RESEARCH REPORT

FOOD CONSUMPTION DYNAMICS OF THE URBAN POOR IN FORT PORTAL MUNICIPALITY

"Towards an inclusive and green food security policy for Fort Portal Urban Area, Uganda"

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Executive summary

This report provides an analysis of the street food system in Fort Portal town . The study draws attention to the consumption dynamics of the urban poor to bring new insights into the current global food debate framed on population forecasts and the related production narrative. Through a consumer survey, interviews and focus group discussions with the urban food vendors and the different consumer segments. The evidence suggests that food security and nutrition, particularly for the urban poor is not just about addressing food production because:

a) The food consumption choices of the urban poor are not totally tied to what the subsistence-based agriculture food system produces.
   o Nearly half the amount of the food on the streets in Fort-Portal is prepared from or with industrial agri-products such as wheat flour, cooking oil and spices as dictated by the consumers' preferences. Consumers' decisions about food are made based mainly on affordability and these foods, particularly chapatti are cheaper and more filling than the traditional diets.
   o This study found a modest influence of small holder agriculture to food security of the urban poor and a likely nutritional challenge in the next decades especially when school age children are feeding on the same food.
b) The food system for the urban poor is not yet well appreciated by urban authorities despite its surpassing growth and importance over the favoured modern food system comprising of supermarkets, restaurants, hotels and modern and spacious market buildings like Mpanga market in Fortportal town.
c) The agitation for modern supply food chains favoured by urban authorities within the context of transition into a tourist city remains flawed. The government can influence policies, regulations and programmes towards modern supply chains and other approaches for market organization but this study finds that the informal food network is preferred and will likely survive for several more decades.
d) The informal food system is a logical response to the food needs of not only the urban poor but also the dynamism and the state of constant development changes like road infrastructure that are currently responsible for large population movement and largely benefiting from the informal food system.

We come to the conclusion that, provided the informal food distribution network stays delinked from disease outbreaks, it can exploit the comparative advantage it has in the food system and use to its advantage the high level political and humanitarian support to get organised and use self regulation in the provision of food under basic standards of safety and hygiene.

1 Introduction

This evidence report on food consumption of the urban poor in Fort portal municipality has been compiled by Kabarole Research and Resource Centre, a local partner in the Food Change Labs along with IIED and Hivos. The study draws attention to the consumption dynamics of the urban poor to bring new insights into the current global food debate framed on population forecasts and the related production narrative. It highlights the gap in the food security discourse for the urban poor.

According to the United Nations human settlements programme, UN Habitat, Africa is the fastest urbanising continent in the world. By 2050, 60% of all Africans will be living in cities. However, urbanisation in Africa is not going hand-in-hand with widespread economic growth; many cities are in fact seeing a proliferation of urban poverty.

Developing countries are experiencing socio-economic changes resulting from economic upheavals and in turn leading to , a very fast growth in rural-to-urban migration. Thus a growing urban population is also characterised by high unemployment rates and limited work opportunities, low compensation levels for salaries and wage earners, and limited social supportive programmes. These conditions make urban food vending a common phenomenon and Uganda is no exception.

on average 40% of the urban poor in low and middle income countries consume street food (Rhona Mijumbi, 2012). This population and others served by the relatively low prices and the convinience of the location rather than the saftey, quality and hygiene, food vending seems to meet their needs that are not met by the formal sector.

Although, a large urban population benefits from the informal vending of food, there are varied arguments on the nutritional status of street food. What is clear though is that- there is already noticeable anecdotal evidence on the nutritional challenge among the local populace, including the urban areas, among children and pregnant mothers. Over 41.7% of children in South Western Ugandan where Fort-Portal is located are stunted. This is slightly higher to the national average of 34% of the under 5 children that are stunted (UDHS: 2011). Ironically, this part of Uganda is considered Uganda's food basket. The 2006 UDHS survey had revealed a worse off situation of 38% stunted growth in the under 5 children, 6% of under 5 showing symptoms of wasting and 16% underweight.

According to World Vision Canada (2008), more than 850 million people worldwide are already undernourished, meaning their food intake does not include sufficient calories to meet the minimum needs of an active life. In addition, hunger and malnutrition cause 3.5 million child deaths every year. In contrast, the earth today produces enough food for 12 billion people and

a billion people are substantially over consuming spawning a new public health epidemic involving chronic conditions such as type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

While food is a basic human right and should be universally available to all, the challenge is providing it with the growing population and sustainably, given that in future, there will likely be less land available and climate change will mean we need to use the earth's resources more efficiently.

Street food in Uganda is governed by section 281 of the Public Health Act, which spells out mandatory requirements for all houses, including running water, toilet facilities , refuse bins and medical examination for the food handlers. However, besides the law being outdated, it's also weakly followed up.

