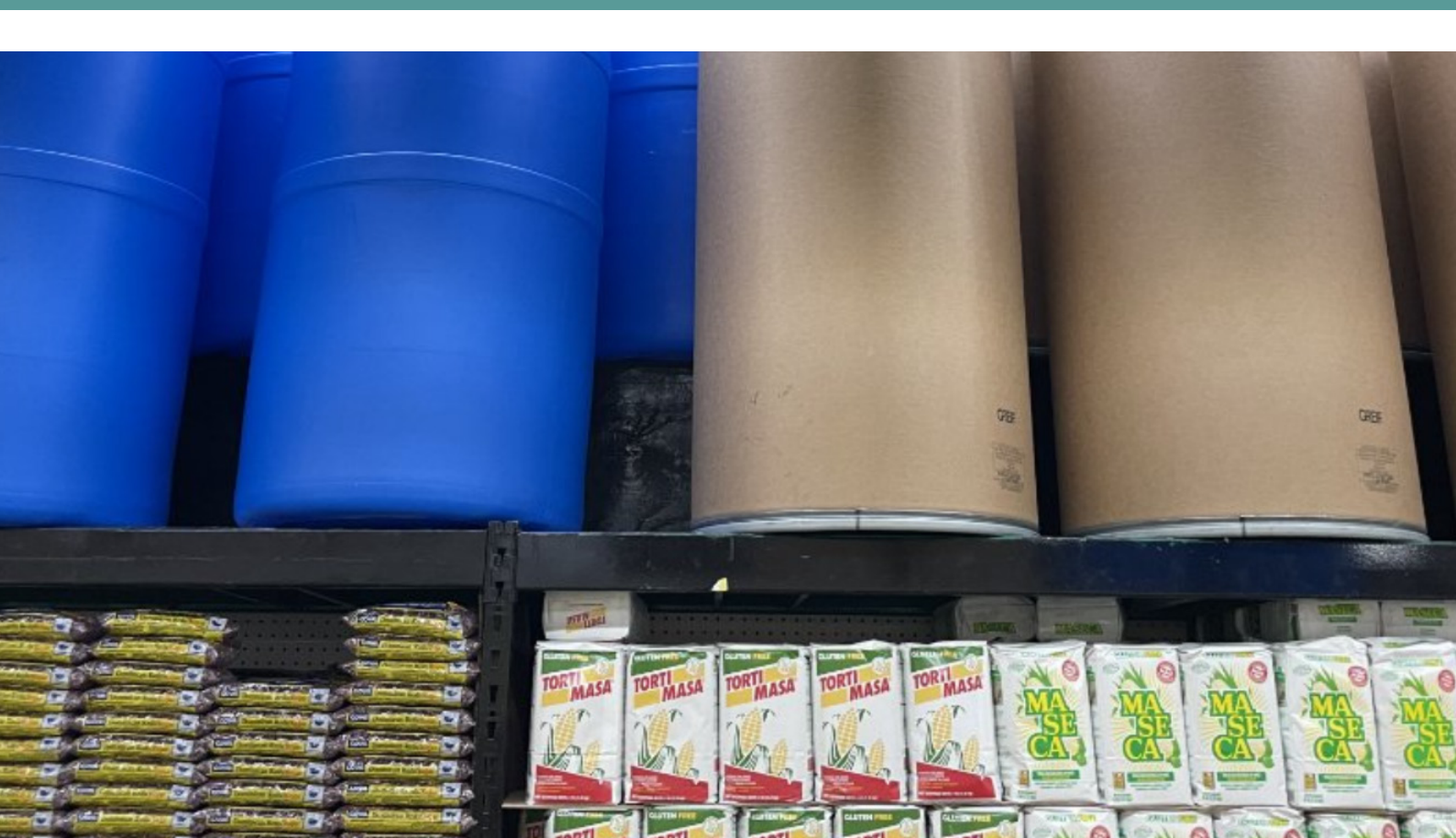


The SDGs, Migrant Remittances and Food Security in Jamaica



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Elizabeth Thomas-Hope

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Abstract

This paper raises questions about the implications of migration for inclusive social development in Kingston, Jamaica. This is based on an assessment of the relationship between remittances and food security at the household level. Emphasis is placed on whether remittances have made a difference in reducing the food insecurity associated with poverty and thus could contribute to inclusive social development. A city-wide survey of Kingston based on a sample of households in communities spanning different socioeconomic sectors was conducted to provide the data. Three indicators were used to measure food security/insecurity. Since there were the highest levels of food insecurity among the poorest households, the correlations between remittance receipt and household food security of the poor were measured. Although there was no evidence of a trend of migrant remittances that promote food security to the extent that they would contribute to inclusive social development, remittances in cash and food were of considerable importance in mitigating the consequences of poverty by improving the levels of food insecurity existing among the urban poor.

