throughout the entire country (Mukhra, et al., 2020; Nanda, 2020; Remesh, et al., 2020) and report on “aggressive and apprehensive” behaviors from the community upon arrival (Priyadarshini & Chaudhury, 2020, p. 71). An important contribution was made by Awasthi and Mehta (2020), outlining return migrants’ general characteristics (sex, age, gender, education, social groups, mode of transport), as well as main motivations to migrate, where “reported job loss [...], fear of the Covid-19 pandemic and pressure from family members to return home” (p.11), were amongst

the most prominent reasons. Regardless of acute distress and aversion to the city, many migrant workers may still return after spending some time in the rural environment. Indeed, according to a study that surveyed 4.835 households in India, nearly two-thirds of the return migrants, have already come back to the cities -have re-migrated- or wish to do so (Pandit, 2020). The return of migrant workers to the city will, on the one hand, reduce the time of the economic recovery of the city, but also demand for employers and policy makers to implement strategies for decent work and living conditions (Srivastava R. , 2020). Overall, as noted by Sharma (2020), this mobility is affecting both origin and destination, cities and rural areas.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

As shown, Covid-19 has an enormous effect on informal livelihoods and especially on the group of people active in the informal sector. Furthermore, we have outlined that Uganda, a country where informality dominates the economy, implemented a very strict lockdown. This led us to believe that the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on the informal workforce in Uganda are far-reaching.

In this study, we assess how exactly the Covid-19 crisis affected Ugandan informal workers in their possibility to keep working and gain an income. Further on, we analyze how these workers reacted to this crisis, meaning what livelihood strategies were employed to front this crisis.

This research was conducted roughly one year after Covid-19 and its implications hit with full force, which means that the changes deriving from this situation are ongoing. This makes three dimensions particularly relevant, which were taken into account: first, the informal sector and its structures in a pre-Covid-19 state; second, a state which can be described as peak Covid-19 (strict lockdown); and third, once the situation somewhat eased and the economy begun to reopen (changing economic environment). This gave way to observe how the informal sector and the workers involved were impacted by the crisis, reacted to it and to what extent impact and reaction influenced the informal sector and the behavior of the people involved.

A main research question was formulated and will be addressed throughout this paper:

What are the effects of the Covid-19 crisis on the informal workforce of Kampala in terms of livelihood security, which were the livelihood strategies employed by informal workers to front this crisis, and are they being effective and innovative?

To answer this question, four questions subordinate to the main research question have been devised:

- I. What are the main activities in the informal sector of Kampala (“pre-Covid-19 context”) and how exactly has Covid-19 and the measures that followed affected these activities and the informal workers' possibilities to work (“Covid-19 peak”) and secure their livelihood?

- II. How have informal workers in Kampala dealt with the effects of the Covid-19 crisis?

Hypothesis: Informal workers who have stayed in Kampala throughout the crisis have devised livelihood strategies to survive and adapt to a new reality.

II. a What are these strategies exactly and are they being innovative and effective in their nature?

Hypothesis: Informal workers who struggled to make day’s end in the face of the Covid-19 crisis have decided to migrate back to their villages of origin.

II. b How does the return migration, brought forward by Covid-19, manifest in Kampala, and what are the impacts of this strategy on informal workers and their employment?

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

This research has been conducted remotely between January and August 2021. In the following chapter, we will outline the methodology. We will first give an overview on the research design and process, outlining different phases of this research. Secondly, we will explain the different methods and techniques that were employed for the data collection of this study. Lastly, we will briefly state the main limitations to this research.

4.1 Research design and process

Research in development studies has been characterized by a multitude of approaches and epistemologies, reflected by different development agendas along the last 150 years (Desai & Potter, 2006). These approaches were accompanied by different means as of how to collect data and evidence. This research aims to understand how a crisis impacted a group of people, more specifically how Covid-19 and the measures that followed, affected the informal workforce in Kampala. This entails the understanding of a complex reality and socio-economic phenomenon. Denzin and Lincoln (2018) note that making “sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 43), can be done through qualitative research. We aim to interpret a crisis shaped environment and the meanings informal workers bring to this situation. Furthermore, a qualitative approach is best suited for describing multiple realities, developing deep understanding, and capturing everyday life and human perspectives” (Trumbull, 2005, p. 101). Therefore, this research entails a qualitative approach and fits within the more humanistic approaches to development studies (Desai & Potter, 2006).

Although this research was seen through remotely, we can still make out four phases, which will be explained with some more detail in the following lines: access to the field, gripping the context, approximation to the subject of study, and analysis and writing.

4.1.1 Phase 1: Access to the field

Above all, it is of essence to explain why Kampala was selected for this research. The local context was selected after a series of conversations with a Ugandan informant, a NGO representative. This contact was first, rather coincidentally, established in December 2020,

through the staff of the International Development Master's Program at the Utrecht University. In the following conversations of informal character, and through the recurring emergence of the topics Covid-19, crisis and informality, the respondent reported on the importance to further assess the impact of this crisis on Ugandan informal workers, as the impact seemed to be far-reaching and such as study had not been done yet. He highlighted the strictness and length of the lockdown and reported on a variety of actions informal workers took in response that were worth researching, one of them being the migration from the city of Kampala back to the rural environment. As we had already read substantial literature on return migrations in relation to Covid-19, mostly reported on in India, the decision was made to undertake this research in Uganda, in order to assess how exactly informal workers were impacted by this shock on a household level, what strategies were devised to front this crisis, as well as take a closer look at the return migration that occurred, together with their effect on informal sector activity.

4.1.2 Phase 2: Context

The field work started with the motivation to obtain detailed knowledge on how the Covid-19 crisis manifested in Uganda. It was considered of utmost importance to grasp the Covid-19 context (see 4.2 Covid-19 context Uganda) focusing on the last 1.5 years, before continuing with any further research activities. Therefore, it was decided to reconstruct a timeline, summarizing all the relevant occurrences in regard to Covid-19 (see Annex B). The work entailed the understanding of concrete restrictions placed upon Ugandans in reaction to Covid-19, the response to mitigate the negative effects of this crisis and the political discourse surrounding the debate of Covid-19. In order to understand the Covid-19 context, we used secondary and primary data: while some of this information could be found online on local news sites and official government reports, face-to-face conversations (virtually) with people familiar to this context were of essence. After reaching out to different organizations (NGO, Religious entities, etc.), businesses and official entities. We were able to conduct 14 online conversations with different local contacts, through either Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which shed light on the situation regarding the pandemic in Uganda. From these 14 conversations, four can be considered key informants, due to their extended knowledge on the situation in relation to Covid-19, but most importantly, due to their knowledge on livelihood strategies and return migrations. Moreover, two conversations can be considered expert interviews, due their knowledge on relevant policies and administrative processes. The rest of the conversations can

be categorized as contextual informants. These conversations were prepared and seen through together with our research partner. All of these conversations were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. These conversations served as the basis to develop the empirical chapters of this research.

4.1.3 Phase 3: The approximation to the subject of study

After gaining a detailed understanding of how the crisis manifested in the East African country, we aimed at establishing contact with the demographic we wished to study: informal workers. We found a field note, which summarized the process and some of the concerns at that point:

Week of 22-27 of March – Field note

After being –quite frankly- a bit desperate for a week about how to reach respondents in Uganda and feeling quite far away far away from everything. We (Carmen & I) send out a second, follow up email to each of the organizations and institutions contacted originally. I am so relieved many people responded and are now willing to talk to us. Suddenly our calendar is full.... and we have to reschedule and adjust... Our goal and aim in these conversations is to be direct and ask to be put in contact with people that can tell us about their experiences; participants. On the other hand, we also want to build a good relationship with these people because we are totally depending on them for local insights and access to participants.

As can be appreciated in the field note, an important part of this initial fieldwork became the inquiry for introductions to participants. Contacts within local NGOs we had already established, were especially valuable in this regard. During this period the joint efforts with our research partner were particularly useful and facilitated the process. Eventually, five of our contacts agreed to assist with the interviews necessary for our research (see table 1). In order to facilitate the process, we designed a document, outlining the different profiles of people (see Annex C) and we adjusted the document in the manner we advanced with the interviews. The interviews were conducted between April and May 2021 (see table 1)

	Research activity	Timeframe
Contact A (Church)	2 Interviews over WhatsApp call	April 15 th - April 19 th
Contact B (NGO)	1 Interview over Zoom	April 18 th
Contact B (NGO)	8 Interviews over WhatsApp call & Zoom	April 19 th – May 3 rd
Contact D (NGO)	1 Interview (2 participants; husband and wife)	May 3 rd
Contact C (NGO)	9 Interviews over Zoom	April 24 th – May 15 th
Contact D (NGO)	8 Interviews over Zoom	May 21 st – May 22 nd
Contact E (Makerere University)	1 Focus group discussion	April 15 th

Table 1 Local contact & Timeline for In-depth Interviews. Source: own elaboration

4.1.4 Phase 4: Analysis and writing

This phase started with the transcription and anonymization of all interviews and conversations. Afterwards the documents were read carefully several times over, to obtain a general sense for the data. The *Nvivo* program was used for the coding process, facilitating the understanding of patterns and relationships within the data. We started using deductive codes, based on our main research questions, and added new inductive codes, when necessary. With this we aimed to give our research a basic structure, while always leaving room for new topics to emerge. We organized the data according to employment activity, distinguishing between pre-covid, peak-covid and post-covid state, in this way being able to compare the general and employment situations of informal workers throughout these phases. Within livelihood strategies the codes were adapted according to the literature we had previously read and divided into livelihood strategies in situ (short-term & long-term) and return migration. The data beneath these overarching codes was divided into smaller groups of information and assigned new codes.

While the coding process formed the basis for the empirical chapters (6-8), we still intended to stay close to the whole “story” of the participants. Taking into account that this research is quite centered around the narrative of informal workers in the face of this crisis, we attempted to give our participants their own voice (to a certain extent), considering their stories as a whole throughout the analysis and writing process.

4.2 Methods and techniques

In the following part we will outline the methods and techniques, which were used to obtain data and information for this research.

4.2.1 Review of Literature

The review of relevant and topic-related literature within the initial phases of this research served to determine the conceptual framework of this study. We took a closer look at the debates surrounding the informal sector and the sustainable livelihood approach, applied to an urban context. Furthermore, we assessed relevant literature regarding the Covid-19 crisis and informality. As Covid-19 is a novel and ongoing phenomenon, and hence relevant literature on this topic is constantly produced, we updated this section on various occasions throughout our research. A wide range of sources was consulted for this: academic articles (peer reviewed), books, online publications (e.g., newspapers) and reports (governmental, NGOs).

We also operationalized the most relevant concepts of this research:

Concept	Definition	Measured by
<u>Informal worker</u>	Worker engaged in small-scale operations and activities, uncovered, undeclared, and unprotected by any legislation	Status of the individual, such as self-employed workers or own-account workers
<u>Livelihood security</u>	Adequate and sustainable access to income and resources to meet basic needs (Frankenberger, 1996)	Access to food, water, health facilities, educational opportunities, housing & community participation
<u>Livelihood strategy</u>	Actions, which aim to respond to deteriorating economic conditions, in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on existential needs and build up assets (Rakodi, 1995).	Mix of labor market involvement, savings, borrowing and investment, productive and reproductive activities, income, labor and asset pooling, and social networking
<u>Return Migration</u>	The movement of people from the city to a rural environment in response to deteriorating economic circumstances	Reasons to migrate and the effect of these movements on people and employment

Table 2 Operationalization. Source: own elaboration

4.2.2 Secondary Data collection and analysis

We used the Labor Force Survey, carried out by the UBOS, together with the World Bank in 2016/2017, to obtain a general overview on the informal sector of Kampala. We used this data to take a closer look at the different informal sector activities. As expected, we found a considerable diversity within the different income generating activities, performed by informal workers in Kampala. Therefore, we saw a need to distinguish and categorize the different activities within the informal sector, in order to reveal its composition and structure. Categorizing the informal economy according to its productive activities was no easy exercise, and simply relying on the conventional basic division of economic structures, through which different economic activities are traditionally categorized – the Three-sector model (Fisher, 1939; Clark, 1940; Fourastié, 1945), later expanded by adding the quaternary or quinary sector (Selstad, 1990; Kenessey, 1987) - seemed insufficient, due to the complexity of informal work activities. Therefore, we used an alternative approach to describe the heterogeneity of the informal sector, proposed by the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) for the “analysis and reporting on the informal-sector” (ISIC, 2008, p. 279). The ISIC is a classification system devised by the United Nations, which aims at classifying data related to different kinds of economic activities. While by no means is this an intent to define the informal sector, it gives way to alternative categories, which are typical and relevant within productive activities of informal type (table 3). We adapted the categories to the activities within the informal sector of Kampala and the knowledge on these helped select the profile of participants for this study (see 3.2.4 In-depth interviews), as well as structure some of the empirical chapters of this study.

Category	Title
I	Agriculture, forestry and fishing
II	Manufacturing
III	Wholesale and Retail Trade
IV	Repair of motor vehicles, computers and household goods
V	Accommodation and food service activities
VI	Service and support activities
VII	Education, health and social activities
VIII	Other activities

*Table 3 Alternative ISIC aggregation for analysis and reporting on informal-sector statistics.
Source: adapted from ISIC, 2008*

4.2.3 In-depth Interviews

Hennink, Hutter and Bailey (2019) refer to in-depth interviews as a useful instrument to gain insightful information of people’s experiences, personal stories, and feelings. The purpose of these interviews was to obtain descriptions of how the agents involved in the economy of Kampala perceive their “experienced world” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005), now affected by a shock and crisis, and then analyze and interpret what this situation meant for the informal worker. We conducted a total of 30 in-depth interviews (see table 4 for an overview) over online tools such as *Whatsapp*, *Zoom* and *Microsoft Teams*. These interviews were semi-structured and included 3 main blocks, addressing employment and livelihood security, Covid-19 and shock response and livelihood security and crisis. Interviews 30, 29, 27 and 25 were seen through together with our research partner.

Interview Nr.	Gender	Occupation	Sector
1	Female	Vegetable Seller	Wholesale & retail trade
2	Male	Tecnician	Repair of vehicles, computers and other household goods
3	Male	Boda Driver	Service & support activities
4	Male	Hotel Employee	Accommodation & food service activities
5	Female	Vegetable Seller	Wholesale & retail trade
6	Female	Waitress	Accommodation & food service activities
7	Female	Teacher	Service & support activities
8	Female	Cook	Accommodation & food service activities
9	Female	Vegetable Seller	Wholesale & retail trade
10	Male	Sandal Maker	Manufacturing
11	Female	Baker	Accommodation & food service activities
12	Female	Hairdresser	Service & support activities
13	Male	Welder	Manufacturing
14	Female	Farmer	Agricultural activities
15	Female	Restaurant Owner	Accommodation & food service activities
16	Female	Teacher	Education, health, and social activities
17	Female	Shop owner	Wholesale & retail trade
18	Male	Poultry Keeper/ Seller	Agricultural activities
19	Male	Shoe seller	Wholesale & retail trade
20	Female	Farmer	Agricultural activities
21	Male	Egg Seller	Wholesale & retail trade
22	Female	Tailor	Manufacturing
23	Female	Mobile Money Agent	Service & support activities
24	Male	Boda Driver	Service & support activities
25	Female	Kindergarten Cook	Accommodation & food service activities
26	Male	Mobile Money Shop Owner	Service & support activities
27	Female	Beverage Seller	Wholesale & retail trade
28	Fenale	Nursery Teacher	Education, health and social activities
29	Female	Vegetable Seller	Wholesale & retail trade
30	Male	Barber	Service & support activities

Table 4 In-depth interviews. Source: own elaboration.