So, what is the problem with urban food security? This is what this study draws attention to. The search for transformation primarily in the direction of significantly increased food production is missing some important reality. Consumption patterns are a much bigger than production and by focusing on the consumption dynamics especially of the urban poor with hindsight that almost all population growth will be urban, mostly in low-middle income countries. This study seeks to find new entry points and insights that provide solution-oriented avenues of thinking and action in the present global food debate and thus bridge deepening divides.

2 Methodology

2.1 Study compnents

The study was mainly concentrated within Fort Portal municipality and to a lesser extent, its hinterland and used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data. The study targets were street vendors, and consumers of street food in Fort-Portal Municipality.

2.2 Sample methods

The study sample was purposive within a population that identifies either as street food vendors or consumers. A significant percentange of the consumers were the unmarried male youths.

2.3 Data collection

Given the concentration of the street vendors in the municiplity, most respondents from the supply side (vendors) were drawn from the municiplity while the respondents from the demand side (consumers) were drawn beyond the municiplity to include its hinter land and some from the rural areas.

A structured questionnaire was administered to 600 consumers, while a study guide was used for Focus group discussions and key informant interviews for 20 consumers and 50 street vendors in Fort-Portal municipality. Additional data was also collected through observations for; areas in which vendors operated, work conditions of consumers, and consumers conditions at their residences.

2.4 Strengths and limitations of study

This study is positioned on the opportunities of the government plan to transform Fort-Portal into a tourist City in Uganda's vision 2040. It therefore provides the opportunity to generate baseline data that could support the planning of Fort-Portal tourist city.

However, we can-not rule out the fact the public excitement on the transition of Fort-Portal into a tourist city could have in someway skewed the views and opinions of respondents. On the one hand, the timing for the study around electioneering time, could have as well had an influence on responses of both vendors, consumers and political leaders that participated in the study.

Overall, the assumption that street food is targeted at the urban poor could have as well missed a point and it can be criticised as having set out with a biased perspective.

2.5 Ethical issues

Prior to data collection, respondents were informed about the study exercise and its importance was thoroughly explained. Assurance for confidentiality of the information provided was given before proceeding with interviews.

2.6 Demographics of street food consumers

Characteristic		Consumer location						Total (n=600)	
		Urban (n=300)		Peri-urban (n=150)		Rural(n=150)			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Marital Status	Married	114	38.0	75	50	50	33.6	239	39.9
	Single	177	59.0	70	46.7	93	62.4	340	56.8
	Divorced	7	2.3	3	2.0	6	4.0	16	2.7
	Windowed	2	0.7	2	1.3	0.0	0.0	4	0.7
Sex	Male	207	69	105	70	99	66	411	68.5
	Female	93	31	45	30	51	34	189	31.5
Age bracket	Below 18	7	2.3	7	4.7	10	6.7	24	4.0
	18-29	218	72.7	81	54.0	93	62.0	392	65.3
	30-39	54	18.0	49	32.7	38	25.3	140	23.5
	40-49	18	6.0	10	6.7	6	4.0	34	5.7
	50+	3	1.0	3	2.0	3	2.0	9	1.5

Table 1: Consumer demographics

It should be noted from the demographics that, most street food consumers are unmarried and mostly youths (72.7%) and the males are the dominant consumers (69%). This findling partly explains who largely consume street and it also highlights their income gaps as low income earners. The survey however didnot look at the education levels of the 72,7% consumers of street food but will most likely be primary and for some, ordinary secondary education. This kind of education in Uganda does not provide employable skills and the consumers of food will be employed as manual laborers in Fort-Portal Urban area.

3   Results and discussions

This section presents the key results from this urban street food consumer survey and as well as a discussion of the findings.

3.1   Evolution of food on the streets of Fort-Portal

3.1.1   Scope, food types and source

According to Niyibizi Jelosom of the street vendors association, street food in its current form was first observed in 2006 with about six vendors along Bundibugyo road. In the same period, there were about 4 street based chapatti makers and sellers in the whole of Fort Portal town. Today, there are about 280 food vendors operating on 4 major streets/locations in the main town.

Soaring demand for cheap and convenient food has led to the emergence and rapid growth of the street food concept. In response to this growth, the urban authority is stepping into a sector it has barely paid attention to and the opinions are divided about the operations. As it stands, street food can-not be ignored but at the same time, it is not accepted yet.

Current views from different stakeholders including technocrats, politicians, food vendors and consumers converge on the essence of street food but the leadership, particularly the technical leadership is challenged to commit to its operations. The technocrats maintain that street food is illegal (which is true under Ugandan law) and would not formally endorse their operations unless the public health Act is amended in their favour. The current leeway for street vendors to operate is an off record agreement between the authorities and the representatives of the street vendors under some conditions[1]. This progressive step is mainly thanks to the political leadership whose argument for street food is about combating youth unemployment while at the same time exploiting the market for affordable ready food.

