

Gender Dimensions of the Food Crisis in Sub Saharan Africa

Bola O. Akanji

Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research

**International Conference on Gender and Global
Economic Crisis.**

United Nations Headquarters, New York. July 13 – 14, 2009

Organised by International Working Group on Gender
Macroeconomics and International Economics (GEM-IWG)
and Gender equality and the Economy Program, Levy
Economics Institute of Bard College

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

Food Crisis is not new in sub-Saharan Africa

Typology of food crisis faced by SSA

Gender dimensions of the causes and effects of crisis – structural and immediate

Gender blindness of global and national

Responses

Addressing structural problem through sustainable macroeconomic policies in the agricultural sector

Threats and opportunities for engendering the necessary macroeconomic responses

WHICH FOOD CRISIS?

SSA has always been in one food crisis or the other!!! Is this different from others?

- The first food crisis was triggered by colonial policy orientation inherited by national government in the pre and immediate post colonial era Policies were deliberately geared towards export-led growth with primary exports being the main source of revenue for SSA and the main source of industrial growth in Europe;
- Result: crisis of food supply shortages on the aggregate level as farmers shifted resources to tradables and markets shifted from food markets to export markets; Fall in export revenue in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Gender dimension:

- Gender roles in agriculture became reversed. Women lost the “hoe culture” and their erstwhile dominance in agricultural commerce. Food insecurity was smoothened by women who sustained subsistence food production.
- Africa lost the opportunity to shape her agricultural production within a sustainable macro-economic framework for long term technological growth and agro-based industrialisation.
- The onset of vulnerability to external shocks

Second Food Crisis

- Second food crisis occurred in some resource rich developing countries (such as Nigeria, Mexico etc) who had the potential to maintain progressive and agro-based macroeconomic policies
- Dutch disease resulted from boom in oil demand from developed countries; oil revenue replaced agricultural export revenue; fiscal neglect of the sector; low share in both GDP and GNP;
- Crash in global food crisis further led to disincentives in the agricultural export sector
- Africa continues to reinforce subsistence food production plus high import dependency;
- Even with decline in export supply resultant price hikes in the global food market and drop in oil prices, farmers did not reap the price gain due to dominance of state controlled marketing boards; **disincentive for largescale production and agro-based industrialization was killed from within;**

Gender dimension

- Women again to the rescue – left on the farms, left in the rural households and left to sustain the waning food crop economy mainly through subsistence.
- With price disincentive, tradable crop economy was further abandoned; women began to lose their land to returnee male farmers; time poverty of women increased as they took responsibility for larger family crop lands (larger) without commensurate technology;

Third Food crisis

- Crisis of adjustment in the mid 1980 and 1990s
- Market liberalisation and return to tradable crop production; crash in real income of export farmers due to exchange rate adjustment; liberalisation policies maintained a negative pressure on profitability;
- Subsistence was threatened as farmers produced more for the market under a situation of eroding real income; Industries were strangled therefore **agro-industrial development was again precluded**.
- Falling real income as exchange rate adjustment and inflation in many countries shrank real income;
- cash quest to meet inflationary trend on non-food items led to food insecurity which was addressed, not through sustainable policy changes but mainly through food imports,

Social adjustment programs and gender

- cash transfers in form of farm credit and fertilizer subsidies mostly did not reach women farmers.
- small scale agriculture became institutionalised as farmers contended with small parcels of land to meet market demand.
- Consequence for women – women tried to adjust to commercial agriculture but had to contend with small fragmented land holdings, often, on borrowed land, precluding more remunerative production.