Sampling method

Interviews require a careful evaluation of which sample to use. While in no case the aim is to obtain statistically significant results, it is of utmost importance to target a “diverse range of people who might have different opinions or perceptions based on their own experiences and context” (Willis, 2006, p. 147). Our aim was to obtain a representative sample of the informal workforce in Kampala. Therefore, we used the Labor Force Survey 2016/2017 and first considered the size of the different sectors:

- wholesale and retail activities (38%)
- service and support activities (23%)
- accommodation and food service activities (22%)
- manufacturing (10%)
- agriculture (3%)
- the repair of vehicles, computers and other household goods (3%)

Furthermore, we took a closer look at the most carried out activities within each of these sectors and chose our participants according to the size of the sector, considering the most popular activities. We also included (after having talked to informants in Kampala and obtained a better understanding of the context) employment activities, which did not have a significant representation in the Survey, but were believed to be relevant within the Covid-19 situation. Therefore, we also interviewed additional participants engaged in agricultural and educational activities. In this study 27% of the participants are within wholesale & retail trade activities, followed by service and support activities (23%), accommodation and food service activities (20%), manufacturing (10%), agricultural activities (10%), educational activities (7%) and lastly, activities related to the repair of vehicles computers and other household goods (3%). This, to the lesser or greater extent, coincides with the size of the different sectors within the informal economy in Kampala (Labor Force Survey 2016/2017)

4.2.4 Focus Group discussion

Within qualitative research focus group discussions (FGD) are a recurring method, especially useful for the understanding of community viewpoints and dynamics (Laws, Harper, & Marcus, 2003). This method is best used in addition to other qualitative research methods, as well as under circumstances where in-depth ethnographic work is difficult to see through (Lloyd-Evans, 2006). In the case of our research the FGD was used to complement in-depth interviews

and ethnographic field work was not possible, due to the restrictions regarding the Covid-19 situation and our inability to travel to Kampala.

We carried out a virtual focus group discussion. This discussion included 11 participants (6 women and 5 men), active in the informal work activity of transforming waste material into cooking energy, or as they refer to it “the bricades business”. This research activity was seen through together with our research partner. Additionally, a local contact was present and translated when needed. This discussion was conducted early on in the data collection phase (Phase 3, The approximation to the subject of study) and helped understand how Covid-19 had affected a group of informal workers, in their possibilities to keep working and secure their livelihood. This discussion helped guide the blocs and questions for the following interviews.

4.3 Risks & Limitations

One of the limitations to this research is related to the challenges brought to the surface by the global pandemic caused by the novel virus SARS-CoV-2. As we were not able to travel at the time the field work was conducted, the data collection could not be seen through physically and on site. While this does not mean that we were not able to collect valid and representative primary data (see previous points), we still believe it came with some limitations. Against this background, we consider the missing ethnographic field work to be most limiting. Why? Due to not being physically present, we were not able to employ ethnographic research methods such as participant observation. This could introduce bias, as during interviews for instance, dominant interests of informants might overshadow others, something that can be avoided and controlled through closely watching the participant and their situation and context, which is done through ethnographic methods (Donge, 2006). In this line, we were not able to contrast what we had been told with what we would have seen and perceived while being physically present. Moreover, this is particularly relevant when researching vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as informal workers as the poor tend to “further diminish their dignity, exacerbate their inequality, and deepen their lack of access to material goods and services” (Appadurai, 2004, p. 66). Although we contemplated this issue, alongside our positionality as researchers, throughout the data collection and analysis, we still believe that, as we were not able to contrast what we were told with our own impressions, generalizations based on the results of this research should be considered carefully.

Furthermore, limitations regarding the sample have to be addressed. Although the sampling was thought-out and seen through carefully (see previous points), the ultimate decision of which respondent to approach, was made by the local contacts, who helped facilitate the process of interviewing. This limited the overall control over the sample. In the same line, the connection between contact person and participant is to be considered carefully, knowing that the contact person either belonged to an NGO or a religious entity. The possibility exists that the relationship between contact person and participant, introduces bias. Therefore, generalizations -again- are to be evaluated carefully.

The last limitation we have made out within this research is topic related. Covid-19 is an ongoing phenomenon, whose effects have not yet reached its final state. This, for instance, is manifested by the fact that the second wave and a spike in infections was recorded, after the completion of the field work. While similarities between the events are not to be excluded, it is important to note that the results of this research are based on the effects of the first wave of Covid-19 that shook Uganda, together with the lockdown that was installed in response between March and May 2020.

4.4 Conceptual framework

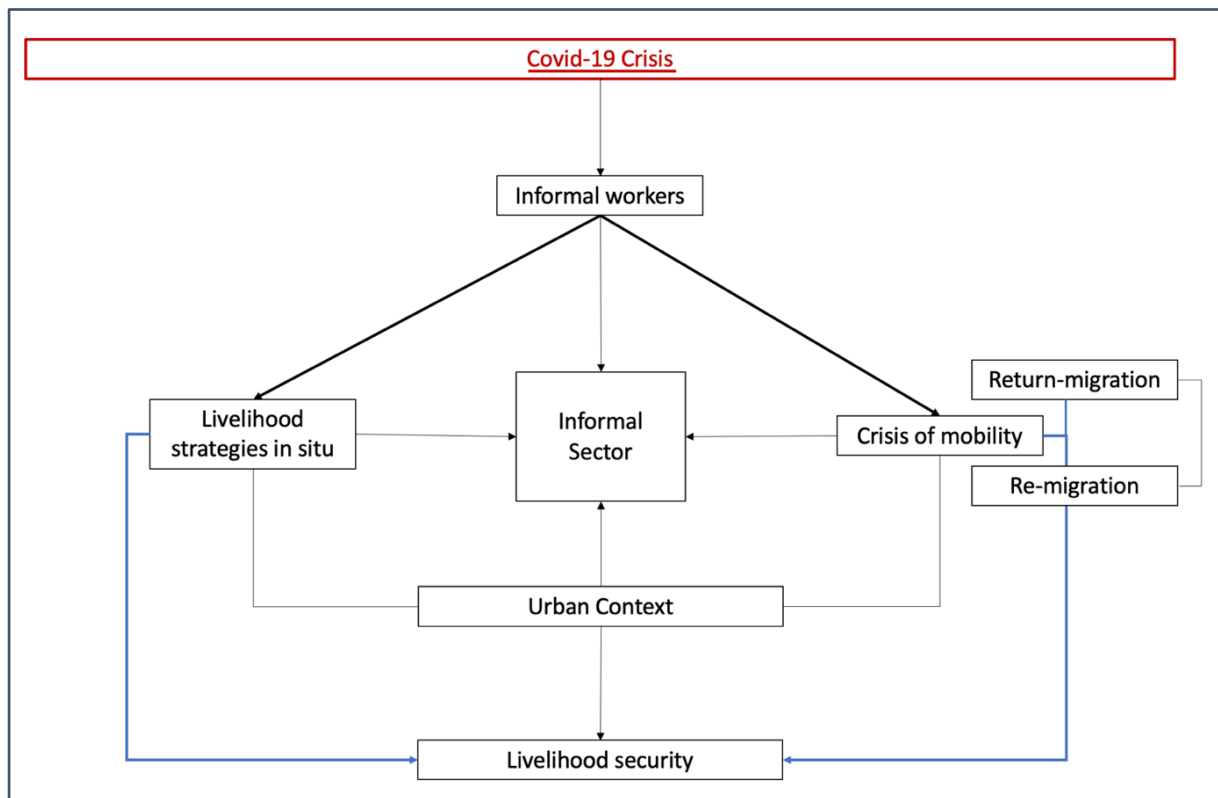


Figure 1 Conceptual framework. Source own elaboration

CHAPTER 5. REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter we will briefly outline some general characteristics about Uganda, followed by an introduction into Uganda's informal sector. Further on, we will give a detailed overview on how the Covid-19 crisis manifested in the African country. This will help create a context of the situation, as well as serve as basis for the understanding of the following empirical chapters of this research.

5.1 Uganda a general overview

The Republic of Uganda is a landlocked country in East-Central Africa, located between the eastern and western branches of the Great Rift Valley. Uganda shares borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo in the West, Sudan in the North, Kenya in the East and Tanzania and Rwanda in the South-West.

The country, often referred to as the “Pearl of Africa” was under British rule for 68 years and gained its independence in 1962. Nowadays Uganda has a population of approximately 43.3 million (UBOS, 2020). Due to high fertility rates (4.8) the population growth is amongst the highest in the world and in 2019 (last figure available) reached 3.6% (World Bank, 2019).



Figure 2 Map of Uganda. Source: CDC, 2021

Administratively, Uganda

is divided into four main regions: the Central, Eastern, Western and Northern region. Moreover, we can make out 111 districts, where each district is further divided into counties and sub-counties.

Uganda, thanks to its good climate and fertile soils, thus self-sufficient in food and agriculture, was one of the biggest export countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Sejjaaka, 2002). Nevertheless,

the economic development has been shadowed by more than 20 years of civil strife (mostly between 1966-1986), where civil wars and negligence have resulted in a stagnant economy of what was once a flourishing country. Since 1986 however, we can observe an increasing political stability and a relatively peaceful rule, under president Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Movement party (NRM). This has led to an increasingly stable economy (also due to the assistance of international finance institutions and foreign investments). Yet, the presidency of Museveni is subject to controversial debates, as he has held his position for over 35 years, allegedly “through distribution of patronage and prebends, intimidation and force” (Golooba-Mutebi, 2008, p. 137).

The capital city Kampala, at the shore of Lake Victoria is located in the Central Region of Uganda. The city is divided into Kampala Central Division, Kawempe Division, Makindye Division, Nakawa Division, and Rubaga Division. The total population of the city is 1,680,600 (UBOS, 2020), with the metropolitan population exceeding 3.5 million people (Richmond, Myers, & Namuli, 2018). Kampala, with an annual growth rate of 3.9 percent, is one of the fastest growing cities in Africa (World Bank, 2017). Historically, we can observe three moments relevant to the growth of the city: after Uganda gained independence in 1962, the city grew rapidly in response to the increase in urban employment opportunities. In the 1970s and early 1980s, due to the stirred political climate and declining economy, rural-urban migrations moderated and “in fact reverse migration was quite substantial” (Bigsten & Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 1992, p. 1425). In the latter half of the 1980s, and with growing stability and peace, the population began to increase once again and soon exceeded one million people in the city of Kampala.

5.1.1 The Ugandan economy

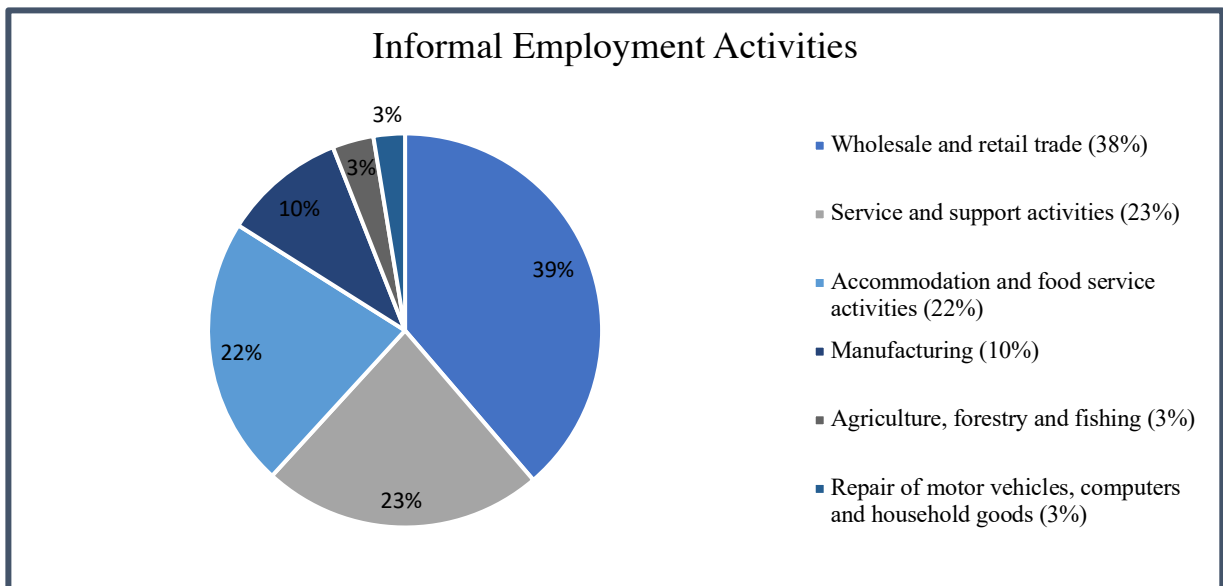
Since 1986 the economy in Uganda has undergone important structural changes. With agricultural activities declining and employment in industry and especially the service sector gaining importance, the number of non-farming enterprises has been growing since 1992 (The Republic of Uganda, 2009). Nonetheless, Uganda’s economy is one of the least developed economies in the world (Ikoja-Odongo & Ocholla, 2005) and heavily relies on the informal sector, which due to increasing rural-urban migration, retrenchments within public service, an increasing number of school dropouts, lay off in formal enterprises, and the increasing

participation of women and children, has been growing at an average annual growth rate of 25%, especially between 1995 and 1998 (Katabira, 1995). Due to the Covid-19 crisis, the Ugandan economy has slowed and reached its lowest numbers since 3 decades (World Bank, 2021).

According to Ikoja-Odongo and Ocholla (2005) the informal sector in Uganda is visible and operates out in the open, dynamically alongside the formal sector. Enterprises in Uganda can be categorized into Household Enterprises (HE), which consist of “self-employed (or own-account) workers and unpaid family members engaged in non-farm business activities” (The Republic of Uganda, 2009, p. 3). The HEs are at the low end of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and the majority of these people form part of the informal sector. MSMEs are defined by their number of employees and their annual turnover. As Micro-firms, businesses with five or less employees and an annual turnover of no more than UGX10 million are not required to pay any taxes, these types of firms can also be attributed to the informal sector.

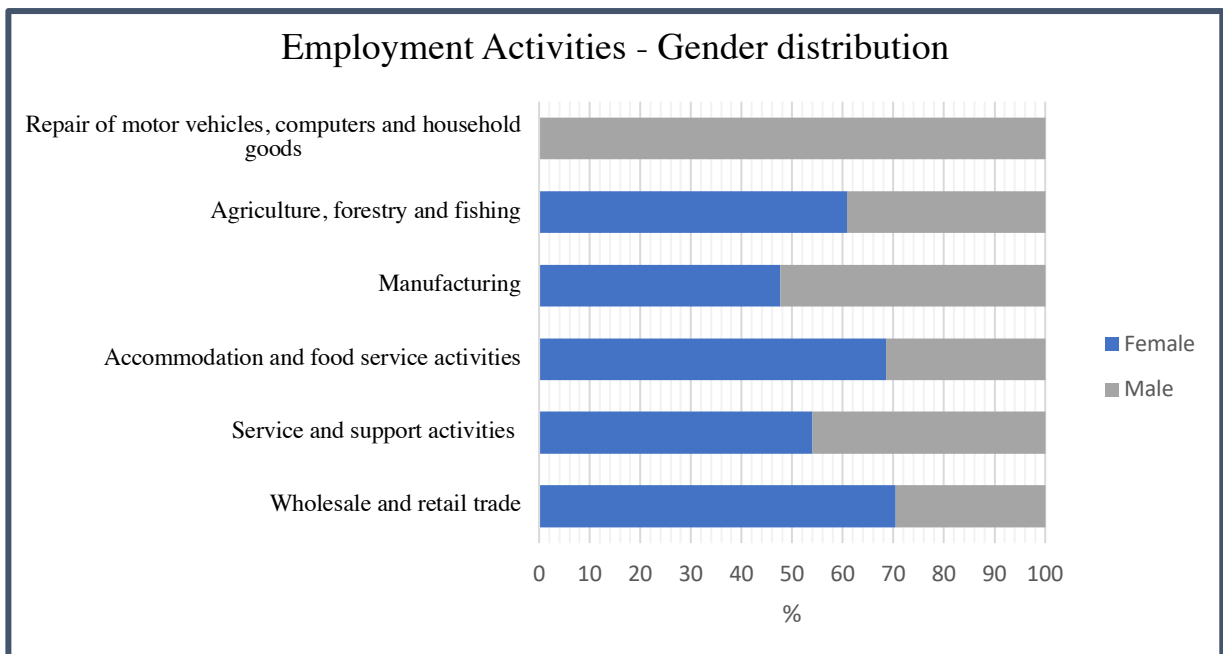
5.1.2 The informal sector of Kampala

The informal sector of Kampala accounts for a variety of different employment activities. According to the Labor Force Survey, carried out by the UBOS, together with the World Bank in 2016-2017 most of the informal workforce are employed in wholesale and retail activities (38%). Of these, though, only 11% are seen through in a shop, kiosk or market stall, meaning that most of the retail activities are carried out on the side of the street or from home. Furthermore, to outline are service and support activities (23%), accommodation, and food service activities (22%), of which 16% can be attributed to restaurant activities or mobile food services, followed by manufacturing (10%), agriculture (3%), and activities related to the repair of vehicles, computers, and other household goods (3%) (see figure 3). The majority of workers engaged in informal sector activities operate in Household enterprises. Most of the informal workers in Kampala are between the age of 25 and 35 years old. Moreover, according to the survey, people in informal jobs work most days of the week: 30% work six days per week and 65% work seven days per week with an average of 13,2 hours per day.