Keywords

inclusive social development, migration, food security, remittances

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Cover Photo

Remittance barrels to send food and other commodities to Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean.
By Ameena Walker, Remittance by the Barrel: <https://theprepared.org/features-feed/shipping-barrels>



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Introduction

There is a general assumption that migration is an important means to achieve the goal of reducing inequality within and between countries, as enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10: “Reduce inequality within and among countries” (UN, 2015). Yet, to date, there has been no comprehensive assessment of migration trends in relation to the SDGs, mainly due to the lack of relevant data to achieve such an objective. Vidal and Lazcko (2022) emphasize the need for governments to routinely collect data on issues or themes relevant to the SDGs as they relate to migration, pointing out the importance of such data for progress in global initiatives and programmes. There has also been a general absence of rigorous evidence-based literature on the nexus between migration and development in the Global South.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015 included a commitment to attain 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets (Vidal and Lazcko, 2022). For the first time, migration has been recognized as a major topic on the global development agenda. The main reference to migration in the SDGs is target 10.7, which calls on all countries to manage migration more effectively to achieve better development outcomes. This target specifically calls on countries to, ‘facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies’ (UN, 2015). Migration has also been increasingly included in national development discourse in recent years. In the case of Jamaica, the subject of this paper, migration is now recognized as closely connected to the official vision of development reflected in Vision 20-30 (Thomas-Hope, 2018).

The interrelationship between migration and food security is absent from the SDGs and food security is rarely considered in the global migration and development discourse (Crush and Caesar, 2017). For example, Clemens et al. (2014) note that food security is not a priority or even included in the reports of the Global Migration Group, the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the UN High Level Dialogues on International Migration, the Global Forum on Remittances, the International Conference on Migration and Development and the World Bank’s KNOMAD (Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development) programme. Positive links between migration and development at the global or national level do not mean that food security impacts are necessarily positive or evenly distributed between origin and destination countries or among migrants themselves. For example, while migration and remittance usage may be linked to food purchases, migrants often do not experience positive nutritional outcomes. Furthermore, many have been found to be at higher risk of food insecurity and malnutrition-related conditions than non-migrants. A study of food insecurity among US-born children showed that 24% of those with foreign-born mothers (migrants) were food

insecure compared to 10% with native-born mothers (Jayatissa and Wickramage, 2016). Additionally, while migration can be a powerful poverty reduction tool, many migrants themselves are in poverty. Research into the relationship between migration and risk of poverty showed that 35% of migrants versus 23% of non-migrants were, on average, in poverty or at risk of poverty in 36 countries in 2015 (Vidal and Lazcko 2022).

Much more work is needed on the specific food security impacts of remittances on both senders and recipients. Lacroix (2011) notes that although there is a wealth of research on migrant remittances, few have investigated the relationships between their use at the domestic level and food security. One study of food consumption patterns in Vietnam found that short-term migration had a positive effect on overall per capita food expenditures, per capita calorie consumption, and food diversity. The nature of migration was associated with differences in the implications for food security (Nguyen and Winters, 2011). There are very few such case studies on this aspect of remittance expenditure in relation to the type of migration, whether long term or circular as with guest workers. A study in India conducted by Mahapatro et.al. (2017) showed that remittance and non-remittance receiving households spent a similar proportion of their household budget on food (45%–60%), but the overall food spend by remittance recipients was significantly higher.

Other research has shown that the equalizing effect of remittances on food security may not occur in all countries of the Global South. Nor has there been much evidence of the extent to which there are spatial variations especially in terms of urban-rural contrasts. Research in Ghana found that migration did not substantially affect the total amount spent on food per capita and had a minimal effect on food expenditure patterns (Karamba et al., 2011). A study based on a nationally representative sample in Jamaica indicated that no measurable amount of the remittances received was spent specifically on food (Thomas Hope et al., 2009). However, more than one-third (36%) of the respondents indicated that they received remittances in the form of goods, including food items (Thomas-Hope et al., 2009). A study conducted by the Bank of Jamaica, the institution through which all formal foreign currency transactions are processed, showed that some 18% of total remittance usage in Jamaica was spent on food (Ramocan, 2011). This percentage was low compared with other countries cited and did not reflect spatial and socioeconomic variations.