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Food Crisis occasioned by shocks of man-made and natural disasters

- Has been occurring in many countries of SSA facing civil wars and other political conflict
- Often leading to large-scale food shortages as production gets disrupted and large populations of refugees are created;

Gender

- Refugee camps filled with women and children contributed to crisis of food supply in neighbouring countries;
- Apart from loss of livelihood and food insecurity, women experience other forms of insecurity – personal insecurity, declining health status of households depleted worsening IMR and MMR,

Food crisis occasioned by climate change

- Causes by increasing industrial growth and prosperity in developed countries; increased demand of fossil fuels, environmental impacts felt in agricultural lands especially SSA with limited adaptation strategies;
- A looming problem unresolved due to debt crisis and limited technological capacity to adapt;
gradual but rapid retraction of arable land and grazing land, massive loss in livestock populations, conflicts between nomadic tribes and settled tribes for grazing versus crop land; destruction of farm lands by migrating cattle herds; internal conflicts and resource struggles'
- Drought and desertification

Gender dimension:

- Low entitlement to land and alternative assets;
- loss of rights to communal resources such as forest lands that supplemented for food security;
- Women escalating environmental degradation to manage subsistent food production by using marginal and reserve lands;
- Lack of energy infrastructure and deforestation for fuel wood -

HIV/AIDS - a real and present food crisis

- Scourge of HIV/AIDS in large populations of Africa – decimating the supply capacity;
- Cost of HIV/AIDS to agricultural populations has been estimated in some African countries - labour constraints, lowered productivity;
- Increasing dependency burdens in rural households limiting capacity of women to break into commercially viable production

The current food crisis is a watershed

Totally exogenous causes:

- Triggered in economies where agriculture contributes less than 10 percent of employment
- Induced by growing food and industrial demand outside the continent
- Commodity supply and export pattern dictated by industrial needs of developed countries
- Commodity imports patterned after the production pattern of more developed countries, including emerging economies
- Worsened by climate change induced from prosperous countries
- Clearly demonstrating vulnerability to all forms of external shocks
- for SSA – it is food insecurity reinforced – a new and additional form of food insecurity;
- A more rapid deterioration in food consumption both in quantity and quality due to household level responses/coping mechanisms leading to rapid decline in Quality of Life
- **and setting back progress of the MDGs**