*Figure 3 Informal employment Activities, Kampala.
Source: Labor Force Survey Uganda 2016/17. Own elaboration*

When looking at the gender distribution within these activities (see figure 4) it becomes apparent that the informal sector accounts for more women than men. In total 62% of the people involved in informal employment activities are women. The largest share of women can be attributed to wholesale and retail activities (70%) for instance.



*Figure 4 Informal employment activities & gender, Kampala.
Source: Labor Force Survey Uganda 2016/17. Own elaboration*

According to Ikoja-Odongo (2002) -analyzing the role of women in the informal sector in Uganda- the reason for women to engage in informal activities are a) the low capital intensity and easy entry and exit, which especially accounts for retail activities and food service activities, and b) the flexible working hours, making it easy for them to engage in home responsibilities, and in this way, comply with their duties within their roles as wife and mother. This becomes even clearer when looking at the marital status (see table 5) and the average household size within people employed in the informal sector, as the majority of the informal workers in Kampala are married (61,3%) and account for a household size between 2-5 members (62%): A fact also confirmed by most of the participants of this study, where only one informal worker was unmarried and most have two or more children.

Marital Status	%
Divorced	0,5
Married	61,3
Separated	10,3
Single	23,5
Widowed	4,3

Table 5 Informal Sector Marital Status, Kampala. Source: Labor Force Survey Uganda 2016/17. Own elaboration

5.2 Covid-19 context in Uganda³

Uganda has known the outbreak of several epidemics, such as-meningitis, Ebola, and Hepatitis E. The constitution of Uganda designated the state as the primary entity in charge of dealing with any hazard or disaster, disrupting the normal life of the Ugandan people. According to the National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management (NPDPM), a pandemic qualifies as such a disaster. The NPDPM holds all procedures important for emergency response, setting “overall policy goals and objectives for disaster risk management” (RoU, 2011), on both the central and local government level (Muhwezi et al., 2020). In case of an epidemic or pandemic, the policy designates the Ministry of Health as the lead organization to coordinate the response (Mubangizi, 2021).

5.2.1 Restrictions

The WHO declared the outbreak of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on January 30th, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020).

³ This part of the research has been cowritten with my research partner (see de Vreede, 2021). It has been rephrased since the indicial version, but parts might still coincide

While restrictions in Uganda were already put in place mid-February, as neighboring countries such as Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania reported a significant number of cases, the first official case in Uganda was only confirmed on the 21st of March 2020. These initial measures included the suspension of mass gatherings, quarantine restriction on arrival to the country, and the closing of educational facilities.

On the 25th of March all public transport⁴ was suspended, and restrictions were placed on movement with private vehicles. This meant that private cars were not allowed to carry more than 3 people per vehicle at one time, including the driver, and motorcycles were not allowed to carry any additional passengers. Within this period many people began to mobilize. Movements took place, from urban to rural areas, and private cars were turned into taxis to transport people out of town. On the 26th of March, the activity of all nonessential businesses was suspended. On March 30th, the president, Yoweri Museveni, implemented a nationwide “shutdown on everything”. All movement was prohibited, and a curfew was installed from 7:00 pm to 6:30 am. For the most part, movements in this period were limited to walking or cycling, and normally constrained within the immediate surroundings. Only people with valid reasons for travelling (e.g., medical reasons), were allowed to use transport with written permission. Furthermore, in May, face masks were made mandatory in public spaces. This period between March and May 2020 we will refer to in the following chapter as “strict lockdown”, which is followed by the changing economic environment, or new economy reality, which resulted out of this crisis (see figure 5).

⁴ Public transport in Uganda consists of *Boda Bodas*, motorcycle taxis, the quickest way to get around metropolitan areas. *Specials* or *Special hires*, taxis or private modes of transport, such as *Uber* for instance. Taxis in Uganda are *matatus*, minibuses, which carry at least 12 people at a time and are known to be the cheapest option of transport. *Matatus* are also a means of transport for interregional traveling, though known to have a particularly poor safety record. Uganda also accounts for regular busses and coaches

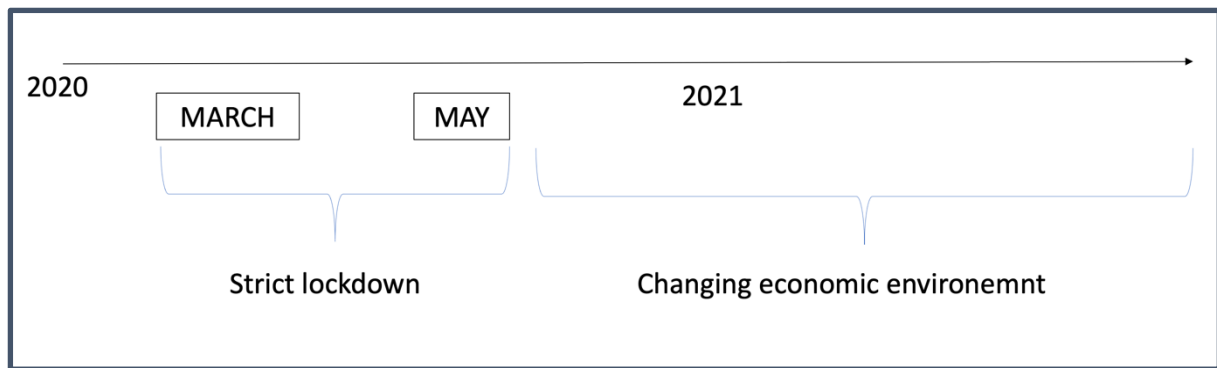


Figure 5 Covid-19 crisis: Lockdown & Changing economic environment. Source: own elaboration

At the end of May, restrictions were somewhat eased, and formal businesses such as garages, wholesale stores, carpentry workshops, and general merchandise resumed their activity, as well as public transport, though only at 50% capacity. This had an important impact on transport costs, meaning that transport became more expensive, and prices doubled or even tripled. During this period, Boda Bodas were not allowed to resume their usual activity. While they were allowed to carry “luggage”, they were not allowed to carry any passengers, which constitutes their main source of income. They eventually continued their normal activity by the end of July.

On the 22nd of July, the curfew was readjusted between 9:00 pm to 6:00 am, a restriction that persists up till the date of writing. As a result, neither bars or nightclubs have been allowed to reopen.

5.2.2 Response

In terms of financial aid packages, businesses and individuals did not get any monetary help from the state. In terms of other (non-monetary) initiatives, most importantly, aid in the form of food relief (mostly posho and beans) was given out to people. This aid was directed to people living in urban areas, especially in Kampala’s informal settlements. However, this aid did hardly reach everybody, and the distribution was rather aleatory, a fact confirmed by many participants in this study. Moreover, people who received this type of aid confirmed that the flour was hardly consumable, the beans were difficult to prepare, and the utilities necessary to process the food correctly (e.g., charcoal), were simply not made available. The amount provided by the government varied according to household size. This type of relief was rarely directed towards rural communities, as the crisis hit during harvest season and food was assumed to be available or easily accessible for livelihoods in rural areas of the country.

Furthermore, different ministry agencies announced different directives in an attempt to minimize the negative socio-economic impact during this crisis. The ministry of Lands, Housing & Urban Development prohibited evictions and land transactions during the lockdown. Initiatives were also implemented by the private sector where, for instance, MTM, a telecom company, offered data packages at low prices. In a similar way, MTM and other companies, made payment through electronic means (mobile money) free of any additional charge. Mobile money became very prominent and was established as the primary means of payment, as handling cash was perceived as a high risk to contracting Covid-19. Ugandans implemented the use of this type of transaction into their daily lives, and even in rather informal establishments such as local markets and shops, mobile money transactions became the preferred mode of payment. Furthermore, individuals (through donations), organizations, and religious entities (which played an important role during this time of crisis) offered help in form of cash, medical supplies, food, or hand washing facilities.

5.2.3 Administrative policies & practices

Regarding concrete policies, the Ugandan government was quick to act and instituted a series of measures and restrictions (outlined above) to contain the spread of the virus, through the preparedness and response plan. Furthermore, it was advised to follow the guidelines, established by the Ministry of Health, who would give daily updates on the situation in English and 61 local languages on their official website, but also through means such as television, radio, social media platforms (*Facebook* and *Twitter*), newspapers, or community leaders. From a medical point of view, the restrictions put in place seem to have had the desired effect, especially during the first wave, as in comparison with neighboring countries the number of infections never skyrocketed. It is important to mention that corruption allegations regarding the food relief distribution and political instrumentalization, related to last year's re-election of president Yoweri Museveni, regarding the implementation of the lockdown and the curfew, have been pressing issues in regard to the Covid-19 response (see Annex D for the political discourse surrounding the Covid-19 context in Uganda).

The government planned to implement a series of funds. We have identified two, which are aimed at supporting workers within this demographic: to begin with, the Emyooga program, a

presidential initiative on wealth and job creation. This fund aims to improve the household income of people with low socio-economic status. Further on, the SME recovery fund is planned to provide Small and Medium enterprises with capital at zero-interest rate. Nonetheless, little is known about whether these funds are already rolled out and how to access them. When asked about these funds -with no exception- informal workers were unaware about their existence. Furthermore, an expert in this field explained that these funds are “something which [*is*]not quite sure how successful it's been, or will be " (Economist, World Bank, Uganda Country Team, April 10th, 2021).

CHAPTER 6. THE EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 CRISIS ON THE INFORMAL WORKFORCE OF KAMPALA AND THEIR LIVELIHOOD SECURITY

In this chapter we will shed light on how Covid-19 has affected different activities within the informal sector in Kampala. We have organized this section according to the different activities, distinguishing between retail and trading activities, service activities, manufacturing activities and agricultural activities, outlining through various examples how this crisis affected informal workers in their possibility to keep making an income. We focus on how informal workers were impacted in their possibilities to work (strict lockdown) but also take a closer look how the new economic reality emerging out of this crisis is affecting informal sector activity in general. Secondly, we focus on how informal workers' livelihood was impacted by this crisis. A crisis, to be understood as shock and disruption to informal workers in Kampala.

6.1 Activities within the informal sector and the effect of Covid-19

Wholesale and trade

Within wholesale and retail trade activities (see appendix E for the whole list) most workers are employed in shopkeeping, where general merchandise, food, charcoal, household goods and clothes are amongst the items most sold. People involved in such shop keeping activities often commute long distances within Kampala to reach more central and popular areas to increase their sales. According to informants engaged in such activities, most vendors buy their produce in wholesales, while few (mainly those engaged in fruit and vegetable selling) travel to nearby villages themselves to collect their products. Profits to be made with these types of activities are around 30-50%.

Oftentimes, selling activities, especially fruits and vegetables, are undertaken for an additional source of income, carried out until late night, “on the main road”, or from home. A cook in a kindergarten facility described this as follows, “the kindergarten job was giving me some good money, with this I could pay rent and buy some necessities at home. Selling avocados and bananas was just an addition” (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021). While a hairdresser explains how she was forced to start selling milk out of her backyard, to be able to afford urgently needed medicine for her husband. Informal workers engaged in such secondary income activities, when asked why exactly they choose this line of business, explained that this

business is one with relatively easy entry, as little capital is needed to start it and a daily income is expected.

With the Covid-19 crisis, and particularly with the closing on all unessential businesses, only those vendors providing essential goods were allowed to operate (mostly food related items) and all those sellers engaged in selling any other goods were prohibited from working between March and end of May 2020, most of them losing their income abruptly. Moreover, the restriction on public transport during this time meant that those workers, who were still allowed to operate, were having difficulties reaching their workplace, or preferred area of selling, a topic touched on by most informal workers engaged in food selling activities. Vendors, who used to commute to other parts of town, or travel to Kampala from the surroundings, could only sell in their immediate neighborhood or had to assume a long walk by foot, in either case limiting their income. Furthermore, the installment of the curfew limited the sales to be made (and is still doing so at the time of this writing), coinciding with the time most people tend to do their shopping. This issue regarding the curfew (not merely affecting those engaged in food selling), informants would oftentimes refer to in an angrily manner, seemingly not understanding the necessity of this particular measure. A vegetable seller describes this as follows: “before⁵, you could even reach midnight, people enjoyed moving the whole day, you get money from those people, which is not there today. If they find you moving after nine o’clock, they put you in prison, you have to be careful” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021).

In a slightly different line, all shopkeepers engaged in food selling activities (street vendors) that were interviewed for this study, complain about a growing competition in their line of work, reporting on an increased number of workers in this type of business, negatively affecting sales to be made and, in this way, making it difficult to provide for themselves and their families. A vegetable seller refers to this issue as follows: “you cannot raise UGX 20,000 a day [...] because there are so many now selling the same thing as you” (Informal worker, female, April 23rd, 2021). While yet another street vendor considers the decreasing demand on top of an increased number of sellers, outlining that “competition is high, and demand is very little [...] and on most days I have to take all my avocados home” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021), concluding that especially teachers, having been out of work for a significant period of time, have taken up these activities, further clarifying: “before Covid, we could make

⁵ With “before” the informant is referring to the time prior to the crisis

enough money because the teachers were in their schools. Now they are selling and interfering in my business” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021). Taking into account, as outlined above, that these activities require little starting capital, and are expected to provide a daily income, together with the fact that this activity was hardly affected by any type of measure, it is of little surprise that many workers engaged in this line of activities. Furthermore, the venture into food-selling activities is a clear example of the “ease of entry” (Gerxhani, 1999, p. 6), characteristic for informal sector activities. Moreover, it highlights the notion of need of survival, an important variable to consider when analyzing the motivation of workers to engage in informal activities (Renooy, 1990; Gerxhani, 1999). Simultaneously, we can appreciate a restructuring of the sectors and activities, typical in times of crisis (ILO, 2020), in the case of our study, towards activities related to the selling of food and other essential goods.

Service activities

Within activities related to service provision we distinguished between service and support activities, which include barbers and hairdressers, mobile money agents and boda driver, to name a few (see appendix E for whole list) and accommodation and food service activities, which include activities related to the preparation of food, restauration and hotels (see appendix E for whole list). All activities related to services, excluding mobile money agents, were not allowed to operate during the strict lockdown, due to the closure of all non-essential businesses. This prevented most of the workers within this sector from making an income during the strict lockdown. Mobile money agents, as their business was deemed essential, were allowed to work, though, they reported on constraints reaching their place of work, due to measures on public transport and the curfew.

In a different line, the measures on mobility put in place by the government, affected people employed in public transport activities, as they forbade them from operating in their usual manner, as outlined by a Boda driver who explained that “when the lockdown came, the boda bodas were not allowed to carry any passengers, only the cargo or the woman who were pregnant and it was not easy to find the people who were pregnant” (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021).

Restauration and hotel activities have been amongst the most affected and especially that part of the sector, designated to tourism activities was impacted heavily, as tourists were not

allowed to enter the country. “People’s income went from whatever they were making to zero” (Uganda Community Tourism Association, personal communication, April 21st, 2021). A waitress reported on being let go immediately when the lockdown was announced, after having worked in the restaurant for several years. While a restaurant owner explains that “nobody was prepared for that”, referring to the moment when the lockdown was first announced. She further elaborated on how she had already used her weekly capital for the restaurant’s provisions, outlining that, as they lost their income from one day to another, had no choice than “to eat [their] capital” (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021).

“The eating of capital” seems to be a recurring expression by informants in this study, and many informal workers have used these words exactly, when referring to the dilemma of providing basic necessities for themselves and their family throughout this crisis and keeping their business afloat. In this line, an informal worker, when asked how the crisis affected his business, explained: “it made me fall down in my business, because I could not be selling as I used to be selling. Then, at the same time, the children want to eat, so in the end, I had eaten all our capital. [...] I could get something to eat but my business collapsed” (Informal worker, male, April 23rd, 2021). Like yet another worker, who outlined: “my business just collapsed, as the lockdown was in place for a long time. Since people were not buying, but again, me and my family had to eat every day, we were eating from that same capital, [...] that's how I lost my capital” (Informal worker, female, April 28th, 2021). This is particularly relevant, and to be taken into account, when looking at the ability for informal workers to restart their businesses coming out of this crisis, as many were simply not able to, due to lacking capital, an issue we will outline with some more detail in the following lines.