3.1.2   Food types

Street food is diverse. Most vendors join in the street food business based on what they believe they are good at and therefore, have a comparative advantage. However, in the course of time, new entrants pick on the same menu, consequently causing overcrowding and leading some

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[1] Operate between 5pm-9am, maintain good hygiene, have identification – identity cards and customized aprons.

vendors to switch to other foods. This is how street food has become diverse and sustained by the positive response of the consumers.

Table 2: Diversity of street food

	Types of street food
1	Chapatti based meals (egg+chapatti or beans+chapatti)
2	Local food (stews+local starchy food)
3	Tea/porridge accompanied with light snacks like mandazzi, scones, fried cassava or sweet potatoes
4	Roasted meats (chicken beef, pork and goat's meat)
5	Fast foods (chips, sausages fried liver and beef)
6	Roasted maize and plantain (gonja)
7	Pilau(Pilawo in Fort-Portal)

The food sold on the street can be classified in four main categories and these are:

1. Local food (usually steamed starchy foods served with a choice of vegetable, beef and chicken stews)
2. Fast foods (usually chips, fried beef and liver)
3. Muchomo (Roasted meat like; beef, goat's meat, pork, chicken and sometimes sausages)
4. Chapatti based meals (rolex[2] and kikomando[3] formats)

3.1.2.1   Local food

The local foods sub group is conceivably the section of street food which has stirred the most this debate on street food mainly because of how it has turned the food culture on its head. The general expectation is that food of this kind is typically eaten in homes and in restaurants if people have to. This food coming out of the home onto the street is something that people especially the older consider as taboo, and are trying to adjust to.

Besides, the cultural shock**, it is prepared off-site and is brought to the street as ready to eat as opposed to other street foods which are prepared in the vicinity.** There is limited information to the consumers about the environments in which the food is prepared and this is a major concern as well in the overall safety debate.

In the absence of formal certification and supervision by urban authorities, the only safeguard in this food system is on site where consumers can observe the handling and get some assurance about the safety of the food. Local food is prepared by the vendors in their homes and carried to the streets along with the utensils. **Most of the vendors carry along a charcoal stove to keep the food warm but it still raises the most concerns because it's most prone to contamination given the total lack of basic infrastructure like public water stand points and**

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[2] The combination of chapatti and fried eggs usually rolled together while the latter refers to the
[3] The combination of chapatti and beans.

public toilets. Vendors have a difficult job of carrying to and fro the full apparatus which includes water, utensils, soap, benches, charcoal and charcoal stove because of the demands of the type of food. **Most consumers of local food eat on site as opposed to other street foods which are normally packed for consumers to eat on the go or take away. As it stands, vendors in local food who happen to be mostly women operate in the most precarious conditions and seem to be the source of contempt from local authorities for street food**. However, from a nutritional perspective, local food vendors make a variety of nutritious foods more available and affordable to consumers than other sections of street food.

3.1.2.2 Fast foods

Fast foods are involving mainly potato chips, fried beef and liver is fast growing with women migrating from serving local food to fast foods. Women who have crossed over perceive fast foods as another plausible and feminine business option for women on the street besides local food. Vendors here emphasized location as crucial because of the cost of food relative to other street foods. Compared to local food, fast foods cost more and the vendors have to position in strategic places like in front of grocery shops and mini bars which come at a monthly rental charge of 40,000 (14 USD) on average. There are fewer vendors dealing in fast foods compared to local food.

3.1.2.3 Muchomo-Roasted meat/chicken

Roasted meats are most tolerated by the local authorities and have been on the street longer than local and fast foods. The vendors are commonest around bars and discotheques and usually operate with an understanding with the business proprietors. Most vendors in roasted meat and chicken are men and it is generally believed to be most suitable for men because of their perceived higher tolerance to heat compared to women, the extended working hours in the night, moreover around bars and the associated security risks, which men are better placed to circumvent.

3.1.2.4 Chapatti based meal

This is the flagship of street food and the embodiment of the affordability trait of street food. The meal gives a feeling of a full stomach for a long time which means, the consumers take several hours before they feel again the need for food. Chapatti can be eaten plain when used as a snack or combined with either fried eggs or beans to turn it into a meal.