There have also been some counter-productive national responses

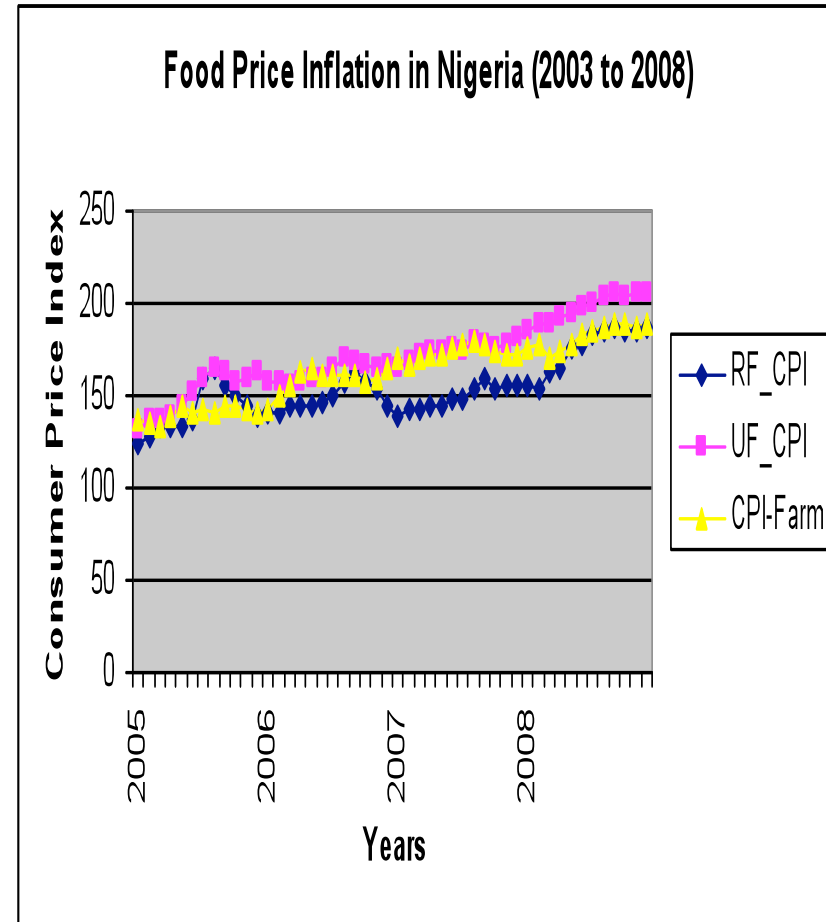
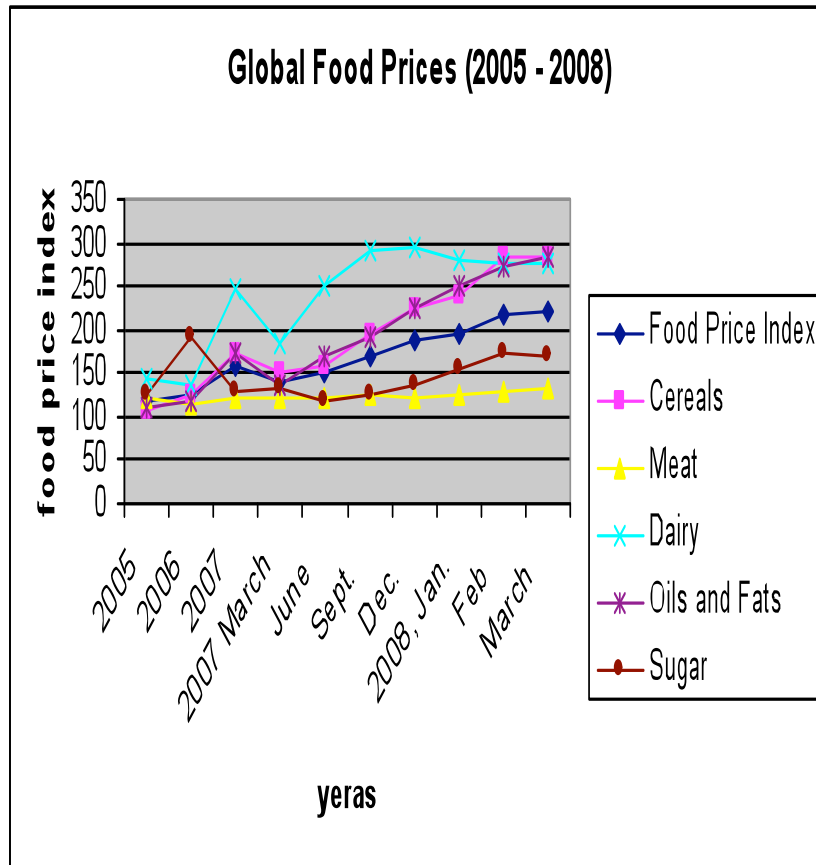
- The policy responses in some countries are exacerbating the problem:
 - Restrictive trade policies to protect the urban poor in net commodity exporting countries tend to have unintended negative consequences at the domestic level, and at the global level, they push up world prices even further and hurt net importers.
 - Some major exporting countries have introduced export taxes, export bans or other restrictions on exports of agricultural products.
 - Some importing countries are not allowing full pass-through of international prices into domestic prices – price support is disincentive for domestic producers;
 - Some countries are stepping up strategic grains reserve, without significant increase in supply or imports, further restricting pass-thru of local production to local markets – up-scaling the local food inflation
- Cash transfers, food stamps, fertilizer vouchers will smoothen immediate consumption but will not solve the fundamental problem;
- Lack of transparency in disbursing state transfers to support farms and to support consumption;