After the easement of measures of the strict lockdown, the negative effects are still noteworthy within the service sector. The decrease in demand within the changing economic environment, a topic touched on by many informants, is an issue to be considered generally, as it affected the majority of informal businesses. An informal worker in Kampala highlighted that profits were “very low [...] by then, people had no money [and] there was no demand” (Informal worker, female, April 23rd, 2021). This is to be explained by the fact that most of the informal workforce had negatively been affected by this crisis in economic terms, meaning that the spending habits significantly changed, declined, and shifted (in most cases) merely to essential goods. This shift in spending habits especially affected workers offering services (though not exclusively). Ugandans in this context were (and are still) not able, or willing to assume costs

for such services any longer, as “people suffered and when they get a little money now, they buy other things, like rice oil and other things they don't care about, like biscuits, the bread and luxus things” (Informal worker, April 4th, 2021). All Barbers and hairdressers interviewed, for instance, who with the easement of measures were allowed to re-engage in their activities, were struggling to make ends meet, as customers are not able to spend money on such “luxury goods and services”. One hairdresser explains how before the crisis she would easily get four customers a week, though in this changed economic landscape is struggling to find even one. Similarly, a restaurant owner, struggling to attract customers, describes the issue as follows: “customers have reduced because they don’t want to pay the same price as before [...] so the result is, that I have very few customers. My benefits are very low, because I don’t get a lot of customers” (Informal worker, May 5th, 2021).

Another point to highlight is that after the relaxation of measures, businesses were forced to comply with the standards, marked by the government, such as sanitizer provision, wearing face masks and complying with social distancing. This, supposing additional costs for the already vulnerable business owners, is perceived by informants in such situations, as a further constraint on their finances.

Manufacturing

This sector includes activities such as tailor (see figure 7) welder, and carpenter, to name some examples (see appendix E for the whole list). Informal workers engaged in such activities, “since there was [...] a lockdown on shops [...], weren't working, meaning money wasn't coming in” (Informal worker, tailor, female, May 5th, 2021).



Figure 6 Informal worker: Tailor. Source: own elaboration

With the re-opening of these types of businesses, the negative effects persist. Firstly to outline, is the pronounced “hand to mouth” functioning of interactions (not merely limited to

manufacturing activities): as people have been out of work for a significant time, the income made is immediately needed for meeting basic needs: “after selling one pair, you go home to feed the family, which is not even enough. After, you go looking for more customers” (Informal worker, male, shoe maker and seller, April 23rd, 2021). Secondly, constraints within this changing economic environment can be associated with 1) little capital, 2) higher expenses for materials and 3) customers demanding low prices. These issues should be considered in combination, as they are highly interrelated (see figure 8), which we will demonstrate in the following lines.

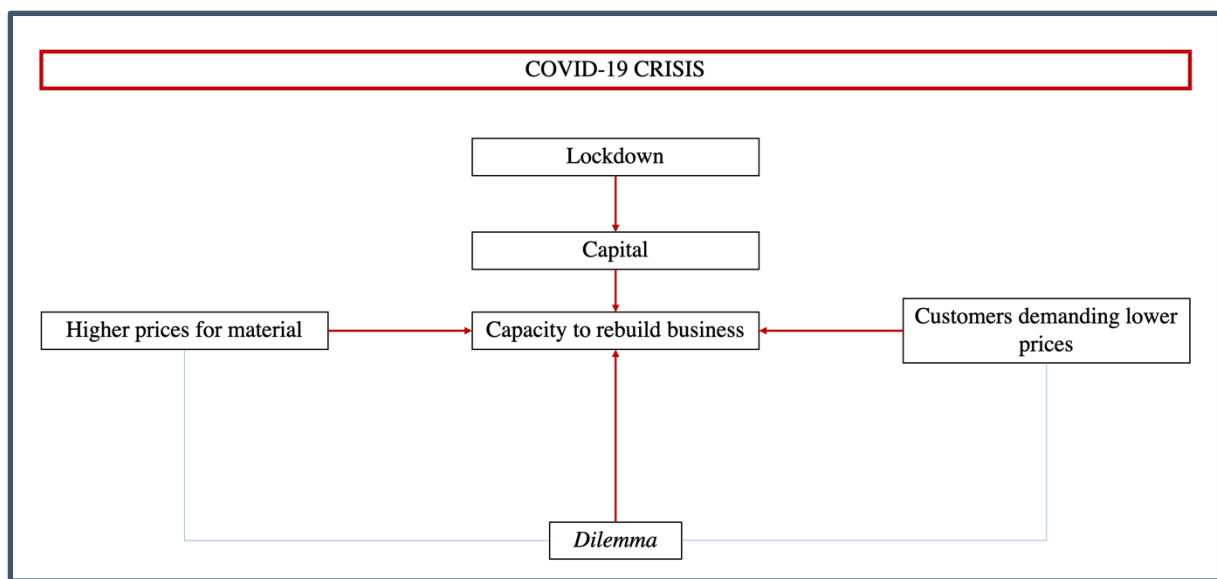


Figure 7 The capacity to rebuild businesses. Source: own elaboration

As already outlined above, many workers complain about little to no capital available to them after the strict lockdown, having used the capital designated to business activities, to meet basic needs during strict lockdown. This meant that the ability and the conditions to restart and re-engage in their businesses were already compromised and informal workers in such situations described this period as “slow”, “difficult” and “challenging”. On top of that, prices for the materials needed to produce goods significantly increased, a fact outlined by all informal workers when asked about arising challenges within this context. On the one side, this price increase for materials supposes an additional constraint on the capital, and forces the informal worker to raise the price for their end products, which, taking into consideration that customers might also find themselves in difficult socio-economic situations, hence are not willing or able to pay the required price, becomes an impossible dilemma. As outlined by a tailor, for instance: “the price that we've been putting before, now people are crying that there is no money, at the

same time things raise in price, so it's not easy” (Informal worker, male, April 23rd, 2021). This dilemma is further described by a tailor who explained that “if you put the price too high, you won't have any customers, so you decide to get low profit, so you don't lose customers”. Continuing that, to preserve a good customer relationship has become even more crucial in order to maintain customers (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021). Following this line, a hairdresser explained: “they cannot pay you like before the customers tell you «like no madam, there is no money... Covid, Covid» Then you're supposed to take that money they give you, because if you choose not to, you will not get that customer again come back to you. So any money they give you must just take” (Informal worker, female, May 20th, 2021).

In conclusion, we can say that in either case, these three constraints, little (re-)starting capital, higher production costs, and customers demanding low prices (as outlined in figure 8) are negatively impacting the profits to be made, as well as the capacity for informal workers to re-engage **in** their businesses. At the same time, workers have no choice but to accept and concede to this changing economic landscape. This serves as a good example to further understand that the strict lockdown, which prevented workers from making an income, has far-reaching constraints on the economy and its negative effects persist over time. If, and to what extent, these constraints will be overcome, depends on a series of factors, which we will outline in continuing chapters.

Agricultural activities

Within the city, agricultural activities are limited, though some people still engage in them, mainly through animal-keeping, which takes place in backyards, or in small pieces of land very close to the city. All activities within this sector were exempt from any type of restriction, which meant that people were allowed to continue with these types of activities. In some cases, mobility restrictions prevented workers from reaching their plots.

Since the strict lockdown, many workers have ventured into the agricultural sector (similar to food selling) and have taken up related activities, like a street vendor, who recently engaged in poultry keeping and explained when asked why exactly she chose this type of business: “I felt it was a safe business, in case a lockdown comes at least I can have my chicken and no one will tell me «oh you cannot work lady»” (Informal worker, female, April 28th, 2021).

6.2 The effect of Covid-19 on livelihood security in informal household in Kampala

When asked if their income before this crisis was allowing them to provide everything they deemed necessary for them and their family, the answers varied amongst the informants. Some seemed to express satisfaction regarding their income and possibilities, outlining things such as: “before Covid came, things were moving well” (Informal worker, male, April 22nd, 2021) and “before the lockdown my job was not bad, I would carry many passengers and then I could provide for my family, we were not suffering, it was good” (Informal worker, male, boda driver, May 22nd, 2021). The majority, though, seemed to be somewhat more reluctant, explaining that they were getting by and “managing life” (Informal worker, female, May 23rd, 2021), as highlighted by a tailor, who explained that “it is never enough, but we could buy some things and have a simple life” (Informal worker, female, May 21st, 2021) and a cook, who summarized that “money is scarce, but what you get, you go with that [...] you go on like that and try and be happy, sometimes you will be more happy, sometimes less” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021). Only two informants answered that their income was not allowing them to provide for their family in the way they would have liked to. One informal worker in such a situation answered the following: “I couldn’t send my children to school, because money was little and we can’t afford school fees and at the same time, pay rent and food too” (Informal worker, female, April 4th, 2021).

While the general situation amongst informal workers in Kampala before the crisis seemed to be one of a mixed nature, their situation during lockdown, and with the easing of measures, was a very challenging one, described as such by all informants in this study. This crisis has, above all, limited informal workers in their possibilities to make an income, as outlined above through various examples. This economic insecurity prevented informal households from being able to meet basic needs and provide adequate and sustainable access to food, water, health and educational opportunities and housing (Frankenberger & McCaston, 1998) (see figure 9):

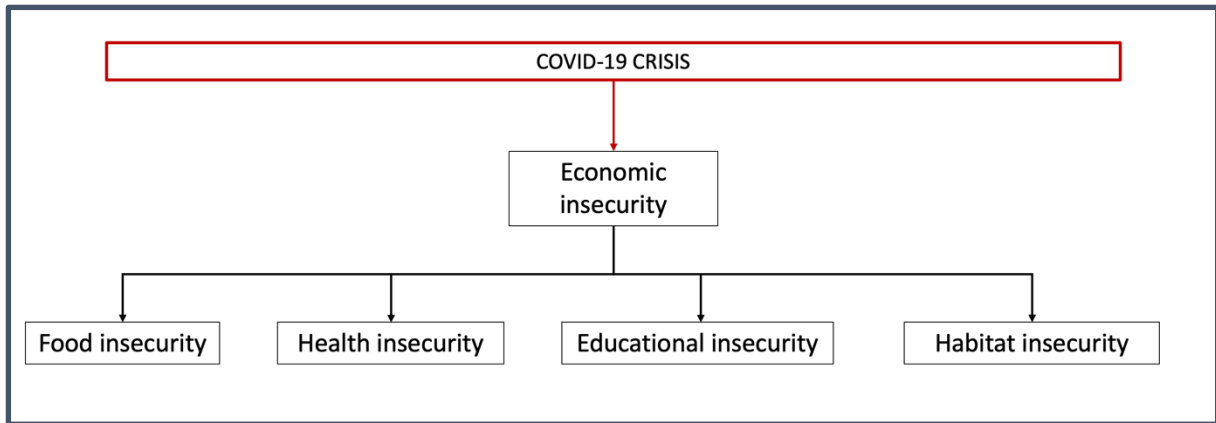


Figure 8 Covid-19 & Livelihood security. Source: own elaboration

With little to no exception, informal workers have reported on food insecurity during this period, especially during the lockdown period. Furthermore, the intent made by the government to provide food portions did hardly reach everyone, and when it did, only lasted for a couple weeks up to one month, depending on the household size.

Regarding the social services, the economic insecurity made the access to medical treatment and medicine difficult, hence impacted the health security: “my husband, he's there, he is just at home because I cannot put him in the hospital, because I can't pay the money for the hospital anymore” (Informal worker, April 20th, 2021). On top of not being able to afford medical treatment, the access to health services was further constrained by administrative and governmental decisions to reserve certain facilities for Covid-19 patients only. A vegetable seller in need of medical treatment for her sick son commented on this issue, explaining that “there is the government hospital, there are two, at those you don't have to pay, but those were saved for corona people and only those were you have to pay, were allowing us. So, I had to go to that one, but I didn't have any money” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021). Furthermore, few participants, commented on the effects of this crisis for the educational security of their children, a concern outlined by several workers who explained: “the income is not really been that good [and] the capital has finished within the lockdown [...] now I [we] can't even send my [our] children to school, it's a very negative impact on our lives” (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021).

Considering worsening housing conditions and the habitat insecurity, many informal workers reported difficulties to meet rent payments, as outlined by a technician, who could no longer

afford the monthly sum: “in that month of May, he⁶ asked me to vacate the apartment. So, I vacated my apartment, I got my properties [...] and I went back home to my mom's place, I had no other choice” (Informal worker, male, April 19th, 2021). Similar to another informal worker who stated she left her house in a hurry to be with her family when the lockdown was first put into place, outlining that “the landlord wanted the money, but I didn’t have any money, I because I had to afford the transport costs back to my house, so I lost my house and all my things” (Informal worker, female, April 15th, 2021). Yet another informal worker, late on rent payments, reported on how the landlord would come to her house daily and shout for her “you need to leave my house, you don't need to stay here, we are tired of you” (Informal worker, female, April 20th, 2022, quoting her landlord). These examples show how the “habitat security” (Frankenberger & McCaston, 1998) was compromised as a result of this crisis.

In sum, informal workers were very susceptible to this shock, most of them being unable to protect their livelihoods and assets during this hardship (Moser, 1996; Frayne, 2004). It is arguable how vulnerable and insecure informal livelihoods in Kampala were before this shock, taking into consideration the mixed answers when asked about their general socio-economic situation before Covid-19 (though being aware this is not the only determinant). However, it is safe to say that the Covid-19 crisis and the changing economic environment deriving from it, which has particularly affected informal workers’ economic security, has made them especially vulnerable. While we can affirm that informal workers were most vulnerable during the strict lockdown, the changing economic environment and the difficulties emerging within this setting are still negatively impacting informal workers livelihood security. This vulnerability is amplified by not being able to meet basic needs and decreased access to social services and housing (Skoufias, 2003; Renooy, 1990), as shown through various examples.

The notion of context

Furthermore to consider, in regard to assessing the vulnerability of households, is the context in which these workers are situated: the urban context. A complex environment, which considering economic terms, relies on cash transfers. This means that essential goods such as water, food, and accommodation, but also other aspects of live, such as public transport, healthcare, and education have to be purchased (Wratten, 1995; Satterthwaite, 1997). Aspects outlined by many workers: “if we don't work, we don't eat” (Informal worker, female, May

⁶ Participant is referring his landlord

22nd, 2021). “Here in town if you don't have money, you have to work hard in town to get money for buying what to eat, for paying rent, for living really” (Informal worker, male, April 23rd, 2021). We already established that informal workers were having difficulties in meeting basic needs. However, it is important to outline that, against the background of this crisis, basic necessities and social services drastically increased in prices, hence made informal workers even more vulnerable. Food and public transport were amongst the commodities, whose price increase had the biggest impact. A local pastor explained the increase in prices as follows: “the prices for food have really increased during Covid-19, because remember, even the borders were locked, there is no exportation and importation of products to Uganda. So, most shops [...] increased the prices and the costs for food also increased. That's why most families could not even afford buying food”. (Local pastor, male, May 3rd, 2021). With no exception, informal workers reported on this increase as a further constraint: “the prices got so high, it really affected us [...] because it's like you used to plan with UGX 10,000 [...]. Now, it was like... it was terrible. I didn't know either. I don't even know which words to use” (Informal worker, female, April 23rd, 2021). A quote, made by a vegetable seller, which shows the desperation many suffered at that point. Another example that highlights the constraint of the economic context, is the increased public transport fees: after the strict measures somewhat eased, most people were allowed to continue their activities. Around this time, public transport was also allowed to operate again, though only at half capacity. This led to an increase in transport costs, and prices doubled or even tripled, to make up for not carrying their normal share of passengers, a fact confirmed by all informants in this study. This affected people within the city, since commuting or moving within the city, became an un-assumable cost for many. In this regard a hairdresser outlined: “the price is too much and if I pay that transport, it will take my capital, because I keep my capital to pay my rent. I must keep the money to pay my rent, so I must walk [...] wherever I go, I just walk” (Informal worker, female, April 20th, 2021).

In conclusion, it is safe to say that the Covid-19 crisis is to be understood as a shock to informal worker livelihoods in Kampala. These workers were severely compromised in their possibilities to work and make an income. First, the strict lockdown prevented most of them from working at all, merely those providing essential goods and services, as well as those engaged in agriculture, were allowed to operate. Further on, with the easement of measures, informal workers were confronted with a new economic reality, having to face a growing competition for certain activities, a decrease in demand, a limited capacity to rebuild businesses and the pronounced hand to mouth functioning of interactions, which had a further constraint

on the income security of informal worker in Kampala. The income insecurity prevented workers from meeting basic needs (mostly, though not exclusively within the strict lockdown) and is cause and effect of a reduced access to social services, such as health and education and worsening housing conditions. Moreover, also acting as further constraint is the complex context in which these workers are situated. An environment, which -also affected by this crisis- requires even higher expenses for basic commodities, making informal worker's livelihoods even more insecure.