This paper discusses the food security situation in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) of Jamaica and attempts to raise questions related to the implications of migration for inclusive social development. It uses the role of remittances in household food security as the indicator of the effects of migration. It seeks to examine whether remittances make a difference to the food security of poor households and the extent to which remittances contribute to reducing the consequences of poverty with respect to food insecurity.

Context

Like the country of Jamaica in general, Kingston was the product of early mercantilism shaped administratively, socially, and economically by colonialism, the sugar plantation, and slavery. The town was founded in 1692 and by 1800 it had become the main port, commercial centre, and administrative capital of the largest British colony in the Caribbean (Clarke, 2006). The location of Kingston in Jamaica is shown in Figure 1. The modern development of Kingston and the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA) is best understood in the context of the country's recent economic and socio-political history. These reflect the effects of national and international politics, increasing globalisation and the changing aspirations and lifestyles of this urban population in the Global South (Kinlocke and Thomas-Hope, 2019).

Figure 1: Location of Kingston in Jamaica



Most of the rapid growth of the city occurred between 1970 and 1991 and was due to comparatively high rates of rural to urban migration, together with natural growth (Clarke, 2006). Although Kingston is unquestionably the primary city of Jamaica, it has experienced the slowest growth of all major urban centres of the country since the 1990s (Thomas-Hope, 2018). The average annual rate of population growth in the KMA between 1970 and 2011 was 0.51% per annum (STATIN, 2011) with the 1990s characterized by negative growth. The most recent population estimates indicated a population of 662,426 in 2012 and 670,323 in 2015, distributed across an estimated 190,864 households in the city (Thomas-Hope et al., 2017). The population of the KMA in 2022 was estimated at 592,477 (world populationreview.com). Urban growth has been characterized not by outward urban sprawl, but by the increased density of housing and commercial activities in many sections of the city and the development of separate new urban centres in commutable distance serving as dormitory towns for Kingston. There are marked variations in population density within the KMA, and the pattern of population density in the city is generally replicated in the distribution of the prevalence of poverty.

Jamaica's postcolonial economic transition resulted in mixed results in the face of challenges related to internal stressors and external shocks. The effects of globalization and associated systems such as neoliberalism consistently stymied the viability of the most important industries which constituted the basis of the local economy. This was compounded by the debt burden and, as a consequence, the international loan agreements from organizations such as the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), which led to contraction in the labour market. Small-scale food enterprises increased as a direct response to the cycle of debt, dependency, and displacement (Kinlocke and Thomas-Hope, 2019). Since 2005, the national economy has moved away from earlier activities such as agriculture, mining, and manufacturing towards an increase in the number and types of services.

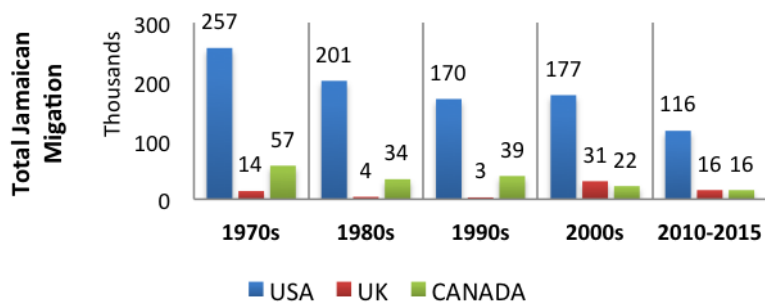
Neoliberal policies encouraged greater integration of smaller economies into global networks, but this was accompanied by negative economic implications associated with increased privatization, growing levels of poverty, and socio-spatial inequality and insecurity. Furthermore, neoliberalism has contributed significantly to poverty due to its negative influence on the availability of jobs in the formal economic sector. The result has been an increased engagement with the informal sector, and informal food retail has provided a favourable option for entry. Therefore, the number of informal retailers has grown because of limited alternatives in the formal sector. However, while neoliberalism may be tied to the growth in unemployment and labour pressures which push individuals into the informal sector, it has also provided opportunities for retailers and consumers through the options for competitive alternatives in the form of imported food (Kinlocke and Thomas-Hope, 2019). Overall, the economy is highly trade-oriented and, in many respects, including that of migrant remittances, it is externally dependent. The informal sector (which is mainly urban) contributes an estimated 25-40 per cent of Jamaica's GDP (Kinlocke and Thomas-Hope, 2019).

The consequences of neoliberalism have been felt most severely by the poor, contributing to their further marginalization. The result has been the perpetuation of relatively high levels of inequality and social polarization throughout the country. Within this context, the informal food sector has provided a favourable livelihood option in both rural and urban areas and has increased the accessibility of food to the poor, especially the urban poor. From the perspective of the consumer, poor urban households are disproportionately reliant on small-scale enterprises, including small-scale food enterprises, in stark contrast to the type of food outlets patronized by higher income households.