Structural weakness of food production and marketing systems

- The macroeconomic framework for agricultural growth has been subject to dictates and vagaries of the developed countries and reinforced import dependency.
- Debt burden and lack of national sovereignty to pursue a macroeconomic agenda that is suitable to African resource endowment;
- Lack of technological innovation in agriculture, reinforcing a primary (craft) economy; **For most farmers, farming is a way of life rather than a business;**
- The input supply chain is totally undeveloped, leaving this sector entirely in the hand of the inefficient state
- Low capacity of farmers to respond to price incentive due to supply-side constraints leading to cyclical reinforcement of food crisis;
- Lack of planning data to effectively target real farmers for farm support;
- The potentials for inter and intra regional trade have not been utilized. There are potentially food surplus regions and high food demand regions;
- The tendency to be susceptible to shocks triggered by crisis in the developed countries must be mitigated by inter-dependence rather than dependency.

How integrated is the African Food market with Global Food Market?

Acute Versus Chronic Food Crisis



Gender as a reinforcing factor

The poor in SSA, over 50% of populations are particularly vulnerable to the effects of all these crises;

Farmers are heavily represented among the poor with female farmers at the bottom of the ladder;

Personal safety nets are limited (assets, skills for livelihood changes) labor is their only asset; when agricultural systems are dysfunctional, the farmers are trapped in high labor-low return activities – women more inclined to do this.

There is a subsistence and micro-credit trap for the numerous women farmers!!

Lack of gender sensitivity in the agricultural planning framework or when there is a focus, it reinforces subsistence and household food security rather than food sufficiency

Women are continually de-linked from integration in commercial agriculture

Women's ability to remain at the forefront of managing household food insecurity may be further threatened

- The evidence from much of Africa is that the ability to respond to new incentives that are presented is stronger with male farmers;
- The ability for women to participate in the commodity value chain is limited due to gender blindness of policies
- The cultural entitlement system is still restrictive (land, water, markets) and may not yield substantially in the short run
- Increasing fragility of households as household coping mechanisms continue to be a priority
- Options for managing chronic food insecurity are being squeezed out by the current crisis

Some emerging forms of coping strategies by women

Rural

Selling prime crops, not to reinvest in future cycles but for immediate consumption of less nutritious food;

Selling household productive assets such as livestock

Shifting from crops of commercial potential to security crops requiring low resource use; some of these are now under intense competition with industries (cassava)

Urban:

Increased percentage of income on food-related expenditure

Changing diets to more carbohydrate, less protein–

School drop out (especially for girls to do street trading) on the rise

Many MDGs compromised;