CHAPTER 7. LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF INFORMAL WORKER IN KAMPALA IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

In response to the decreasing livelihood security, informal workers devised a series of livelihood strategies. Against the background of this crisis, livelihood strategies employed by informal workers in Kampala aim, on the one hand at survival, and on the other, at betterment (Beall, 2002). The former (those which we count to short-term strategies) were employed mostly during the strict lockdown, where informal workers were most vulnerable, to alleviate the pressure on existential needs (Rakodi, 1999). In an attempt to adapt to the changing economic environment, long-term strategies aim to build up assets, which had been compromised within the lockdown period. They might be pursued for a longer period of time and -in some cases- could translate into changes, related to business, employment and general behaviour. We have organized both types of strategies within those that minimize expenditure, followed by strategies that aim to increase income and resources and, lastly, livelihood strategies that draw on social capital.

7.1 Short-term strategies

Strategies that minimize expenditure

As outlined above, most households were food insecure during this time, and with little to no exception, informal workers interviewed for this study, reported on the reducing of total spending (already outlined above) as well as changes in their dietary habits including cutting down on meals, eating less quality food, or eating the same meal for a prolonged period. A shopkeeper, in such a situation, described this as follows: “if you eat lunch, you're unable to eat [...] supper, so it's lunch, you sleep and wait for tomorrow” (Informal worker, female April 15th, 2021). Similar to yet another worker, who stated: “we had to survive, so we decided that breakfast was not important, lunch was not important, meaning that we only ate once a day. So that when we woke up, we had maybe some sugar or, you know, we could make tea, but nothing else until night” (Informal worker, female, April 15th, 2021). Several statements informal workers made related to this strategy, showed that this types of actions, referred to by Chambers and Conway (1992) as “stinting”, triggered negative physical and mental effects. Various workers reported constipation and significant weight loss: “we had the same food every day, every day we had beans, then I also got the constipation [...] the kids also lost so much weight” (Informal worker, female April 20th, 2021). Regarding the mental effects, especially female

informal workers outline how difficult it was for them, as mothers, to tell their children that they would not be able to eat that day, or what they wished to eat would not fit their small budget. A mother of two explained in this regard: “it was so difficult for me because, as they are babies they will say «daddy mommy I need that thing, I want to eat that today», it made me fall down all the time” (Informal worker, female, April 20th, 2021).

Strategies that aim to increase income and resources

Aiming at increasing resources, informal workers in Kampala resorted to selling some of their assets and goods. While not many informants employed this strategy, it still had the desired effect and helped meet existential needs, as shown by the following statement made by a Boda driver: “when it became so difficult, I also had to sell my phone so I could buy the things we needed at home” (Informal worker, male, April 22nd, 2021).

In a different line, informal workers tried to mobilize additional labor during the strict lockdown, attempting to somehow find work and gain an income regardless of the lockdown and the restrictions. Many resorted to offering home services, such as a barber who explained how he went to his clients’ homes to cut their hair, or a waitress who outlined: “they called me to go and cook for them. After cooking, they pay me [...]. Like that, every day I was hustling” (Informal worker, female, April 23rd, 2021). Strictly speaking informal workers, who engaged in such home activities “weren’t allowed but [...] were doing it illegally” (Informal worker, female, April 23rd, 2021), which leads us to the third strategy within this category: illegal activities. With this, we mainly refer to the non-compliance with Covid-19 measures, such as described by the workers attempting to mobilize additional labor, or a sandal seller, outlining how he would avoid areas, he knew police frequented and resort to sell his sandals in more remote and peripheral parts of town, to avoid legal repercussions. In respect to illegal activities informal workers have also informed on theft. Although, none of the informants themselves testified on having broken the law in this regard, many describe how they heard or experienced such situations.

Lastly, we have also identified the reception of goods and assets, mostly from organizations, family and friends, as well as the church. Regarding this, it is worth mentioning that referring to the reception of goods and assets, no matter from whom, as livelihood strategy might be debatable when taking into consideration the discussion surrounding the term “strategy”,

regarding the question of whether the notion of strategy implies rational and active decision-making (Crow, 1989). However, workers who received this type of help were actively seeking aid. This can be appreciated by the following quote, where an informal worker “called” an NGO representative, she was acquainted with, asking for help: “it was very hard for me that day, I had nothing to eat for the children and I called [*name*⁷], she said «I will support you with a food», she helped me” (Informal worker, female, April 20th, 2021). Similar to another worker, who explained: “it became hard, we didn't have food. I was in a bad situation, so I talked to my pastor and asked him to help us, and they were so kind and gave us a little money for our upkeep” (Informal worker, female, April 15th, 2021). A quote which, again, shows the agency of the informal worker in their time of hardship in regard to this type of charity. Hence, we argue, considering that the relevant question within this context is whether the actions are consciously planned or not (Wallace, 2002), that the reception of goods and assets, in this context is to be treated as a livelihood strategy.

Strategies that draw on social capital

Another strategy that informants reported on, was the reciprocity between community members. This strategy was not available to everyone, indicated by the mixed answers, when asked how the community spirit was perceived during their time of hardship. Many reported feeling supported by the community: “everyone had very little money during COVID and no one could really spend that much, but I felt that at least people were trying and giving me whenever they could” (Informal worker, female, May 21st, 2021). Some even showed amazement, as can be appreciated by the following statement: “it was really amazing, I would have never expected it [...] with the busy life that people had, it's like, we didn't know who our neighbors were, [...] someone would buy food, let's say one bunch of matoke, and then someone would share, like just come and bring for you” (Informal worker, female, April 15th, 2021). Few outlined the positive impact this reciprocity had on their state of mind, as explained by a sandal seller: “when you get the support from the community from friends it gives you also the strength to keep working and also help others” (Informal worker, male, April 28th, 2021). This quote confirms that social capital available in a moment of crisis is crucial to the household's wellbeing and can lead to feeling less vulnerable (Moser, 1996; Douglass, 1998). Nonetheless, several informal workers described the opposite, outlining similar things to the impression of a hairdresser: “it was very hard for me [...], I had nothing to eat for the children

⁷ Name deleted to ensure the anonymity of the NGO worker

[...] but no person who helped me” (Informal worker, female, April 20th, 2021). Some made an attempt to explain why the community was not supportive, naming social distancing and fear of repercussion from authorities as reasons why people kept to themselves. While we don’t doubt that either of these reasons might have hindered this type of reciprocity, we want to also point to the debate surrounding social capital amongst urban informal livelihoods, where some believe the urban poor to suffer from little integration and solidarity (Moser, 1998), while others argue social capital to be one common asset in this context (Douglass, 1998; Dersham & Gzirishvili, 1998). In this regard, we want to add the difficulties for “a hungry man [...] to help another hungry man” (Bell, 1995, p. 435) and that many informal workers were simply not able to extend help in whatever form, having had barely enough to provide for their own households, as seen in previous chapters.

6.2 Long-term strategies

Strategies that minimize expenditure

In response to this shock, people have shown to be more thoughtful on how and where they spent their money, in readjusting their purchasing habits (mostly food items), illustrated by the following quote, which affirms that the location of purchase is selected consciously, as well as items and quantity: “I used to spend much on food, but right now I really spend less because I’ve carved out the place, where I can buy the food for cheaper cause the nearby place, is expensive. Now, I travel at least like one kilometer or two, to go to the market to buy food because there it is cheap. And when I go there to buy food, I’ve learned now to store food into the house like rice, beans, sugar, cooking oil, those things. I will not be so unprepared anymore” (Informal worker, male, April 19th, 2021). Furthermore, informal workers have reevaluated their priorities and reduced spending on non-essential goods in general, as outlined by a poultry keeper who stated that: “I think my finance management in terms of not wasting resources has changed so much, just being cautious in terms of the expenditure I make on every single product. The things that are maybe not so necessary I make sure that I forgo them, that is the kind of lifestyle that we’re living now with my family” (Informal worker, male, May 12th, 2021). In this line, few informants have also reported on avoiding the increased cost of public transport, as for some the cost does not fit the budget anymore.

Strategies that aim to increase income and resources

The most prominent long-term livelihood strategy amongst informal workers in Kampala appears to be saving money. More than half of the informants have reported on a changed attitude when it came to their household budget planning. Many describe this changed behavior as a lesson learned, and even as a positive outcome of this crisis, explaining: “we have learned the lesson, this has open our eyes, we should be always well equipped we need to save we need to plan we need to be well organized, in case the challenge comes again” (Informal worker, male April 22nd, 2021), “Covid, it has taught me [...] I can't be sure of tomorrow, I can't be sure of next month, so it has taught me that I need to always have some money saved” (Informal worker, male, May 12th, 2021), or “I draw some lessons, like in terms of saving. Because now I have seen that when you are in difficult situations not everyone is going to respond promptly, respond to your needs. So, it's good to be saving, just in case something can happen, like with this pandemic (Informal worker, female, April 28th, 2021).

Other strategies that manifested amongst Ugandan informal workers, in regard to the increase of resources, are related to their businesses and income generating activities. Some have made an attempt to diversify their sources of income, being very cautious of the urgency to engage in various activities such as outlined by a vegetable seller: “what we have learned [...] is not stay with just one job, this has really opened our eyes «don't stay on one job, you have to be with the two». And if you don't have two, don't settle, at least try to get other ideas” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021). Further explaining how many Ugandan informal workers are now learning “how to bake, tailoring, how to take care of the hair such things”. This shows the importance of having skills and one could even go as far as arguing that this crisis triggered a necessity to acquire new skills and develop on a personal and professional level, in order to rebuild assets.

Few have chosen to involve other household members to work, engaging especially women and children, in income-generating activities. A restaurant owner, when asked about possibilities to make extra income explained “when we get some additional work, I send the children and they do the job” (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021). While a boda driver outlined “I want also my madam to begin like doing some business to raise up the income” (Informal worker, male, April 22nd, 2021).

As already touched on in previous chapters, some of the workers have decided to completely abandon their original activity and venture into new businesses. The decision of which new activity is chosen, is based on the belief that some are more resilient in times of crisis, basing their assumption on the current events. Therefore, new activities have included food and agricultural related businesses, as these were the least affected by the measures and people understood these to be the most promising ones. Agriculture, even in urban areas, has served as a “buffer” and many people have started to engage and invest in such businesses (Economist, World Bank, Uganda Country Team, April 10th, 2021). Others again, have transformed their businesses adapting and reinventing their way of operating, in an attempt to adjust to the current situation. We have identified three forms of adapting to the new economic environment: home businesses, mobile businesses, and new ways of operating.

Home businesses. Many workers have shifted their work to their home, or immediate surrounding and established businesses, related to soap production, poultry or baking, to name a few examples. When asked why they chose this business model, many named the opportunity it gives them to spend more time with their families, especially their children. An aspect outlined by two female informal workers:

“It feels safe to me and I understood that I can sell to my friends and neighbors. I am my own boss now [laughter]. It is just working. But also, the good thing is that I can be with my children so much, I get to really know them” (Informal worker, female, May 17th, 2021).

“This is also one of the things which pushed me to think about raising chicken at home. With the lockdown we were all together at home and with the new business I can keep taking care of them at home, especially the little one, she is two, I can be a working lady and a mother” (Informal worker, female. April 28th, 2021).

This type of business emerged out of a situation of crisis, hence, a relevant question to ask in this regard is whether this model will persist in time, or if things will go back to the way they were. While we can’t make any affirmation at this point (considering the essence of time and yet unknown developments of this crisis), we still believe that the aspect of being able to connect home life and work is a considerable variable when questioning the duration of these

forms of businesses, also taking into account that the majority of the informal sector is made up of women, and most households surpass 3 members. Furthermore, the nuance of agency and self-determination informal workers seem to enjoy with these types of businesses, shown by expressions such as “I am my own boss”, or “boss lady”, can also be seen as indication that these businesses will persist and establish themselves as a new form of opportunity.

Mobile businesses. While some established businesses at home, others did the opposite and decided to make their business and themselves mobile, either investing into a vehicle or going from house to house offering services, in this way actively seeking customers and reaching remote parts of the city and the surroundings to increase their income. A poultry keeper explained: “I resorted to [...] vending the chicken, I got a small bike and a box with a chain in the side, and I would put the chicken in there maybe 20 chicken, and I went from house to house, vending the chicken. I waited for the customers to come to where I was selling, but they were not coming. So, I resorted to move with the chicken house to house, around the town I live in and also the households surrounded” (Informal worker, male, May 12th, 2021). Similar to a technician who outlined “the bicycle is around 351 Ugandan shillings. So, when I bought one, I started using that [...]. I had a few clients, but because they would not come to my office, I had to move to places“ (Informal worker, male, April 19th, 2021). Informants have reported on an increase of the cost for bicycles, which indicates the growing demand for them. Many people have also started to advertise their goods and services on Facebook or in WhatsApp groups, where in many cases, goods are delivered through Boda Boda drivers of trust.

Again, we have to ask whether this strategy will evolve into a permanent form of business. As seen above, this is a difficult question to address. However, we can affirm that workers in this situation see this new type of business as an opportunity and plan to continue operating in a mobile manner: “the technique for vending chicken from household to household wasn't there before. And now, when we were forced to test it during the lockdown, it kind of worked. So, it has become a continuant thing that [...] people can vend and, in this way, expand the market. So, I think that is one of the opportunities” (Informal worker, male, May 12th, 2021). Furthermore, informal workers in mobile shops report increased revenue, which we believe to be a relevant variable to consider when evaluating its duration in time: “somehow it is better than before, I have made more money, only little more but it is something” (Informal worker, male, May 12th, 2021). When asked whether they prefer this form of business over their situations before the crisis, all answered positively and highlighted the advantage of not

depending on anyone, as shown by the statement of a barber who explained: “I started improvising, moving door to door [...], it is more difficult but I am my boss and I can decide, my family is also more calm because we are making the decisions now. If we have success we have success, if we fail we fail [laughter]”. Hence, the fact the workers themselves see this form of business as an opportunity and plan to continue operating in a mobile fashion, the possibility for increased revenue, as well as the agency and self-determination it provides them, can be seen as indicators for this form of business to persist, offering new opportunities for informal workers in Kampala.

Another aspect to outline in regard to home and mobile businesses is gender. When taking a closer look at who engaged in home, and who in mobile businesses, we can identify a clear tendency of women engaging in home businesses and men in mobile businesses. When looking at this through the lenses of reproductive labor theory, this aspect is of little surprise, and considering that reproductive labor is indispensable for the maintenance of productive labor (Boydston, 1990; Dalla Costa, 1972; Hartmann, 1976) , one could go as far as to argue that woman stayed home and established their businesses there (at the same time giving care and engaging in reproductive labor) so men are able take part in the productive economy outside and engage in mobile businesses. However, considering the nature of this crisis and the fact that it forced people to stay home for a prolonged period of time, we believe it is necessary to look at this from a different angle, additionally (to the gender aspect) consider that some resorted to selling their mobility, so others can afford to stay home, and hence that mobile business are indispensable for the existence of home business.

Interactions & Operations. Informal workers have adjusted their modes of business interaction and operation, while adapting to a new reality. Various informal workers, within different activities have informed on having started to give out credits for their goods and services. A baker, who bakes her goods at home and sells them to local bakeries explains that: “you go and pick your money maybe after one month [...]. When the product is finished, they⁸ can call you and say [...] bring again or bring another [...]. At the beginning I was struggling ‘cause I have to buy the ingredients but I didn’t get the money right away. But I am learning now, and planning and it is working somehow” (Informal worker, female, April 30th, 2021). Another example that illustrates new modes of operating are the upscaling or downscaling of

⁸ With “they” she is referring to the local bakeries, she sells her baked goods at

activities in its size and nature: regarding the upscaling a barber explained how he “improvised” and added services: “I’m improvising. I’m adding some skills like in my business. I’m adding in after-shaving, I add in some services like massage, facials [...] These are free services, but customers now come to me, then to others and I can make some more money” (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021), further adding he “learned to be innovative and creative”. In respect to downscaling activities, tailors and bakers for instance have informed on producing lesser goods, and a restaurant owner explained: “we are open, but things are not like before. Now I just have breakfast, I make porridge and I make snacks. [...] That’s what I do now” (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021). These newly emerged modes of operating show the necessity, but also the capacity of informal workers to adapt to a reality, shaped by this crisis and either aim at lowering expenses or making businesses more competitive, in either way attempting to increase the income.