Migration Corridors and Trends

Migration has involved and impacted people across Jamaica's social and economic spectrum. People in different socioeconomic sectors have engaged differently with migration based mainly on their educational and occupational backgrounds. These factors have greatly influenced the various forms of capital – financial and social, that migration has or has not offered to the migrants and their households or families (Thomas-Hope, 2002, 2018). There has been a decline in flows from Jamaica through all major corridors since the 1960s (Figure 2). Following the major flows of Jamaicans to the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, the main migration corridors have been to the USA and Canada. Jamaican migrants in the UK have continued to send remittances back to family members in Jamaica and there has also been a significant return migration, especially in the 1990s.

Figure 2: Jamaican Emigration to Main Migration Destinations by Decade



Source: Thomas-Hope (2018)

Although there has been a continuing trend of reduced emigration, young and working age population cohorts have continued to dominate the flows. Students at different levels of secondary and tertiary education and tertiary-educated professionals have been important components of the movement. There has also been high female labour migration and, linked to this, a significant incidence of absentee mothers from households. This has generally been economically positive for the household, although of mixed impact in terms of the care of children and the elderly left behind (Thomas-Hope, 2018).

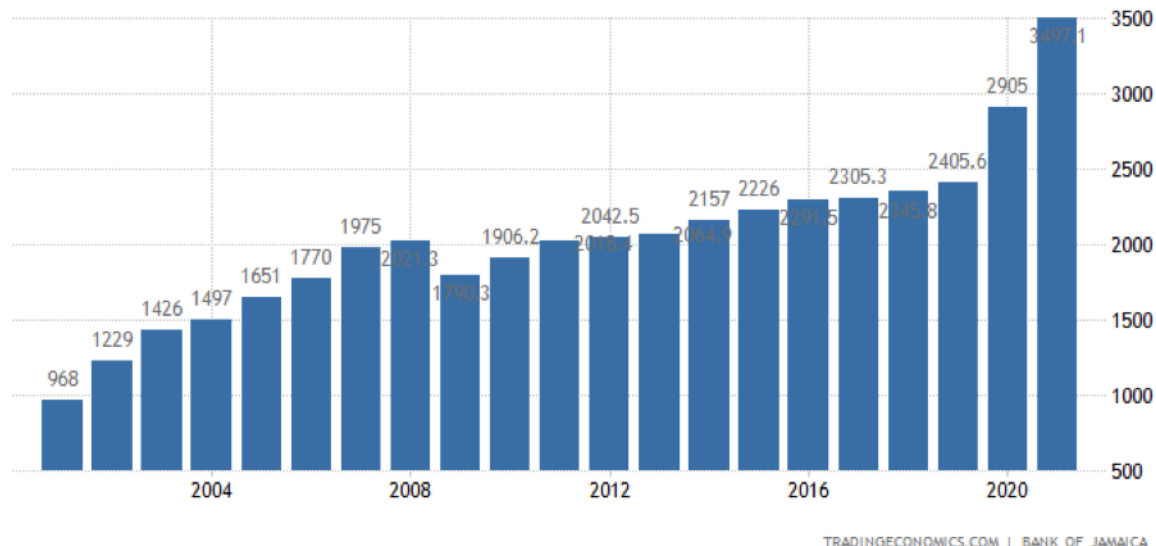
Despite the overall downward trend in long-term or permanent emigration, there have been increasing opportunities for seasonal labour contracts. This has allowed the inclusion of persons without high educational levels, professional training, or substantial financial means. Short-term migrant labour contracts generally last a maximum of six months, and the associated circulation of workers between Jamaica and North American destinations has become an important aspect of Jamaican migration. These contracts are negotiated and managed through bilateral agreements between the Government of Jamaica through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) and the host governments of the United States and Canada. Since 2014, the programme has been expanded from farm work in the US and Canada to include hospitality in the US and factory and low-skilled em-

ployment in Canada. The overall numbers of people involved have increased, but farm programmes continue to take the largest numbers of workers, especially those with Canada. For example, in 2016 the 8,565 employed in Canada was twice that of the US farm programme in that year.