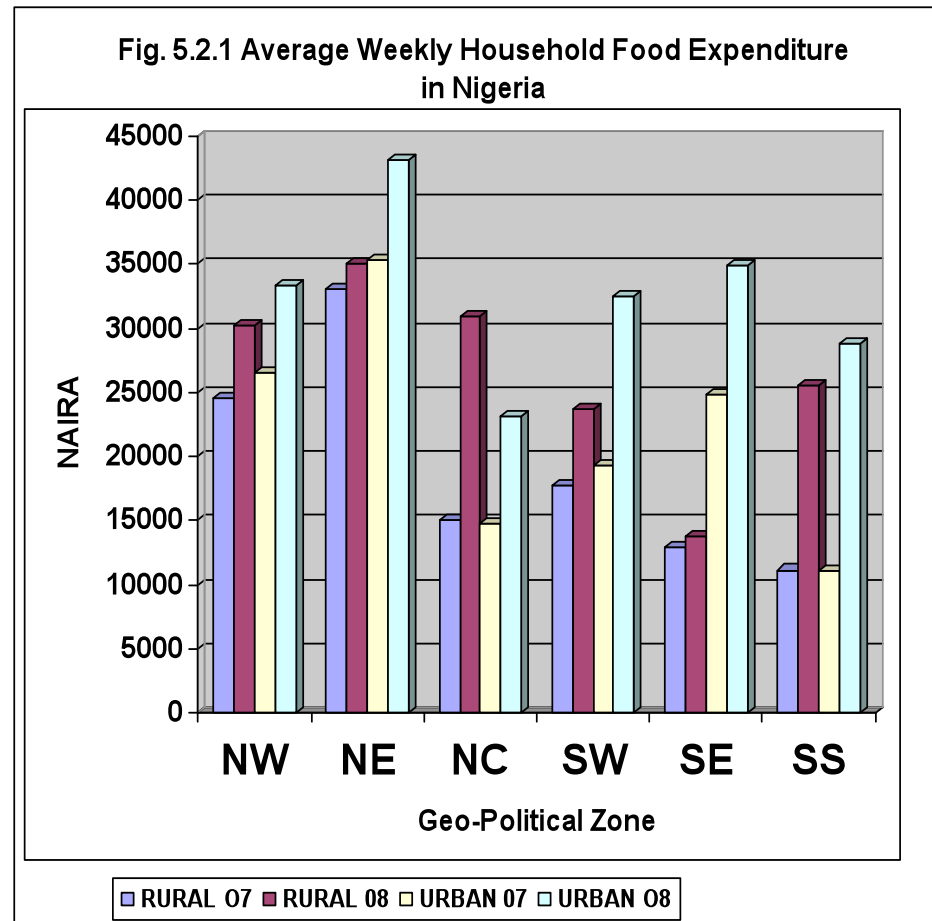
Destitution on the rise: Begging has become a preoccupation

Prostitution has become more visible – further compounding the AIDS pandemic

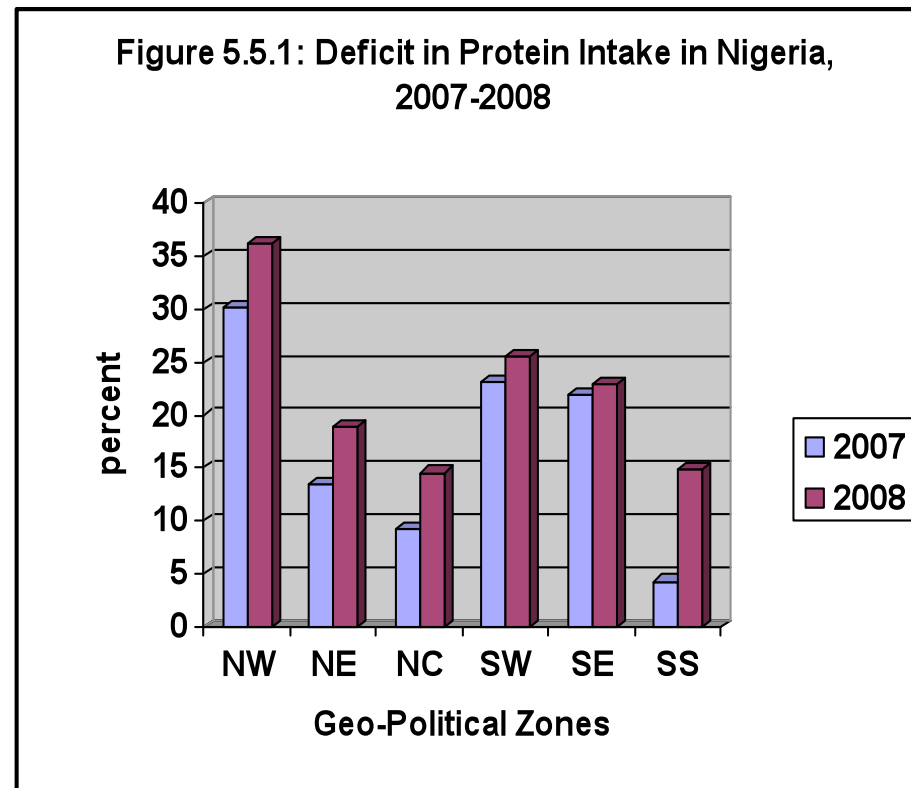
Domestic tensions as men lose livelihoods – domestic violence on the rise;