Strategies that draw on social capital

Similar to the reciprocity between community members outlined above, informal workers have resorted to family members in rural parts of the country for help. Many have reported on having rediscovered the importance of these relationships, which confirms Tacoli’s (1998) assertion that (especially during times of crisis and shocks) social capital can transcend borders. Various participants in this study explain how they were (and are still at the time of writing) receiving small contributions (food), from their family and friends in rural parts of town, sent to them through public transport, such as boda bodas. Few informants have turned this reciprocity into a business opportunity, selling the products, cultivated and sent by their family: “I have joint hands with my sister, we started growing beans, because when you get good beans, you bring them from village to Kampala, and these people from the shops they can buy from you” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021), further confirming that “we are now connected [...] those ones in town, to the village people, because we learnt a lesson, we learnt a lesson, a very big one”. With the lesson learned, she is referring to the importance of maintaining strong ties with relatives in rural parts of the country, or “the extended family system” referred to, as such by yet another informant of this study, who further elaborated on the importance of it, especially during this time of hardship as “people in town, who did not remember their families, or forgot to send money back, they had a problem because they were completely dependent on their salary” (Informal worker, male April 21st, 2021). All in all, we can say that the roles seem to have reversed, during and coming out of this crisis; while the majority of informal workers

interviewed for this study, used to regularly send remittances back to their relatives in rural part of the country, most were unable to, and few even required the help of their relatives back in the countryside to survive and restart their businesses. Following this line of thought, another important aspect to outline, which is highly linked to this rural-urban reciprocity, is the migration from town back to villages of origin, a livelihood strategy, which due to its magnitude and impact is believed to be particularly relevant and will be discussed in more detail in the following lines.

To conclude this chapter, we have summarized the livelihood strategies employed by informal workers in Kampala in table 6.

	Short-term strategies	Long-term strategies
<u>A) Strategies to minimize expenditure</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing of total spending - Changing dietary habits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Changes in purchasing habits -Reducing no-essential goods and services
<u>B) Strategies to increase income and resources</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selling assets and goods - Mobilizing additional labor - Illegal activities - Reception of goods and assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Saving -Diversify income -Engaging other household members to work -Venturing into new activities -Mobile businesses -Engaging in homebased business -New modes of operating
<u>B) Strategies that draw on social capital</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reciprocity between community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Rural- urban reciprocity

Table 6 Livelihood strategies in response to Covid-19, Kampala. Source: own elaboration.

CHAPTER 8. RETURN MIGRATION AS A LIVELIHOOD STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

In the following part, we will take a closer look at return migration as a livelihood strategy. We will first outline the reasons to migrate as well as the influencing forces within the phenomenon of return migration. Furthermore, we will take a closer look at the re-migration to the city and the effect of these migrations on business and employment.

8.1 Reasons to migrate

Many of the people, severely affected by this shock, moved from the city to a rural environment. When asked about the reason for leaving, informants outlined similar things to the following statement made by a boda driver: “I decided to go back to the village with my family, knowing the situation is very very hard. I don't have money for the rent. I didn't have money to buy anything to eat. So, I decided to go back to the village to look for food” (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021). These statements led us to affirm that the main reason why return migrants left was the inability to meet basic needs, caused by the economic insecurity, which resulted from the Covid-19 measures, preventing workers from making an income and hence, from providing for themselves and their families. In addition, as already outlined before, prices for basic necessities increased, making survival in the city even more difficult. Informal households migrated under the perception that food was available in rural areas, as can be made out by the following quote: “our relatives there, even they were suffering, but at least they had food, maybe they don't have sauce for the food, but it's something [...]. In Kampala you didn't have food, or sauce or even water, you don't have anything (Informal worker, male, April 22nd, 2021).

For the most part, informal workers left with their entire families. In some cases, the rural communities people intended to reach were located nearby, within a radius of approximately 5-20 km, while in other cases, people had to travel many hours, or walk for several days sleeping on the road, until reaching their destination. On arrival people were received with mixed feelings. A general perception amongst return migrants in this study, was the fear and mistrust they experienced from the community during the first few weeks of their stay. A

returnee explained: “they thought you could be carrying the disease, so everyone was at least trying to avoid me” (Informal worker, female, May 21st, 2021).

An important question to ask regarding these migrations is why some people left and others stayed. One could argue that some households were just better off than others. Nonetheless, we think that there must be some further explanation and influencing factors over the phenomenon, and that only considering the general well-being at the moment of decision, would be insufficient to comprehend the extent of this phenomenon. We found the social capital available at the moment of decision, rural-urban linkages, and factors regarding business and employment to be forces that influence the decision to migrate.

Social capital

To begin with, the social capital available in the moment of crisis, or put differently, the embeddedness into social structures, are believed to have an impact over a person returning or not. As shown before, various informal workers received support during the time of crisis, from family in the city with possibilities to extend help, neighbors, their employers, the church, or organizations, for instance. With support here, we do not merely mean monetary aid, but also refer to the social reciprocity some experienced. While it would be a false to assume that the support received and the social capital available determined the decision to migrate, we can still affirm that those who benefited from social capital were less likely to migrate, as with little exception, informants, who received such aid, remained in the city during this crisis, even with strong rural-urban linkages existing.

Rural-urban linkages

In a different line, connections with the rural environment (family ties, as social capital), rural-urban linkages, are to be understood as one of the stipulations for this type of migration. With no exception, participants who returned, returned to family and relatives. That being said, we are not excluding the possibility that return migrations occurred to an unknown place, with no ties held, but rather highlighting the fact that one is more likely to return to a place, where connections have been maintained; a place the migrant knows, but at the same time, a place where the migrant is known. As pointed out by a returnee, return migrants with no ties to the rural community, had “difficulties finding work, or quality food and could not live freely in the community” (Informal worker, female, April 8th, 2021). Furthermore, the own term “return

migration” implies a connection between the origin and the destination, as returning to something, means having been there once.

On the contrary, these linkages in some cases have had the reversed effect and can be understood as the motivation to stay in the urban environment; some workers were set on staying, despite their endangered wellbeing, out of responsibility for their family in rural areas they were supporting financially, as outlined by a waitress: “I have family in the village, but I did not go in the village, because I could not go and also sit down doing nothing, I couldn’t go there because all of us at home, no one will help us so I decided to remain in town”, further explaining how she would rather “stay in the city and hustle” and somehow try to send money back, than return to her family (Informal worker, April 23rd, 2021).

Business & Employment

We have established that income insecurity was the main hardship during this crisis and the main reason for workers to migrate. Hence, we can affirm that the measures put in place, and weather activities where allowed, had an influence over the decision to migrate, shown by the fact that the majority of return migrants were engaged in activities, which were not allowed to continue during the lockdown. Nonetheless, we believe that it is important to take a closer look at business and employment itself, not only of those who left, but also of those, who actively stayed, as we consider further factors (than just the Covid-19 measures), had a part to play when it came to the decision to migrate.

Within those who actively stayed, we have identified the commitment with productive activities as an influencing force over migration, as the responsibility for their work, made various informal workers stay in Kampala despite the difficult environment regarding work and livelihood. An informal worker, engaged in poultry selling explained in this regard: “I didn’t go back because I still wanted to maintain my small business that I was doing, make sure that this doesn’t collapse completely, as it was my main source of livelihood, our main source of money” (Informal worker, male, May 12th, 2021), while a mobile money shop owner outlined “I did not leave for village, because I own a business, I couldn’t leave my business. I wasn’t making any income, but I had to at least try, I couldn’t just leave all behind” (Informal worker, male, May 5th, 2021). When asked about whether, looking back, they made the right decision, all workers answered positively, outlining similar things to this statement made by a restaurant

owner: “I think it was right for me because at least I have not lost completely everything, like maybe those who left. Some have actually lost completely their business capital, but I try to persist and be there until at least I could save a little part of my business not losing it all” (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021).

We showed that the commitment with their business and work made some workers stay in Kampala, the question to answer, however, is what distinguished them from the rest? Interestingly enough, all workers who named their commitment as their reason for staying, own their businesses, hence are self-employed. Secondly, all three businesses require a mix of assets, which had already been invested into the business. Within the businesses of informal workers, who actively decided to stay in Kampala because of work-related reasons, we have identified a poultry business, a restaurant, and a mobile money shop. To begin with, all three require certain knowledge, to be seen through successfully: knowledge about keeping animals, about cooking and customer service and about how to manage mobile money. Moreover, in the case of the poultry business, financial capital is needed and was already invested for the chicken and their upkeep: “from day one to the day of selling, I invest UGX 5,000 for each chicken” (Informal worker, poultry keeper, male, May 12th, 2021). Similar to the restaurant, where the capital needed and invested was not so much economic, but more related to the infrastructure: “it's a small stand, where I build a small kitchen. We have some tables in front. That's where we serve people. We have around 5 tables” (Informal worker, female, May 5th, 2021). She continued describing how leaving was simply no option, highlighting that she also stayed to remain updated on ongoing events and be amongst the first ones to reopen. In the case of the mobile money shop, the investment made, apart from the equipment needed to see through the activity, was the upkeep of the shop, which according to the informant had been rented for 4 years up to the time of the crisis. In view of all this, we argue that this commitment and responsibility originates from the nature of employment (self-employment), and from the assets necessary and previously invested (knowledge, economic capital and infrastructure). With this, we want to point to the fact that both circumstances (nature of employment & invested assets) are relevant and to consider, when evaluating how informal workers react to crisis, and hence, which livelihood strategies are chosen.

To sum up, social capital, rural-urban linkages, and circumstances related to business and employment are aspects which influence the decision of what livelihood strategy is employed.

A fact further confirmed by Serrat (2017), who outlines that the livelihood strategy chosen will always depend on the assets available to a household or individual.

8.2 Survival or betterment?

We have seen that the migration to the rural environment took place out of necessity; necessity to alleviate the pressure on existential needs. At the time of the decision, the main priority for informal workers was food security (impacted by the declining economic insecurity), confirmed by the fact that all return migrants interviewed in this study, named hunger as the most pressing need. During the time in the village, the majority were able to tend to this need, as almost all of the informants reported on available land for cultivation (see figure 10 and 11 for example), shown by many quotes similar to the following one made by a return migrant: “we were digging seriously because you had to get what to

eat. Our food came all from the garden so we had to dig and to plant, everyone was planting so they can eat” (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021). The point to be made is that food was available, but “only from home gardens, not from the markets” (Informal worker, female, May 21st, 2021). This was not the case because there were no markets in the villages, or the markets were closed, but simply because most informal workers who migrated held no income generating activity, and hence, could not purchase any food or other goods: “no please, we are not getting any income. We just digged for home use.” (Informal worker, female, May 21st, 2021). When asked if they were able to sell their produce, many answered in an amused way explaining that “people don’t need to buy much as they have



Figure 10 Return migrant's children. Source: own source



Figure 9 Return migrant. Source: own source

their own gardens, they don't buy the food" (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021).

We have found that, just as the necessity for food drove many informal workers out of the city, the necessity for income had the reverse effect and was the main reason for migrants to return to the city. Facts outlined by statements such as "in the village you [...] dig you get food, but you cannot get money, we all need money. At least in the town I can get some money, that's why I came back" (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021); "I can't make money in the village, I can only get food, so I had to come back" (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021). Against this background, we can affirm that migration was an effective strategy in terms of tending to existential needs, more specifically food insecurity. Hence, it is a strategy which indeed helped informal workers to survive (Bell, 1995). Nonetheless, after some time, the priorities were not merely survival, and monetary income was needed to tend to these "rediscovered" priorities. We have identified various such priorities:

- **Education.** A female informal worker explained that she needed income to save for her children's school fees explaining that "education is very important and also income is very important. In the village I was just digging without money, [...] you can get at least what to eat, but you can't actually save for the kids' school fees".
- **Business capital.** Yet another return migrant stated that she needed to make an income to persevere and save for her business ideas: "I had to go back to the city to get any piece of work, which at least gives me a monthly salary, so I can collect that amount and set up my projects that I was planning to" (Informal worker, female, May 21st, 2021).
- **Loans.** A boda driver needed income to pay off the loan he had on his motorcycle and hence returned to Kampala: "I had a loan of the bike that I was riding on [...] So I had to move on and keep working" (Informal worker, male, April, 22nd, 2021).
- **Rent.** Various return migrants highlighted the fact that they did not want to lose their housing and belongings they left behind in a hurry, and hence returned: "my landlord was already calling on me and saying «are you coming to pick your things, if you don't come back I am going to throw them out» I left village then to come back to look for the money to pay the landlord" (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021).
- **Health services.** One migrant outlined how he needed monetary income to pay for medical expenses and treatments: "at a point I had to come back also because of my mother's medicine, the pill, it is very expensive" (informal worker, male, April 30th, 2021). While another pointed that health services are simply not available in the rural

parts of the country: “I had to come back to Kampala, where we have big hospitals, [...] So, I said to my son not to worry, let us go back to Kampala so that you can go to the hospitals. That's why I came back also” (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021).

- **Services & Comforts.** In a slightly different line, and not directly linked to income, return migrants -additionally- named comforts they missed in the village as a further motivation to return to the city and their work; “they had no television, no power. We weren't comfortable (Informal worker, female, May 22nd, 2021).

We know -for a fact- that not everyone returned to the city, and few actually had the opportunity to establish a way to obtain an income in the rural environment (De Vreede, 2021). Nonetheless, we think, basing our opinion on the claims of most informants, that in any case making money, making an income is a necessity in Uganda, and that the opportunities to make an income are greater in cities (Meikle, 2002) and hence, greater in Kampala than in the rural environments (Dasguptaa & Lloyd-Jones, 2018). A fact suitably summarized by an informant: “I learned that money is very important, if I have money everything is easy, but if I don't have money I will suffer so much. The thing is [...] I can only do that in the city” (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021). Therefore, we believe that most return migrants, especially those who were not able to engage in an income generating activity in the village, have either already returned or will eventually have to, out of the necessities to make an income and tend to other necessities than merely food security.

8.3 Return migrations and employment

Lastly, we want to assess if and to what extent, these migrations influenced the business and employment situation of informal workers. Firstly, we will assess how these migrations influenced the business and employment situation of those who remained in the city, followed by the effect for those on the move.

The effects on those in the city

To begin with, many of the workers, who decided to stay in the city, reported decreased business opportunities, when asked if and how the outflow of people affected them. This fact was outlined by many informal workers in this study. We have selected the two following quotes, as they are believed to highlight the decreasing income and market size very well.

Furthermore, the second quote, outlines a relevant aspect to be considered in this regard; as most workers in the city support (or supported) their families in the rural areas financially -a fact outlined by more than half of the informants in this study- fluctuations in their incomes, will also have repercussions on the well-being of those in the village:

“Like to the greater extent it affected us because people were not many in Kampala, so my orders [...] started getting lower, not even 10 people, yet if they would have been there, I would have gotten more income. But since people left, I had less opportunity to sell masks and clothes” (Informal worker, female, tailor, May 22nd, 2021).

“I told you about that people that left the town and went to the village where my friends, my customers, so when they left and actually are not coming back, [...] I lost some kind of market size. But, when it affected me, it also affected my people in the village because If I can’t make profits, I can’t support them in a right way and so they also suffer” (Informal worker, male, chicken vendor, May 12th, 2021).

The effects on those on the move

In a different line, we want to take a closer look at the business and employment situation of return migrants upon arrival to the city: those who migrated to a rural environment, but have since returned to Kampala. We have made out two types of re-migrants in this regard: those who have encountered disadvantages within business and employment upon arrival (see table 7), and those who have not reported on no constraints (see table 8), other than those related to the general effects the Covid-19 crisis had on the economy (see chapter 5).

In table 7 we have outlined the activities of those migrants, who have returned to the city, together with the disadvantages they encountered. While with no exception, all these workers have reported on similar restraints than those who decided to stay in the city throughout this crisis (less income, decreasing demand & more competition, curfew), we have made out further constraints, regarding their work after their re-migration. Furthermore, table 7 displays the livelihood strategy employed to front these disadvantages.