It is a phenomenon contemporary meal which has evolved to simulate a full meal yet remain affordable. These creative recipes are locally known as "rolex" and "Kikomando". The former is used to refer to the combination of chapatti and fried eggs usually rolled together while the latter refers to the combination of chapatti and beans. The chapatti is cut into smaller pieces and served with beans. On average, each chapatti vendor makes between 100- 150 pieces of chapatti and uses half a cartoon (i.e. 12 kgs of wheat flour) in a day. When eggs are added,

most vendors use up a try or two daily. For their lion's share of the street food, chapatti vendors pay 1000 UGX in dues daily to the South division office while the local food vendors pay half the dues daily because of the higher turnover of the former. It is worth noting that the chapatti business on the streets is virtually a male preserve partly for the same reasons as roasted meat. It's also very strenuous especially at the stage of making the dough and therefore, left for the men.

> **Summary Finding/Discussion**
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> Over time, street food has evolved in For-Portal and encompasses all types of food catering for the local food culture and the contemporary food culture of fast foods and the chapatti based meals.
>
> Arguably, Local food on the street raises the most concerns and contempt from a cultural and safety perspective yet makes a variety of nutritious foods more available and affordable to consumers than other sections of street food and provides important employment for women. From consumers' perspective, chapatti based meals seem to be preferred for its filling effect and not for its nutritional value.
>
> We also observed that, local food apparatus, especially burning charcoal stoves driven on Boda-Bodas or bicycles pose serious risks especially with many of the food vendors operating near gas stations and others operating in congested spaces.

3.1.3   Source – where is the food coming from?

Most food eventually sold on the street as ready food is locally sourced from the nearest markets particularly Kabundaire market situated within Fort Portal he farmers' market. Vendors do not go too far in search for food to reduce on the operational costs to the extent possible.

 We observed that most vendors especially those dealing in local food cannot do exceeding volumes of food by the very nature of the business (i.e. food cooked at home and carried to the street along with the necessary apparatus). Most vendors normally prepare food for a maximum of 30 customers. This also means that, they are not buying big volumes of food. For example, Katogo vendors roughly use one large bunch of Matooke to prepare food for about 30 customers. At the present scale, most local food vendors do not find it economical to go to the markets in the hinterland except when the food is not available in the town markets (which rarely happens).

However, for the vendors dealing in roasted meat, they source from multiple markets within and outside the town and choose time to time the market with the most competitive prices. Some of the vendors have regular suppliers and maintain contact with livestock farmers in the neighboring villages. This is so mainly because of the relatively higher volume of the trade in

which case, even a small difference in the cost price between different markets/suppliers makes business sense. Kaahwa Robert, a roaster of chicken and goat's meat roasts between 10 and 15 birds a day while another roaster, Mutegeki Julius roasts 3 birds daily on average and supplies about 40 raw birds daily to his esteemed customers. For this kind of volume, a lower cost price is pursued at all cost because it ultimately makes a difference in the profit margin.

For chapatti vendors, the source of food is any grocery store within the closest reach because prices for industrial agri-products such as wheat flour and cooking oil are fixed. In comparison to the fresh food market, grocery stores represent the biggest source of food for street food mainly because chapatti based meals takes the lion's share of street food. About 50% of 280 street vendors profiled and registered by the street vendors association are chapatti vendors; they churn out the most food and serve the highest number of customers. On average, each chapatti vendor serves over 50 customers in a day.

> The strongest linkage between the small holder agriculture in the hinter land and the food consumption in Fort portal town is through livestock farmers. Most of the roasters have contacts with farmers in the neighboring villages who supply them regularly. This kind of relationship also extends to the chapatti vendors via poultry products, particularly eggs and vegetables and local food vendors for the Matooke based meals through Matooke bicycle vendors and a farmers' market located in Fort-Portal town.

3.2   Economics of food vending and consumption

This section presents and discusses the economic aspects of food vending and consumption in Fort-Portal Town.

3.2.1   Access, affordability and food choices

Graph 1: Monetary Value of food accessed by Consumers from Vendors.
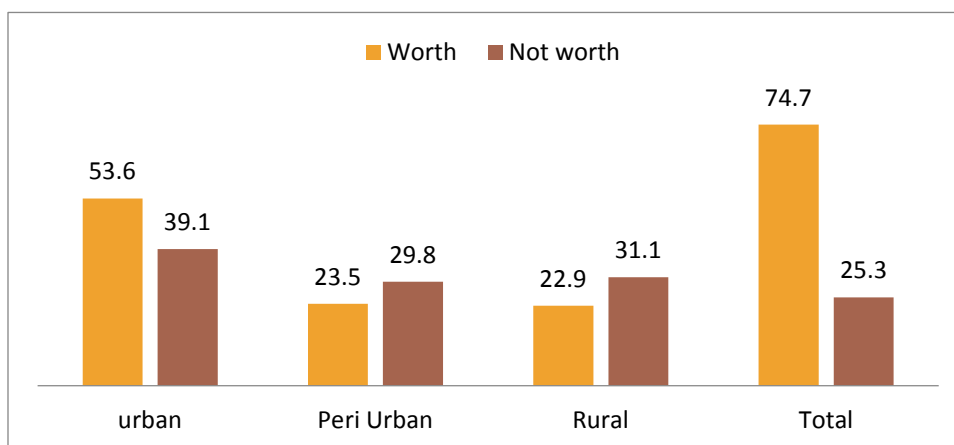
The one most important driver of street food is the soaring need for cheap and convenient food by the informal labor force, and a growing number of students as a result of sprouting