Female criminality has become rampant, questioning the link of women with higher financial accountability

Fragility and Coping Mechanisms (Nigeria)



Fragility and Coping Mechanisms: Nutritional effects (Nigeria)



What needs to change: Opportunity to address structural problems

- Beyond the current price boom, the most effective response for developing countries is to seize the opportunity and step up efforts to encourage expansion of domestic agricultural production by improving infrastructure, distribution and storage systems;
- Structural problems reduce the supply response to rising prices in countries with comparative advantage in crops like maize and cassava. With high demand for ethanol, opens up large export market for a number of countries;
- the macroeconomic framework for agricultural development must be geared towards rapid commercialization of the sector; frameworks under the AU Agricultural Policy have great potentials;
- Potentials for much higher yield must be explored through massive fertilizer subsidy and technology infusion over a period of time – some of the short term measures being adopted should be extended to a period of five production seasons;

Capital inflow will be a real challenge given the lingering financial crisis

- Influx of capital will be key to transformative policies based on agro-industrial development but FDI is constrained by the current crisis!!!
- African countries have access to several facilities (Poverty reduction Growth Facility (PRGF), External shock facility (ESF))
- Data shows that no country has accessed the ESF, even when the food crisis constitutes “qualifying shock”; rather they have been extending the PRGF;
- These facilities are tied to specific spending patterns, mainly human development spending, this can be used to pursue MDG-related spending
- The facility fund will relieve public expenditure on health education etc and allow a better flow of public spending to agriculture;
- Despite the increase in world oil and food prices, many LICs experienced improvements in their terms of trade, as the prices of other commodity exports increased as well.

Some countries are experiencing financial sector growth

- Financial sector jobs has been as source of employment and gradually growing back the middle class
- Financial sector growth is poorly linked with real sector growth; agriculture can be a pivot of growth if domestic capital is channeled into private agricultural investment
- Public-private partnership has worked and can be extended to develop the infrastructure for agriculture value chain
- This can be built around public works programmes as employment guarantee process for the teeming poor, including women

Engendering responses: Opportunities and Threats

- The required framework inherently disadvantage women in a new framework of largescale agriculture due to poor access to private input markets and investment capital;
- How relevant is the current scope of women's food production operation in a framework of commercialization and industrialisation?
- Constraints of access to large parcels of land to enter into commercial agriculture remain real and may be a major challenge in the short run;
- Can the cultural entitlement structure be sufficiently modified on the short to medium terms? The last two decades have been about this with limited levels of success;
- Human development differentials remain a big challenge on the short run – MDGs threatened;

Engendering responses: Opportunities and Threats

- Group strategies have been used successfully to secure access to large parcels of land under government-funded schemes;
- Countries undergoing new political agenda have had the larger space to integrate women's interest in land redistribution schemes (Rwanda, South Africa)
- New and fledging democracies around the developing world provide platforms for gender inclusion and an engendered national macroeconomic agenda; making gender more relevant;
- Opportunities in the crop value chain should be pursued by women groups
- Building on marketing and processing skills for upstream and downstream sector agricultural activities may be more effective on the short to medium term for integrating women in crop value chains
This strategy will help faster to integrate women in commercial agriculture;

Some Interventions likely to reduce gendered constraints of the Food Crisis

- Under the AU-NEPAD framework, school feeding programs are gaining ground, also promoting girls enrolment;
- Expansion of conditional transfers targeted at the most vulnerable in some countries
- National health insurance schemes for private and informal sector workers, including agricultural workers

Some Growth areas for women farmers

- Agriculture – tourism linkages
- Peri urban agriculture – high value food-based farms; fish farming, poultry, bee-keeping, export of Non-timber forest products;
- Food-related services in the re-emerging middle class (eateries and entertainment)