Overview of Migrant Remittances

Despite the decrease in emigration, there is evidence of a consistent annual increase in remittances since 2009. The receipts were high in 2008, the year of the global economic downturn, but dipped in the following year, suggesting that Jamaicans in the diaspora were not financially able to sustain previous levels of sending money home (Figure 3). Despite the associated recession, in 2016, the amount recorded by the Bank of Jamaica was estimated at USD2,292 million, an increase of USD522 million over the USD1,770 million remitted 10 years earlier in 2007. Total remittances for 2020 were USD2,905 million and nearly USD3,500 million in 2021. Actual financial flows were higher than indicated by Figure 3 as the data does not include informal monetary inflows personally delivered or sent by friends and family or transacted through personal arrangements. Nor does the Bank of Jamaica data on remittances include pensions and social security emoluments from the country of last residence unless the individual had sent such funds through international money transfer companies.

Figure 3: Volume of Remittances to Jamaica, 2001-2021 (USD)



Source: Data from <https://tradingeconomics.com/jamaica/remittances>

Remittance flows to Jamaica have thus remained relatively reliable throughout the years of recent global economic downturn and pandemics. This indicates that sending remittances to relatives is seen by emigrants as a moral obligation to assist families that intensifies during periods of hardship. Remitting is a much greater priority for migrants than responding to economic and investment opportunities in Jamaica. However, the size and regularity of remittance flows depend on the continued size and commitment of first-generation Jamaicans residing abroad as well as those migrants who have returned and continue to transfer the proceeds of overseas earnings back home as a combination of cash and in-kind remittances, usually clothing and food items.

A positive evaluation of remittances and, therefore, of migration to improve the economy of the emigrants' home country is based on the contribution made to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Jamaica is one of the top countries worldwide in terms of remittance receipts per capita from its diaspora (IMF, 2011). Remittances contributed some 14% to national GDP each year between 2006 and 2015, and 15.5% and 16.1% in 2014 and 2015 respectively (Bank of Jamaica, 2017). Therefore, it is understandable that the assumption would be that remittances are a major factor in generating growth. If that were the case, the question would be, to what extent would it contribute to food security and, thereby, to promoting inclusive growth?

The evidence suggests that despite the large contribution of remittance flows to Jamaica's economy, they have not played a commensurate role in generating economic growth. The reason for this lies largely in the fact that remittances are private funds. Although in some cases they have been invested in personal ventures, and some of the funds may have helped to generate wealth at the local level and sustained numerous households in various ways, only 15% was shown by the Bank of Jamaica to be used for investment, business, or savings. Thomas-Hope et al. (2009) found that respondents reported no remittances that had been spent on investment. Given the private nature of remittance funds, a second logical assumption would be that they reduce discrepancies in wealth within the population.

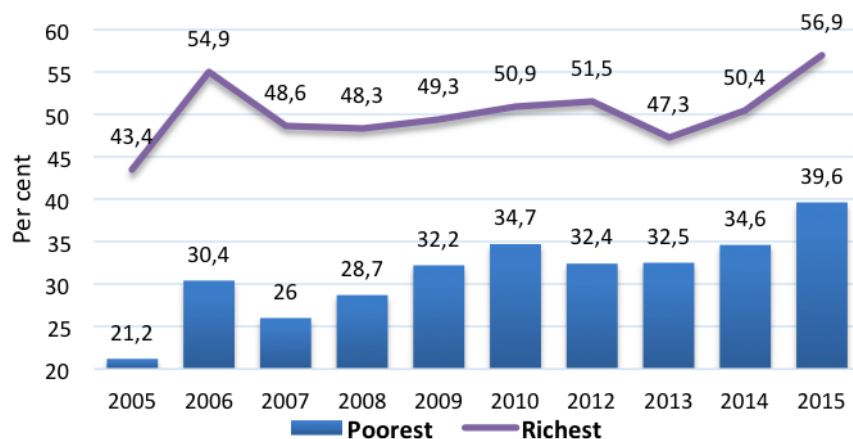
However, this type of equalization has not occurred because of the uneven distribution of remittance receipts, both by geographical location (in terms of rural versus urban) and, more significantly, by socioeconomic sector.

Despite the scale of remittance flows, there was considerable variation in remittance receiving households both geographically and by economic status. In terms of geographical distribution, slightly more households in other towns received remittances than those in the KMA or in rural areas. Just over a half (52%) were households in towns other than the KMA, 24% were located in the KMA and 24% were rural households (STATIN, 2014). In terms of the economic status of recipients, households in the upper economic brackets dominated remittance receipts. In 2005, for example, only 21% of households in the lowest income quintile received remittances, compared to 43% in the upper income quintile (Figure 4). By 2015, almost 40% of the poorest quintile were in receipt of remittances. This could be explained by the increase in the number of unskilled workers participating in the Government of Jamaica's Overseas Work Programmes (OWP), which increased opportunities for employment through short-term labour migration among the low-skilled. However, the proportion of recipient households in the upper income quintile also rose to nearly 60%.