universities in Fort-Portal. The consumer survey rated the monetary value of food at 74.7% and that it was worth it. The reasons for consuming street food go beyond affordability, but accessibility, availability and quantity of food served. Hardly did the consumers make mention of the dietary content of food on the street.

Table 3: Profession of consumers of vended food

Employment	Responses	
	No.	Percentage
Business person[4]	260	43.30%
Bodaboda	97	16.2%
Student	60	10.0%
Farmer	54	9.0%
Carpenter	26	4.3%
Drivers/conductor	20	3.3%
Barber/salon	14	2.3%
Mechanic	14	2.3%
Construction worker	11	1.8%
car washer	11	1.8%
Butcher man	7	1.2%
Waitress	5	.8%
Potter	4	.7%
Medical officer	3	0.5%
Shoe shiner	2	0.3%
Tailor	2	0.3%
Hawker	2	0.3%
Receptionist	2	0.3%
Radio Presenter	2	0.3%
Electrician	2	0.3%
Secretary	1	0.2%
Office cleaner	1	0.2%

The consumer survey further revealed that the list of consumers is developing, enlisting professionals in the medical and media fields and formal office (see table 3). From a sample of 600 consumers presumably expected to be composed of semi and unskilled labourers, there were three medical officers, two receptionists, two radio presenters and one secretary. This shows the street food clientele is evolving and has the potential to rewrite its narrative in regard to who it serves.

A number of consumers highly appreciate the diversity of street food and say that they can treat their taste buds on the street more than they can in their homes. It's these little additives to the street food concept that has made it a force in the urban food systems and drawn in more consumers including the middle class.

The results from the consumer survey in table 4 below shows that more half (56.3%) of consumers interviewed just recently started consuming street food than those who have consumed it for a year and more (13%).

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[4] Small scale business operators in a range of merchandise such as clothes, groceries, stationary etc

Table 4: Length of time spent depending on street food

Characteristic		Consumer location						Total (n=600)	
		Urban (n=300)		Peri-urban (n=150)		Rural(n=150)			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Time taken consuming street food	1-5 months	185	61.7	70	46.7	83	55.3	338	56.3
	6-12 Months	51	17	51	34	39	26	141	23.5
	12+ months	38	12.7	18	12	22	14.7	78	13
	Non response	26	8.7	11	7.3	6	4	43	7.2

Source: Survey data

Nonetheless, for the regular consumers, cost and convenience still account for the most reason for consuming street food as illustrated below:

- **For boda-boda cyclists**, street food is within easy reach as they also operate on the street. They can affordably munch on their breakfast, lunch or supper in waiting for the next passenger and are saved the bother of having to leave their duty posts in search for food. Street food is also diversified with a long price continuum. This translates into flexibility on the part of the cyclists who earn their income on a daily basis. On a bad day, they can opt for a much cheaper meal because street food is highly divisible. For example, a chapatti based meal can be customized to fit the consumer's budget. Depending on the income of the day, a consumer can opt for one or two eggs to be added to his or her chapatti and then, charged accordingly. Similarly, local food can be served as half plate or full plate, plain or alcarte to fit the consumer's budget.
- **For drivers of commuter vehicles and commercial trucks and travelers especially on business**, street food is usually available at the time they need it. Most of the drivers end the day's work late evening when most licensed food outlets like restaurants are closed or have run out of food. Street food vendors on the other hand work late into the night and are a surer source of food for workers who remain active for the first half of the night. Travelers on the hand are usually in transit; they arrive in Fort portal town and shortly board again for their final destinations which can be Kampala, Bundibugyo or Kasese. Street food is the closest to their routes and saves them a lot of hustle if they had to move some distance from the bus stops in search for ready food.
- **For labourers at construction sites**, street food best fits their circumstances as low wage workers and non-residents in the town where most building projects take place. Most workers commute daily from neighboring villages very early in the morning and return late in the evening and therefore, rarely have the opportunity to eat food from home. From

their daily low wage, they have to pay for daily operational expenses such as transport and food and therefore, opt for cheaper street food as the logical response.