Activity	Further constraints		Livelihood strategy
Cook	Not hired back on arrival	<i>"The boss called me, but I was still in my village and could not hurry back in time" (Female, May 21= 2021)</i>	Venturing into new line of work Long commute to work
Hairdresser	Not hired back on arrival	<i>"When I went to my shop the boss had already put someone else for my job" (Female, April 22= 2021)</i>	
Welder	Not hired back on arrival	<i>„Since they were releasing some people, because they were making less money and I was also not near to tell them I can still work, when I came back, they told me I can't start working now, it's too late“ (Male, April 30= 2021)</i>	Venturing into new line of work
Boda driver	Missed out on opportunities and innovations	⁹ <i>"Well maybe with the delivering services. So many people started delivering businesses and them they send the foodstuff and other things with the boda, but the delivering people don't call me because they don't know I am available now" (Male, April 22= 2021)</i>	Work more hours
Soft drink seller	Place of business interaction taken by someone else	<i>"I'm not moving on well [...] the spot where I am selling now is not so good, but my old spot is taken by another business lady she made a stand and now there I can't sell" (Female, May 22=, 2022)</i>	Selling in new areas

Table 7 Return migrant's constraints regarding business & employment upon arrival to Kampala. Source: own elaboration

When asked if they faced difficulties regarding their business and employment situation, three informal workers reported on not being hired back upon arrival back to Kampala, which -as can be appreciated by the quotes in table 7- is related to having spent time in the village. Both the welder and the cook gave up on finding employment in their original activities, outlining that they “can’t allow the time for finding a job in [their] profession” (Informal worker, female, May 21st, 2021) and that “maybe after some time passed [they] can try to find work [in their] specialties" (Informal worker, male, April 30th, 2021). Both are currently engaged in food selling activities, an activity, which (as already outlined in previous chapters) requires little knowledge and starting capital and is expected to provide daily income. Only the hairdresser found employment in her line of work, though complained about having to commute further and losing valuable hours of her day walking, as the public transport fees don’t fit her reduced budget. The explanations given by all three of these workers clearly show that the reason for not being hired back is related to the time spent in the village. Furthermore, all three of them showed discontentment with their current work situation. Another example which shows that

⁹ when asked if he perceived disadvantages reading his work he outlined:

the time in the village has had negative repercussions for the business and employment situation on arrival, was outlined by a boda driver (see figure 12), who explained he felt deprived in terms of inclusion into new forms of businesses that emerged in response to the crisis: delivering services (see quotes table 7). When asked how he tried to measure up he explained: “I just more, I work all the hours the curfew allows me. I don’t need much rest” (Informal worker, male, May 22nd, 2021). Furthermore, an informal worker engaged in soft drink selling explained how she lost her preferred area of selling to someone else during her stay in the village, being forced now to sell in a different place, with less opportunities to make sufficient income.



Figure 11 Informal worker: Boda Driver. Source: own source.

These examples, outlined in table 7, show that the disadvantages go further than just the difficult conditions of the new reality of the economy, caused by this crisis (outlined in previous chapters). We believe that these disadvantages are a repercussion of having left the city, and hence that leaving the city can negatively impact the business and employment of informal workers in Kampala.

Nonetheless, three return migrants have reported on no negative disadvantages regarding their business and employment situation (see table 8) upon arrival.

Activity	Livelihood strategy		Outcome
Kindergarten teacher	Home schooling	<i>“Before going I thought I will start getting some kids here at home and just coach them from home, as they have not opened nursery schools yet” (Informal worker, female, 22nd May, 2021)</i>	<i>“It is at least fair, not like in lockdown, at least the kids that come they bring some money, at least so we can buy what we need” (Informal worker, female, 22nd May, 2021)</i>
Barber	Illegal activity	<i>“I called my boss to see if we can open up [...] So my boss told me you can come try to work [...]. So that's the reason why I decided to go out of the village also” (Informal worker, male, 22nd May, 2021)</i>	<i>“[The income], it's not enough, but we are getting by” (Informal worker, male, 22nd May, 2021)</i>
Kindergarten cook	Rural-urban reciprocity & Income diversification	<i>“When we were in the village ...you know, when you get a problem that's when you get a plan. I have joint hands with my sister, we started growing beans, because when you get good beans, you use, you bring them from village to Kampala, and these people from the shops they can buy from you” (Informal worker, female, 22nd May, 2021)</i>	<i>“It is somehow working [...] but I mostly get money for eating only” (Informal worker, female, 22nd May, 2021)</i>

Table 8 Return migrants with proactive livelihood strategies. Source: own elaboration

What is to be outlined here, is the fact that these informal workers left their villages, but either secured their position beforehand, or returned with a thought-out plan in mind, which can be appreciated by all quotes in table 8. The Kindergarten teacher already thought in the village about teaching at home, the barber “called ” his boss beforehand to assess the situation and the cook arrived with a thought-out business plan: selling goods she would obtain from her village, while establishing a pancake business at her home (see figure 13).



Figure 12 Informal worker: Street Vendor. Source own source

With this we can affirm that return migrations can have negative effects on the business and employment opportunities for return migrants upon arrival back to the city. From what we have seen in this study, these disadvantages can be considered, in terms of difficulties to find employment in their line of work, to be up to date with ongoing innovations and prime positions for business interactions. However, informal workers with actions taken beforehand, were able to avoid these constraints and returned to Kampala with less insecurity. An important question to answer is what distinguishes these two profiles of informal workers. We have found that it is the way in which, they devised the livelihood strategy, which is illustrated in figure 14. The former devised a livelihood strategy, after arrival to Kampala, in reaction to the disadvantages they faced, while the latter composed their livelihood strategy thinking ahead and before arrival to Kampala. Following this line of thought, we want to give way to a new perspective, to be considered within livelihood strategies, reactivity and proactivity. So far, we distinguished between strategies that aim at either survival, or betterment. However, in this case, the point to be made is less about the purpose of the strategies, as in either case re-migrants aimed at securing their income and building up assets, but more about how informal workers devised them, whether in a reactive or proactive manner.

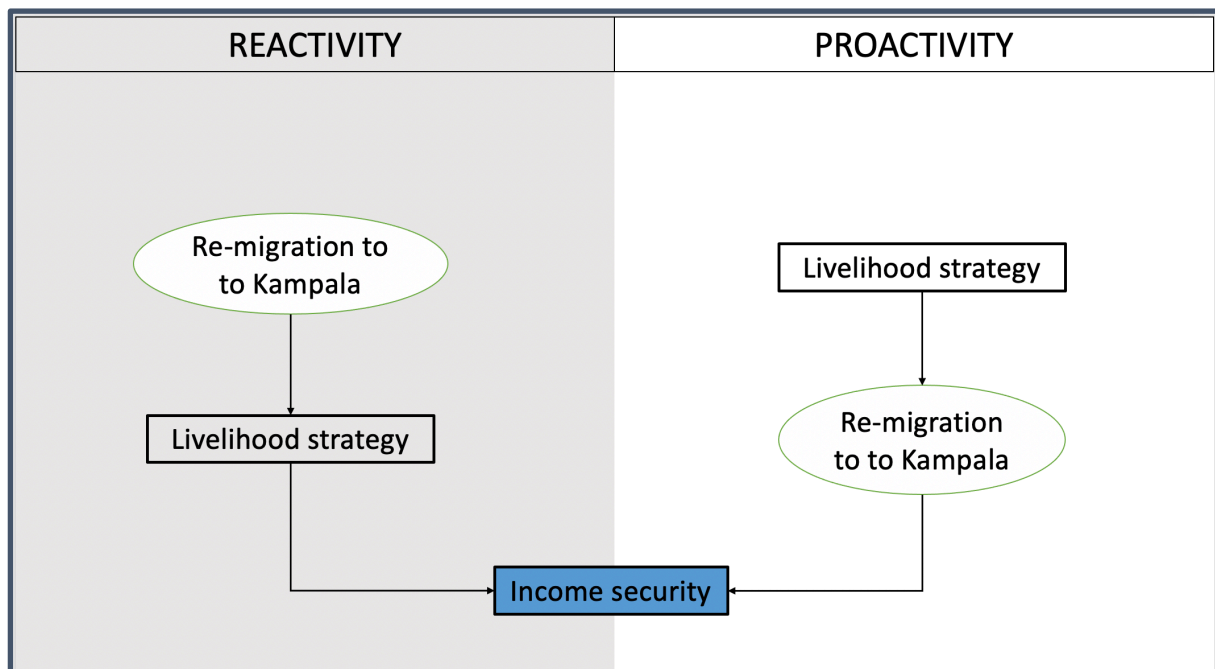


Figure 13 Reactive & Proactive Livelihood strategies. Source: own elaboration

To conclude, we have shown that one recurring livelihood strategy was the migration to the rural environment. Many informal workers migrated to escape the negative repercussions of

the financial instability, caused by the Covid-19 crisis and the measures that followed. While this strategy was effective for meeting essential needs (short-term strategy), the income generating possibilities in the rural context were rather limited. These limited opportunities to make monetary income pushed many to re-migrate to the city. Not surprisingly, these migrations have influenced the business and employment situation: on the one hand those who remained in the city, were negatively impacted by the diminished market size, on the other those on the move suffered disadvantages upon arrival back to the city re-engaging into productive activities. In this regard, informal workers with proactive livelihood strategies and previously thought-out actions have shown to suffer less insecurity.

CHAPTER 9. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Discussion

We have shown that in the context of Kampala the Covid-19 crisis, and especially the strict lockdown, is to be understood as shock and disruption to informal workers' livelihoods. We outlined that, due to the Covid-19 crisis and the measures that followed, informal workers' livelihood security was severely compromised, due to the limited possibilities to work and make an income. This crisis -the lockdown and the following changing economic environment- has made this demographic especially vulnerable and insecure. This insecurity was -and still is- both cause and effect of a reduced access to social services and the inability to meet basic needs. The data suggests that in response to all this, informal workers devised a series of livelihood strategies of short-term and long-term nature to alleviate the pressure on existential needs and rebuild assets. Furthermore, the data showed that a significant number of workers chose migrating back to their rural origins -return migration- as their livelihood strategy, where we found food insecurity to be the main reason to leave the city. However, the need to obtain monetary income, needed to tend to “rediscovered” priorities (education, rent payments, medical services, loans, savings) has led to the re-migration of many informal workers back to Kampala. While with no doubt the time during strict lockdown between March and May 2020 had the greatest impact on the wellbeing of informal workers, the general effects, the Covid-19 crisis had on the Ugandan economy, and the problems that emerged from this changing economic environment, still persist. Workers in Kampala are facing a growing competition for certain activities, a decrease in demand, a limited capacity to rebuild businesses and the pronounced hand to mouth functioning of interactions. This new economic landscape is challenging both those who originally stayed in Kampala and those who left, to come up with effective and innovative strategies to adapt to this new reality.

The Flexibility of the informal sector

This crisis was one that put a hold on the economy, both the formal and the informal. According to literature, in times of crisis a rearrangement of inputs from the formal economy to the informal one is to be expected (Colombo, et al., 2019; Colombo, et al., 2016; Blanton, et al., 2015; Skoufias, 2003), but what is to be expected within the informal sector as an individual unit? All in all, we have observed the same. What we mean by this, is that just as informal activity increases in times of crisis, considering a general perspective, in the informal sector

those activities increase, which require least capital, assets and knowledge, a rearrangement of inputs: many informal workers in Kampala, both those who persisted in the city throughout the crisis, and those who migrated and have since returned, have engaged in activities related to the provision of basic needs, such as food selling. An activity, which requires neither much starting capital, nor any assets. If we think of the informal sector as a food chain, then those activities, which require least capital and assets to engage in, are at the bottom and are those which will increase in times of crisis, just as informal activity will increase in general.

Nonetheless, our research has shown that it is also possible to stay on top, and that few informal workers were able to maintain their businesses and employment, devising a series of livelihood strategies. While some of these strategies are much in line with relevant literature on livelihood strategies (saving, engaging other household members to work, changes in purchasing habits and income diversification), we have made out a few further livelihood strategies, which were employed in response to this crisis in the context of Kampala: the idea of selling mobility, home businesses, and new forms of operations and interactions. These, creative, innovative and newly emerged actions show the capacity, but also the necessity of informal workers to adapt to this new economic landscape, created by this crisis. What we mean by capacity and necessity can be explained, looking through the lenses of the “weak” (Beall, 2002) and “strong” (Meagher, 1995) approaches of the analysis of urban livelihoods. On the one hand, these newly emerged forms to generate income manifest the capacity of initiative, innovation, and adaptation of informal workers, in response to a changing economic environment, highlighted by expressions where informal workers stated they “seized an opportunity “learnt” or “improvised”. This view emphasizes the resilience and agency of informal workers (Beall, 2002). On the contrary, these newly acquired models can be understood as actions of little choice and agency simply taken to survive, where the flexibility informal workers demonstrate, highlights how unprotected they are (Meagher, 1995).

While taking a stand in regard to both these approaches would have needed a deeper understanding of the situation, circumstances and the mindset of these informal workers, which would have required us to physically spend time in their context and employ further research methods such as participant observation, we believe that it is important to consider our results. These show that this situation of crisis led few informal workers to create innovative opportunities for themselves and their business. In the same line, we have shown that these types of actions show a certain desire and claim for self-determination. This is why we believe

that rather than concerning ourselves with whether these actions originate from agency or were devised simply to survive, it is more relevant to consider if these strategies are effective tools to preserve informal workers' livelihood security, now and in the future. "Effective" is defined by being "successful in producing a desired or intended result". If the intended result is the informal workers' livelihood security, hence "adequate and sustainable access to income and resources to meet basic needs" (Frankenberger & McCaston, 1998, p. 31) we can affirm that especially home businesses, mobile shops, and the forms of business interaction, but also other strategies, such as income diversification, saving, and rural urban reciprocity (see table 6, for an overview on long-term strategies) had the desired effect, as informal workers in such situations reported having increased their income, acquired new skills and being more content now with how they earn their living. While it is difficult to affirm if these actions will persist, considering the essence of time and further, yet unknown, developments related to this crisis, we believe that effective strategies have the potential to be persistent and develop into new habits amongst Ugandan informal workers.

Crisis, resilience & wellbeing

Throughout this research we have attempted to assess informal workers' vulnerability, their insecurity to this crisis. As overall the informal workforce in Kampala was very susceptible to this shock and many of them unable to protect livelihood and assets during this hardship, a relevant question to answer is whether this situation has made informal workers more resilient. As outlined in previous lines the ability to adapt to the changing economic landscape can already be seen as resilience. Nonetheless we want to point to another aspect, regarding crisis, resilience and wellbeing:

Assets act as a buffer and mediate the household's vulnerability to shock. Therefore, the resilience will essentially depend on assets available to a household (Harpham & Grant, 2002). Following this line, livelihood strategies aim to maintain and increase assets and, as we have shown, in order to rebuild assets, informal workers have diversified, developed new and intensified existing livelihood strategies. While being fully aware that assets are measured by a wide stock of capitals, which, of course, are all relevant, we want to focus on financial capital and at those strategies which aim to increase income. Income has, in the most literal sense of the word, moved informal workers' decisions throughout this crisis: when taking a closer look at reasons to leave, and reasons to return to the city, we found that the main motivation for

informal workers in both cases was income insecurity. Even though the aims and priorities at either moment of decision were different, -survival at the moment of leaving and building up assets at the moment of returning- it still highlights the importance of making an income, of obtaining financial capital. Against this background, and having understood the importance of income in the context of informal workers, it is no surprise that most livelihood strategies aimed at increasing income, resources, and building up assets, as we have shown in our results. While we have already assessed the effectiveness of these strategies, and of course consider it necessary to increase assets, we believe that there is a fine line between the use of these strategies and the household's increasing resilience and decreasing overall wellbeing. The point to be made is that an improved resilience can't be at the cost of an impoverished general wellbeing: income diversification will increase a household's financial capital, which will make them more resilient and less vulnerable to future shock, but might also affect a worker's general wellbeing when having to work 15, or more, hours a day. Just as engaging, other household members in productive activities can easily lead to more financial capital for the household, but might cause children their education. In the same way, home-based businesses are a great opportunity for mothers to look after their children, while at the same time building up assets, but might entail augmenting the workload: taking care of their business, their children, and the household.

With that being said, we support that livelihood strategies should help build up assets, while not compromising the wellbeing of the household. A balance between resilience and overall wellbeing. However, we have found that this crisis has made many more people conscious in their choice of strategy and of the way assets are used. One aspect, which speaks for this, is the fact that, with little exception, informal workers reported on new acquired saving practices. Furthermore, we have identified that the way in which strategies are chosen is relevant and that proactivity is a way to ensure less insecurity. In sum, we believe that conscious and proactive livelihood strategies are key for building up resilience without compromising the overall wellbeing.