Remittances are not always sent on a regular basis, and, for many households, the sums of money received were quite small (Thomas-Hope et al., 2009). During the year prior to the 2009 survey, about half (52%) of the absent migrants who remitted funds contributed amounts totaling J\$20,000 (USD285 equivalent at that time) or less. Approximately 55% of the sample population reported that absent migrants who remitted funds did so only on special occasions. At the same time, there were also 'regular remitters', of whom just under half sent funds at least monthly.

Remittances were the only source of income for some households, especially the poorest and the elderly. These receipts – both monetary and in-kind – were of major significance to low-income recipients who put even such small sums of money to immediate use in meeting expenses for basic needs including food. In 2011, the main use of the remittances were utilities, food, and housing, which

Figure 4: Percentage of Households Receiving Remittances by Quintiles, 2005-2015



Source: STATIN, JSLC, 2016

accounted for more than 40% of the money received. Education came next, while investment/business and savings accounted for 15%. Although there has been no recent data on the use of remittances, there has apparently been no significant change in the pattern of remittance usage from that recorded in 2011 (Bank of Jamaica, 2017).

Methodology

A city-wide survey of Kingston was conducted as part of the Hungry Cities Partnership between July and September 2015. A total of 702 households were selected using a two-tier sampling procedure (Kinlocke et al., 2019). First, seven communities representing the range of socioeconomic conditions/levels across the city were selected using a sampling frame that comprised a list of communities in the Kingston Metropolitan Area prepared by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN). Table 1 shows the distribution of the sampled communities in relation to the distribution of household poverty levels across the city. The second stage involved the use of systematic random sampling to select households for interview in each of the communities. Every third household was selected from a predetermined starting point established by the data collection supervisor. This method was chosen for its lack of bias and logistical appropriateness based on the layout of housing in the community. The questionnaires were administered verbally to an adult member of the household.

Four main indicators of household food security were used in the survey (Coates et. al. 2007; Kinlocke et al., 2019):

- **Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS)**

The HFIAS score is a continuous measure of the degree of food insecurity in the household. Based on nine questions asked of respondents regarding experiences of food insecurity in the four weeks prior to the survey, each household is allocated a score on a scale from 0 (complete food security) to 27 (extreme food insecurity). The HFIAS questions focus on both the quantity and quality of food access and show the kinds of challenges faced by households.

- **Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence (HFIAP)**

The HFIAP indicator is derived from the HFIAS scores and uses a scoring algorithm to categorize households into

four levels of household food insecurity: food secure, mildly food insecure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure.

- **Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS)**

Dietary diversity refers to how many food groups were consumed in the 24 hours prior to the survey (Swindale and Bilinsky, 2007). The average number of different food groups consumed provides a quantifiable measure of household dietary diversity, which is indicative of the level of household nutrition.

- **Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning (MAHFP)**

The MAHFP is an indicator of the household's ability to ensure that food is available above a minimum level throughout the year. Households were asked to identify in which months (during the past 12) they did not have access to sufficient food to meet their household needs. A score is calculated by subtracting the number of months of inadequate food provisioning from 12.

The paper relies on two measures of poverty: (a) self-reporting of household income expressed as quintiles; and (b) the Lived Poverty Index (LPI) which was used as a subjective measure of the experience of poverty, which does not rely on self-reporting of income. Using a composite score comprising several variables, the LPI attempts to capture different dimensions of the experience of poverty based on access to various basic needs. An LPI score is calculated for each household as the mean score on a 5-point Likert scale, with 0 indicating total access and 4 indicating no access or a significant level of lived poverty.

Household Profile

Since most of the food consumed by the urban population of Kingston comes from rural Jamaica or is imported, access to these sources is of particular relevance to food security. Urban residents commonly receive food from family members in rural areas, especially where city residents have previously migrated from rural locations. For this reason, the place of birth is relevant to the likelihood of food support from outside of the city.

Table 1: Sampled Communities in Kingston by Poverty Prevalence

Community	No. of Households Sampled	Poverty Prevalence (% below poverty line)
Havendale	86	0.40-4.40
Harbourview	186	4.41-9.20
Seaview Gardens	191	4.41-9.20
Port Royal	49	9.21-15.50
Nannyville	64	9.21-15.50
Rae Town	68	21.71-30.00
Elletson Flats	56	21.71-30.00

Source: Hungry Cities Programme Fieldwork (2018)

The survey found that 58% of the household members were born in Kingston and almost 42% in other parts of Jamaica (including 15% in another town and 27% in a rural area) (Figure 3.6). It is not known at what stage in their lives those born outside of Kingston migrated to the city, or the extent of interaction that had continued between themselves and family in other parts of the country.