- **For workers in metal and carpentry workshops**, street food is within their reach especially around the Kisenyi area which also has the highest concentration of street food vendors. The workers and the food vendors have overtime familiarized with each other as the former represent a class of more permanent consumers who can even be served food on credit.
- **For students, especially college and university students residing in hostels**, street food is convenient for their busy student life. Additionally, most of them live in very limited spaces that are not conducive for cooking and in cases where food is provided, it is basic and monotonous. On the street however, students can find a variety of affordable food which solves their space issues and gives them a break from the food monotony (i.e. posho, rice and beans) characteristic of colleges.

Summary Finding/Discussion

This study shows that 56.3 % of consumers of street food started consuming street food less than 5 months ago. This finding indicates a growing trend for street food, and also partly explains an increasing population in the township. It literally implies that, with more demand for street food, street food vending is likely to grow much faster than anticipated. This no doubt explains the first increasing number of food vendors on the streets of Fort-Portal of at least 50 food vendors per year.

It can be observed however, that, a good number of street food consumers like construction workers, carpenters and Boda-Boda riders are not town residents while others are travelers heading to other neighboring towns. This also provides a knock on effect to the assumption that urban poor would be the sole target for street food.

We can therefore conclude that,

a) Street food is not necessarily stimulated by the income disparity of urban residents but convenience reasons.
b) The regular commuters and consumers of street food in urban Fort-Portal Town will most likely influence the food culture in the rural areas.
c) Street food consumers are not just the urban poor or slum dwellers, they are also regular people as street food evolves, creating recipes for not only nourishment but pleasure as well. Most fast foods and roasted meat are consumed mainly for the pleasure of food by the middle class.
d) Consumers obtain multiple values including those which are measurable in monetary terms and those which are not. This makes street food more valuable to the consumers than the vendors who basically enjoy the direct monetary value.

4   Food vending and sanitation

Without official license, street food remains outside the jurisdiction of the municipal leadership which means that, the district health inspector and the senior enforcement officer do not play the inspection and enforcement roles respectively as they would for licensed food outlets like restaurants and hotels. They in fact question the safety, especially of the meat and poultry products and the water used in food preparation in the Kisenyi slum area; they fear some of these products may be unfit for consumption but their hands are somewhat tied. They think a wakeup call will certainly come in form of disease outbreak and then, the entire food system will be brought to a more objective check than what is happening now.

One chapatti vendor – Abdul Majid frankly talked about the daily health risk associated with the Mugunu stream which runs through Kisenyi and is evidently degraded with garbage. He said that,

> *"The proximity of the vendors to the stream presents a daily temptation to use the contaminated water to cook and wash dishes in light of the general limited access to clean water in the area".*

In his view, improving food safety will go along with some redeeming work on Mugunu stream as well as improving general access to clean water in the food vending areas.

Garbage also accumulates beyond the revenue collected to clean up. According to the chairman of south division, the division accumulates 67 tonnes of garbage on a daily basis and spends above 5 million Uganda shillings in garbage collection. **The division spends an extra 1.5 million Uganda shilling per month to pay people who pick up litter and garbage carelessly disposed. This kind of litter is very much linked to the street food system yet the revenue collected from the street vendors is as low as 200,000-300,000 Uganda shillings per month.** This means **the street vendors are still required of a better act on garbage management as well as the consumers they serve**. Currently, the municipality does not have enough garbage bins where litter could be disposed off by both consumers and reinforced by rigorous public awareness on proper waste disposal.

5   Governance of street vending

5.1   The Operational legal framework

There is nowhere in the Public health Act of 1935 that food vending is provided for. This is re-sounded by the law enforcement officers in For-Portal Municipality. The law only makes reference to foodstuffs in ware houses and the powers of a medical health officer to intervene in situations such as pollution and any other forms of contamination including that originating

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from vermin. The law is therefore old and not applicable in the contemporary times where food vending has been become very important.

While the local government Act of 1998 gives powers to the local governments to make by-laws where they find them appropriate, there is no record of any effort by Fort-Portal municipality to make by-laws regulating street food vending. Although not licensed, food vending is one of the revenue streams for Fort-Portal municipality, we found out that the operations of food vendors are informal and remain as such. The food vendors however have benefited from a humanitarian argument from politicians that view food vending as a form of employment. At the moment this seems as the only security that the vendors have to operate their business of street food vending without being randomly swept off the street by enforcement officer.

5.1.1   Self-regulation

The vendors, with support from the south division chairperson recently formed a vendors' association to improve coordination with the leadership which so far exhibited tolerance for their trade compared to the previous regimes. Taking into account the precariousness of street food vending, there was broad consensus on the part of the vendors to self-regulate and through good behavior, diffuse the biases against their trade and make proud the political leadership especially which has literally been their mouthpiece and advocate. According to the chairman of the south division,

"the key requirement from the vendors is to maintain good hygiene and respect the time allocated (from 5pm to 9am) for their operations".