Following this line, policies should center around building upon, and strengthening existing livelihood strategies, in this way increasing the household options and choices (Bebbington, 1999). Just as policies are to focus on the strengths of existing strategies, they should also consider the general well-being of the household and ensure that building up assets does not compromise this. Furthermore, just as the informal sector presents a high level of

heterogeneity, as we have shown in our results, so do the employed strategies and interventions need to be tailored to the various needs, characteristics, situations, contexts, and circumstances of the workers and their action. A mother who established a home business, will present different needs for intervention than someone who established a mobile business. In this line, the different strategies we outlined in this study can be of guidance for policy makers, as the “knowledge and better understanding of the main [...] strategies of households are very useful for setting the priorities for public programs and safety nets” (Skoufias, 2003, p. 1099).

Implications

This research adds to the existing body of literature related to the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. While there have been some attempts to further explore the effect on the informal sector, especially regarding the ineffectiveness of lockdown like measures (Patel, 2020; Corburn, et al., 2020; Islam, 2020; Haddout, et al., 2020; Pereira & Gratao, 2020), the assessment stays rather general (ILO, 2020; World Bank, 2020; Ataguba, 2020; Bassier, et al., 2021). Our research offers a look into how this crisis impacted informal workers at a household level, and while of course the bigger picture is important, we believe that understanding the impact for the people on a more personal level is very significant. While it is of little surprise that this crisis severely affected informal workers, it is of the essence to understand how exactly they were affected and what exactly they did to front this crisis. This knowledge will be essential to devise efficient policies and interventions in Uganda. Furthermore, this research adds to literature on livelihood strategies, giving a series of examples of such, employed by informal workers in Kampala in response to the Covid-19 crisis. Furthermore, as the line between different strategies seems rather blurred in academic debates, we clearly distinguish between those strategies, which aim at survival, and those which aim at building up assets. Lastly, we contribute to research, which concerns itself with return migrations induced by Covid-19, which until now mostly centered around India. While most of this research addressed government responses to this phenomenon (Nanda, 2020; Priyadarshini & Chaudhury, 2020; Srivastava, 2020; Mukhra et al., 2020; Awasthi & Mehta, 2020) and social security policies (Srivastava, 2020; Basu & Basu, 2020), considering this topic in more general terms, we propose, once again, a perspective which puts the household unit in the center, focusing on the implications for the people themselves, considering an urban perspective.

9.2 Conclusions

As we have already touched on some main conclusions in the discussion, we will highlight some further conclusions in a summarized rather manner:

Conclusions regarding the period of strict lockdown:

- During the strict lockdown all informal workers, who were not engaged in activities which were deemed essential, were not allowed to operate, and lost their income basically from one day to another
- Those who were allowed to work, such as mobile money agents and those selling food items for instance, found it difficult to reach their place of work, due to limited public transport
- The economic insecurity caused by the containment measures severely endangered informal workers livelihood security, and hence, their ability to meet basic needs
- During this period informal workers made use of livelihood strategies, which mainly aimed at alleviating the pressure on existential needs (e.g., food, water, rent). Actions at this time included changes in their dietary habits, selling goods and assets, mobilize additional labor, engaging in illegal activities, the reception of charity from organizations, family and friends and reciprocity between community members

Conclusions in relation to the return migrations as a livelihood strategy:

- Many also chose to leave the city and migrated back to their villages of origin. The main reason to leave the city was the inability to meet basic needs, therefore we find this strategy to be one of short-term nature
- However, we identified further factors, which had an influence over a person returning or not:
 - The social capital available at the moment of hardship influenced informal workers decision to stay in Kampala
 - Rural-urban linkages had an influence both on the decision to stay and leave the city
 - The commitment with business and employment influenced the decision to stay. This commitment originates from the nature of employment (self-employment) and the assets previously invested into the business
- Due to the limited possibilities to obtain monetary income return migrants eventually re-migrated to the city to be able to tend to newly emerged priorities, which require economic capital (education, rent payments, medical service, loans, saving)

- These return migrations had a negative effect on the business and employment opportunities for those who decided to re-migrate and reengage in their lives in Kampala. On arrival (back to the city) those with proactive livelihood strategies suffered less insecurity

Conclusions concerning the economic landscape post-lockdown:

- The period of the strict lockdown, in which most of the economic activity came to a stand, has caused a new economic environment
- The curfew has and still is limiting business interactions in general and hence the income to be made
- In response to this crisis, those activities increased which require least amount of capital and assets (activities with ease of entry), such as street vending. Moreover, those activities increased, which were least affected by containment measures: activities related to the provision of essential goods, mostly fruits and vegetables and activities related to agriculture
- Many workers have experienced difficulties to re engage in their business due to a series of factors:
 - The designated capital was used to survive during the strict lockdown. The “eating of capital” has either made businesses collapse, or compromised the ability to restart businesses
 - The spending habits of most have shifted merely to essential goods, which has negatively impacted the demand
 - Prices for materials have significantly increased
- Many informal workers showed a pronounced had to mouth functioning
- Informal workers devised a series of livelihood strategies, which aimed to rebuild assets (long-term strategies), these actions included the rearrangement of purchasing habits, a reduced spending on unnecessary items, saving, and rural-urban reciprocity.
- Furthermore, workers have employed new practices related to their income generating activity: many have diversified their income, others have engaged other household members to work, some have ventured into new lines of businesses. Yet others have reinvented and adapted their forms of business, establishing home or mobile business, or simply changing the way of operating.

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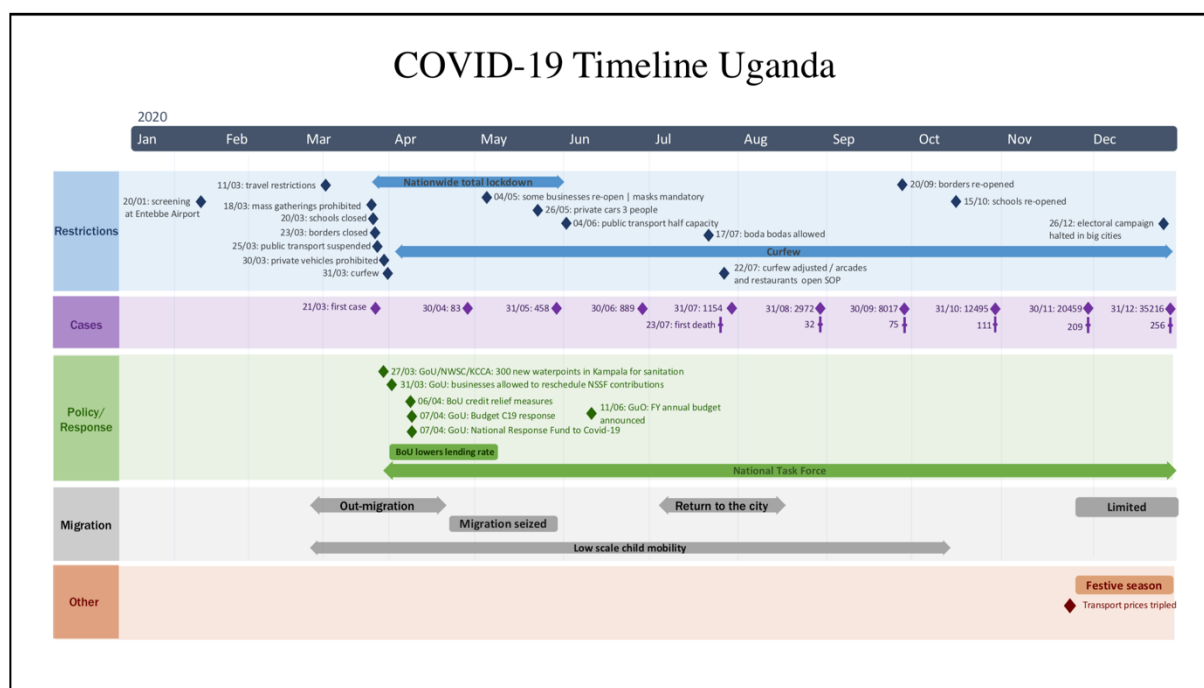
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APPENDICES

Annex A: Argumentation “Secure rather than sustainable livelihoods”

A core concept of this approach is sustainability, which entails the preservation of environmental, social and institutional structures, while aiming for livelihood strategies with a positive outcome. In a rural context the focus on sustainability might make more sense, though is still connected to some implications, as the preservation of the environment might be sacrificed for a positive livelihood outcome (Carney, 1998). In an urban context however -a space, which at the core consumes natural resources (water, land, raw materials, etc.), irrevocably changing their nature and simultaneously producing large quantities of waste- we argue that employing the concept of sustainability is not fully coherent, even when engaging in sustainable behavior. In this case we should rather talk about less environmentally harmful practices. Furthermore, the relationship between environmental sustainability and urban economies, aiming at economic growth, proves to be a complicated one, as economic growth is -again- connected to the consumption of resources and the production of waste materials. The dichotomy lies in the fact that growth in this sense, does not always entail the reduction of vulnerability and poverty. Therefore, following the lines of Rakodi (2002), within the livelihood approach, when referring to an urban context -to urban livelihoods- we will make reference to secure livelihoods, rather than sustainable ones.

Annex B: Covid-19 context in Uganda, timeline



Source: Own elaboration¹⁰

Annex C: Participant profiles¹¹

Here are the participant profiles we would like to engage with in order to do our research. We are aware that talking to everyone will be very difficult. We will be grateful for any conversation and any contact. Thank you again, we appreciate it very much.

1. Respondents informal sector

We would like to talk to people employed in the informal sector (wage employment/ self-employment). In the following lines we have come up with some example profiles that could be interesting. A conversation with a representative of each of the most important sector would be ideal.

¹⁰ This document was codesigned with Carmen de Vreede

¹¹ Initial document for participant selection. This document was adapted according to the interviews already conducted

Respondent profiles	
Informal sector	Activities
Trading and services activities	Boda boda driver Market owners/ sellers Taxi driver Street vendor (foodstuff, textile, general, merchandize, beverage) Teacher Barber/ Hairdresser Charcoal seller
Manufacturing	Tailor Wood worker Baker
Accommodation and food service activities	Waiter Bartender Cooks
Agriculture	Animal farming Farming
Repair	Technician

2. Migrants

Our research focuses on people that have travelled from the city to their rural origins in time of the Covid-19 crisis. Analyzing the phenomenon, three profiles became relevant.

Migrant profiles	
Return migrant	A person that has travelled from the city to a rural environment in times of Covid-19
Return migrant, that has remigrated to the city	A person that has left the city during the crisis and went back to a rural environment, but has then since returned to the city, as the situation has somewhat relaxed
Return migrant, who has stayed in rural area	A person that has left the city during the crisis, but has stayed put and still remains in the countryside/village

We are aware that many of the informal workers have migrated, which means that many profiles might overlap, this is in no way a problem, but actually beneficial, as it will give us more information.

Annex D: Politics and Covid-19 in Uganda

As in many other countries too -in Uganda- Covid-19 and everything it entails was made highly political, caused cases of corruption and became subject of the public debate. In the following lines we will outline some examples:

On Saturday April 4th, military staff began to distribute food (beans and maize flour) among poor families in informal settlements in and around Kampala. In the week after, four government officials at the Office of the Prime Minister were arrested by the Anti-Corruption Unit as they were accused of inflating prices of food aid, that was given to vulnerable people, and rejected the lower price offers from other suppliers.

Another example that marks how political the issues surrounding Covid-19 became, are face masks. As stated above, face masks were made mandatory in order to contain the spread of the novel virus. Some argue that political actors were instrumentalizing face mask for political profit, distributing them with colours and symbols of their respective political parties. “Yellow is the colour of the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM); blue is of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC); and red is increasingly associated with People Power, a political movement founded and led by musician turned opposition politician Robert Kyagulanyi, alias Bobi Wine” (Anguyo, 2020). The government announced that public funded mask will not have any affiliation to any political party, but soon after started rather discreetly distributing yellow masks. Many citizens have embraced the mandatory face mask, as it gives them the opportunity to show their political affiliation, others have turned the wearing of different colours of masks into a livelihood strategy, as wearing the “right” colour of mask might ease their access to different relieve packages, backed by different political parties. Furthermore, some people have used explicitly the yellow face mask as precaution against harassment by security forces, as NRM supporters rarely get hold up by the police. According to Parkes et al (2020), the police is perceived by many Ugandans as very violent and corrupt, since they beat people who don’t follow the restrictions (for example to be out after curfew to sell food) or want money to let them go. Many people do not trust the police and public authorities in general, something that was already very much so before the pandemic.

In the same line, there are reports that police and law enforcement are favouring. As stated in the article of the Observer (2020), members of the governing political party (NRM) were not

hold responsible when breaking with the established social distancing and mask wearing rules at political events, while politicians belonging to other political parties were immediately disciplined by public authorities (The Observer, 2020).

Furthermore, Ugandans Members of Parliament supposedly were offered 20 million Ugandan shillings each (nearly €5000 euros) to assist the government in the times of the Covid-19 crisis. This caused controversial public reactions, manifested through making noise with cooking pots and jerry cans, as the protestants contest that the money should rather be spent on health workers fighting Covid-19 (Rfi, 2020).

Annex E: Activities within the informal sector of Kampala

Wholesale and retail trade
Butcher
Shop Keeper
Shop Keeper - Agricultural Products
Shop Keeper - Beverage
Shop Keeper - Bicycle Parts
Shop Keeper - Charcoal
Shop Keeper - Clothes
Shop Keeper - Cosmetics
Shop Keeper - Curtains
Shop Keeper - Dairy
Shop Keeper - Electronics
Shop Keeper - Electronics
Shop Keeper - Food
Shop Keeper - Furniture
Shop Keeper - Hardware
Shop Keeper - Motor Parts
Shop Keeper - Paint
Shop Keeper - Phone Charger
Shop Keeper - Roseries
Shop Keeper - Tee
Shop Keeper - Vegetables
Shop Keeper - Video and Books
Shop Keeper -General Merchandise
Shop Keeper -Household Goods
Service and support activities

Accountant
Artist
Barber/ Hair dresser
Bartender
Boda Boda Driver
Dry Cleaning
Entertainment in Bar
Healer
Knife Sharpener
Knife Sharpener
Medical Service
Mobile Money Agent
Office Work
Office Work
Parking Service
Photographer
Road Sweeper
Shoe Cleaner

Accommodation and food service activities

Acommodation Services
Baker
Cafeteria Staff
Cook
Preparing and Selling Local Food
Preparing and Selling Pork
Preparing and Selling Porridge
Preparing and Selling Cassava
Preparing and Selling Chapati
Preparing and Selling Chips
Preparing and Selling Chips
Preparing and Selling Corn
Preparing and Selling Drinks
Preparing and Selling Fast Food
Preparing and selling Food
Preparing and Selling Fried Fish
Preparing and Selling Honey
Preparing and Selling Kipoli
Preparing and Selling Mandazi
Preparing and Selling Mandazzi
Preparing and Selling Nuts
Preparing and Selling Pancakes
Preparing and Selling Pork
Preparing and Selling Porridge

Preparing and Selling Samosa
Preparing and Selling Sumbusa
Preparing and Selling Tee
Pressing Vegetable oil
Restaurant Owner
Restaurant Services
Selling Beverages
Selling food
Waiter

Manufacturing

Brewing Beer
Brick Maker
Carpenter
Charcol Stove Maker
Jewlery Maker
Making and Selling of Arts & Crafts
Making Envelopes
Manufacturing of Doors
Manufacturing of Furniture
Manufacturing of Metal Products
Manufacturing of Metal Products
Manufacturing Soap
Shoe Maker
Soap Maker
Tailor
Weaver
Welder

Agriculture, forestry and fishing

Cattle Keeping
Duck Keeping
Farmer - Coffe
Farmer - Coffe, Matoke
Goat Keeping
Keeping Goats
Pig Keeping
Poultry Keeping

Repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; repair of computers and personal and household goods

Mechanic
Parking Service
Phone Repair
Repairer of Refrigerator
Technician

Education; human health and social work activities
Babysitter Taxi driver Teacher Teacher
Other activities
Hawker Skulpturer Street Vendor Supermarket Toilet Cleaner Video Grapher
Construction
Builder Builder
Mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply, waste management
Electrician Engineer

Informal sector activities Kampala. Source: Adapted from the Labor Force Survey Uganda 2016/17