The average size of the households was 3.6 persons. Around 25% had three members while 15% households had more than five members. census data indicates that the average household size in the city of Kingston was 3.0 in 2011 (STATIN, 2013). The higher value reported in this survey were possibly related to the fact that response rates were higher in several lower income communities where households tend to be larger in size.

Figure 6 shows the different types of household in the sample. Just over half of the households were either female-centred (with a female head and no partner or spouse) or male-centred (with a male head and no female partner or spouse). Of these households, 34% were female-centred

which is important in this as previous studies indicated that females receive more remittances from abroad than men.

Around 44% of adult household members (over 18) were in paid employment. Full-time workers (23%) and self-employed individuals (14%) accounted for a significant proportion of the overall sample, while part-time, casual, contract or seasonal workers accounted for only 9% (Figure 7). About 24% were unemployed with 14% 'looking for work' and 10% 'not looking for work.' Levels of unemployment were higher than national levels which were around 14% annually for those actively seeking work (STATIN, 2014). Many individuals, including students, were engaged in multiple activities.

Figure 8 shows the diversity of sources of Kingston household income in the month prior to the survey. These included various kinds of employment including formal wage work (53% of households), informal wage work (15%), and casual work (8%). Other income sources of note included government social grants (12% of households), informal sector business (6%), and formal sector business (5%).