Additional requirements include: acquiring a street food identity card, wearing aprons and taking medical checkups. Once these key requirements are met, vendors can operate smoothly. Most vendors confirmed that the relationship with the urban authorities, especially politicians except that this relationship varies from one political regime to another.

It was during this study that for the very first time that vendors heard about local authority plans to find a permanent solution to their fears of food safety in the township and how they planned to organized them. The municipality planned to put all food vendors in a permanent vendor centre. However this was met with resistance by the vendors who argued that the decision was not in tandem with the dynamics of food vending.

According to the vendors (and supported by the survey's data), their only edge in the food system is accessibility and affordability which a central market arrangement would strip off and render them useless to their customers.

The vendors' recommendation though not yet solicited is to improve the working condition where they already operate, rather than relocate them away from their consumers. They are

requesting provisions like, street lights, public water stand points, public toilets which operate in the night as well, storage facilities and strong foldable tents to increase the safety of the food and bring order on the streets. Consumers too, alluded to the same improvements when they were asked about the challenges they face in consuming street food. The challenges of consumers were much less about the actual food but rather the conditions under which they consume the food and they were mostly concerned about the open air situation that easily gets destabilized by the rainy weather and dust. The consumers were also concerned about the congestion- in the areas where food is served.

Summary Findings/Discussion

The relationship between vendors and politicians is only temporary and informal and only lasts because of humanitarian views of politicians and if vendors can keep part of the bargain, (i.e. maintain good hygiene, respect stipulated working hours and proper identification – identity cards, standard apron). Without local authorities providing an updated legal framework and facilities on the current trends of food vending, there are no guarantees that the business can remain stable for a long time. The situation could change when an epidemic related to food vending strikes. This situation therefore, makes street food vending in Fort-Portal **ambiguous because of the interplay of legal and humanitarian views.**

It also emerges from this study, the municipal authorities do not necessarily understand the dynamics of street food vending and their policies and plans are out of touch with realities on the ground. The fear is that, any policies implemented without consultation with the vendors, stand a chance to be resisted and become a source of conflict. The authorities however insist that the town is already planned and cannot be redesigned. All the spaces currently used by the vendors are either road reserves which must be left clear or are private spaces owned by the landlords of buildings along the streets, in which case, they are outside the municipal jurisdiction.

6   Conclusions

As it stands now, the street food system is functioning reasonably well. There are no recent cases of urban authorities chasing the vendors or impounding their food and property. The food system has gained a semblance of stability through a reliance on the political support and good behavior on the part of the vendors. The question that remains is whether this food system is resilient enough in an intensely unstable context. There are straight answers but one thing for sure is that the alternative food systems are less likely to prove viable for the growing urban population of low income earners.

As Fort- Portal navigates its path into a city status, so too will the leadership have to re-examine the aspect of inclusiveness in all aspects of urban planning especially food access for all as the pressure for affordable food for all is only likely to intensify in the coming years.

.There is one particularly striking finding of the study which challenges the conventional attitude towards street food and signal new ways of looking at street food. The state of constant change and dynamism of the street food system has made it a major food system not only for the low income residents but the middle class as well. This redefinition of street food places it in direct conflict with the image of the soon-to-be Fort Portal city. A section of the people will remain eager to combat street food rather than improve it in the name of progress.

Overall, the main findings can be summarized as follows:

Street food is an important source of food for the low income and the commuter population. Any disruptions in the street food system would increase their vulnerability in a very direct way.

The food system in Fort-Portal urban area is currently functioning fairly well and the consumers are generally happy with what they get although there continues to be a glaring knowledge gap on food safety, and the nutritional value of street food that is consumed on the street.

Largely, street food vending is surviving through self-regulation amidst an old and archaic law, supplemented by good behavior of the vendors. However, the authorities could strike in case of an epidemic that puts the public at risk and yet street food remains the most affordable for the low income urban dwellers.

7   References

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ANNEXI: Consumer Survey Questionnaire

GENERAL INFORMATION	
1. consumer setting	a) Urban b) Peri-urban c) Rural
2. Gender	a) Male b) Female
3. Marital status	a) Married b) Single c) Divorced/separated d) Widow/widower
4. Age	a) Below 18 b) 18-29 c) 30- 39 d) 40-49 e) 50+
5. Village / Cell of residence	
6. Sub county/ Division of residence	
7. Where you reside, Is it your place of origin?	a) Yes b) No
8 If no, who long have you been staying in this place?	_____Months OR _____Years
9. Is the place you stay the same place of work	a) Yes b) No
10. If No, provide subcounty /division work from?	
11. What do you do currently?	**a)** Boda Boda b) Drivers / conductor c) Construction worker d) Carpenter e) Student f) Shop/salon attendants g) Farmer f) Other (Specify)_____
12. Estimated Average income per day (if applicable)	*Shillings*
13. What time do you report to work?	*Time*
14. What time do you leave work to your home?	*Time*

FOOD ACCESS FROM STREET FOOD VENDORS		
15. Do you access food street vendors?	*From work Place* a) Yes b) No	*From Home (residence)* a) Yes b) No
16. What are you preferred food vending access points? **Multiple response**	a) Road hawkers b) Road side food stales c) Food markets d) Other………………….	a) Road hawkers b) Road side food stales c) Food markets d) Other……………………..

17. Which is your most accessed food vending access points? Choose one	a) Road hawkers b)Road side food stales c) Food markets d) Other…………………………	a) Road hawkers b)Road side food stales c) Food markets d) Other …………………………..
18. If yes, how long does it take you to access food venders?	*From work Place* **a)** Less than 5 mins **b)** 5 -10 mins **c)** 10- 30 min **d)** 30 min-1hour **e)** 1 hour+	*From Home (residence)* **a)** Less than 5 mins **b)** 5 -10 mins **c)** 10- 30 min **d)** 30 min-1hour **e)** 1 hour+
19. Have you ever consumed food from these street food vendors?	a) Yes b) No	
20. If yes, why do you buy food from the street food vendors?	a) Cheaper b) Easily Accessible c) Serve more food d) Serve well prepared food d) Serve nutritious food e) Available at all times f) Other _____	
21. If yes, how often do consume food from the street food vendors in a week?	a) Daily (6-7 days) b) 5 days c) 4 days d) 1-3 days	
22. If yes, what meals do you often consume?	a) Breakfast (6-12pm) b) Lunch (12-6pm) c) Dinner (6:00 -3:00 am)	
23. What is the type of food do you buy from the vendors on a daily basis?	**BREAKFAST** **a)** Katogo **b)** Tea /porridge **c)** Chappati **d)** Maddazi **e)** Samosa f) Muchomo **f)** Other _____	**LUNCH** **a)** Katogo **b)** Pilaw (fried rice) c) Home cooked food b) Tea / porridge c) Chappati e) Maddazi f) Muchomo g) Samosa h) Other _____	**DINNER** a) Katogo b) Pilaw (fried rice) c) Home cooked food b) Tea / porridge c) Chappati e) Maddazi f) Muchomo g) Samosa g) Other _____

24. Does you menu change on daily basis?	a) Yes b) No	a) Yes b) No	a) Yes b) No
25. What actual time do you access the food from the vendors and what is the preferred time?	**BREAKFAST**	**LUNCH**	**DINNER**
	Actual / preferred	Actual / preferred	Actual / Preferred
26. Do you access the preferred food from the street vendors at your convenient time?	**BREAKFAST**	**LUNCH**	**DINNER**
	a) Yes, always b) Yes, sometimes c) No	a) Yes, always b) Yes, sometimes c) No	a) Yes, always b) Yes, sometimes c) No
27. How much on average do you spend on food if you are to buy it from local restaurants?	**BREAKFAST**	**LUNCH**	**DINNER**
28. How much on average do you spend on food from street food vendors?	**BREAKFAST**	**LUNCH**	**DINNER**
29. Is the food bought from street food vendors worth the value of the money paid	a) Yes b) No Please give your reason?_____ _____		

GENERAL FOOD SAFETY   AND NUTIRITION

30. How do you rate the hygiene of the place where you get food from?	a) Good hygiene b) Fair hygiene c) Poor Hygiene Give reason:…………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………………
31. How do rate the hygiene of the people that serve you food?	a) Good hygiene b) Fair hygiene c) Poor Hygiene Give reason:…………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………………
32. Have you had any recent health complications that are associated to food from the street?	a) Yes, more often b) Sometimes c) No Give reason:…………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………………
33. How do you rate the overall diet of the food you consume from vendors?	) Good diet b) Fair diet c) Poor diet Give reason:……………………………………………………………………

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CHANGES IN FOOD CONSUMPTION	
34. Are there any changes in how you obtain food compared to 5 years ago in your area?	a) Yes b) No If yes, What are those changes?... ....

35. In your view what has triggered those changes?

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SUGGESTIONS

36. What are your suggestions to ensure the low income earners have access to safe and affordable food?
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37. What suggustions do have to make street food vending better?
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Would like to be contacted for further discussions on the same subject?   A) Yes   B) No

If yes, Provide Name _____Contact _____