Figure 5: Place of Birth of Kingston Residents

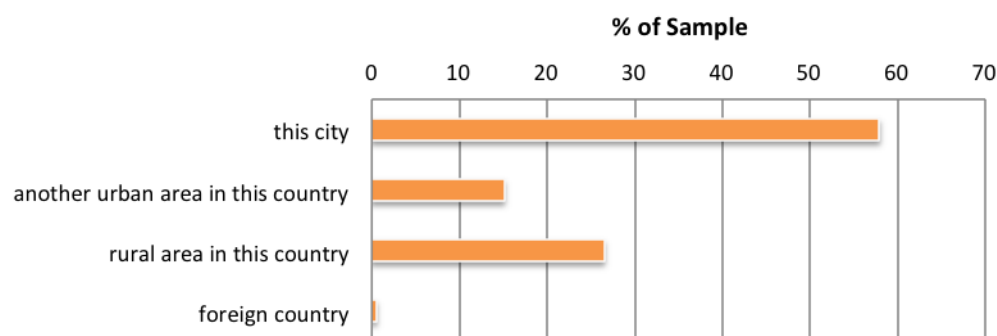


Figure 6: Household Types in Kingston

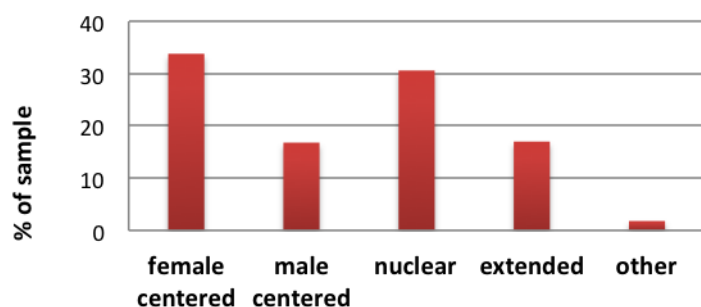


Figure 7: Work Status of Adult Household Members in Kingston

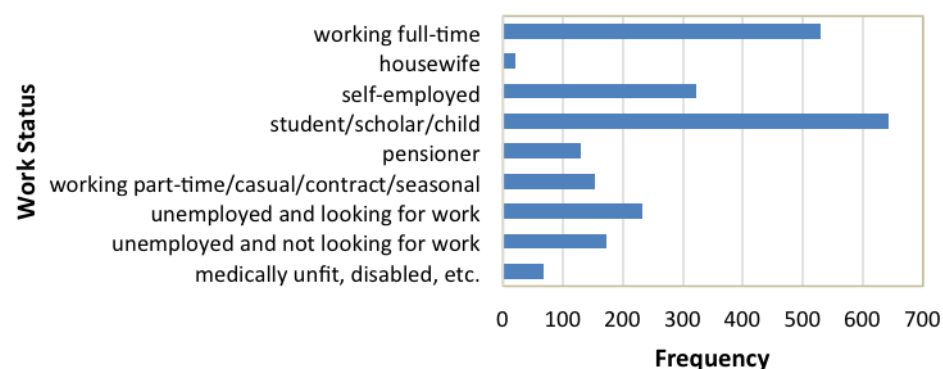
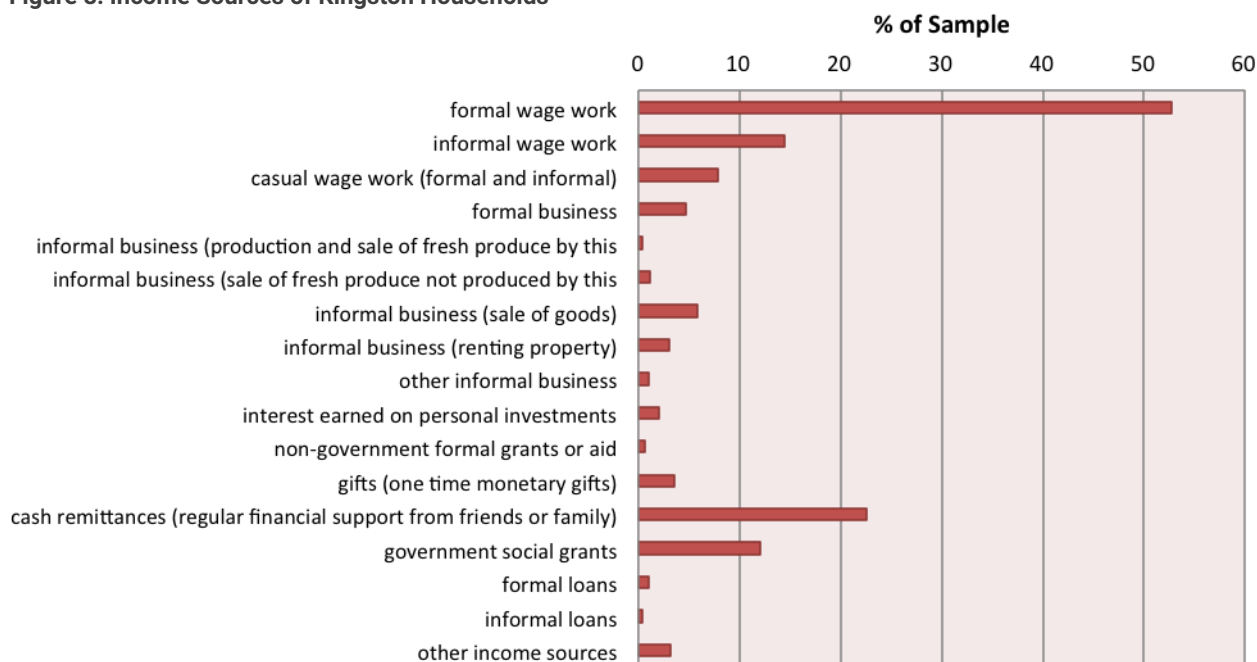


Figure 8: Income Sources of Kingston Households



Remittances to Kingston Households

Cash remittances from migrants were the second most important income source overall involving nearly one-quarter of all households. The mean amount of remittances received was USD189, which is lower than the other major sources of household income including formal wage work (USD786), informal wage work (USD492), casual wage work (USD247). One-quarter of all households had also reported

receiving in-kind food transfers from relatives in rural areas in Jamaica at least once per year. Of these, just over half received food at least once per month (but only 8% at least weekly) (Table 2). One-quarter of the Kingston households received food remittances from overseas (most in urban locations). Food remittances from outside the country tended to be less frequent with most transfers occurring once or twice per year.

Table 2: Sources of Food Remittances in Kingston

Food sources	Recipient households as % of total households	Received at least once a week	Received at least once a month	Received at least once in six months	Received at least once a year
Food sent by relatives in rural Jamaica	24.7	8.1	45.7	31.2	15.0
Food sent by relatives in another area of Kingston	3.0	18.9	23.8	47.6	9.5
Food sent by relatives in other towns of Jamaica	3.7	0.0	46.2	42.3	11.5
Food sent by relatives in rural areas of other countries	4.7	0.0	36.4	39.4	24.2
Food sent by relatives in urban areas of other countries	21.1	0.7	7.4	32.4	59.5

Levels of Food Insecurity

The mean HFIAS score for all Kingston households surveyed was 6.48 which translated into the HFIAP categories shows that more than one-third (37%) of the households were severely food insecure and more than one quarter (28%) were moderately food insecure. Only 26% of households proved to be completely food secure (Figure 9). The HDDS is a measure of dietary diversity which proved to be very low in Kingston with a mean of 4.51 out of a possible score of 12 (Figure 10). This means that the average household had only consumed food from less than 5 food groups in the day prior to the survey. Finally, the mean MAHFP was a relatively good 11.12 suggesting that most households had 'adequate' access to food throughout the year

Poverty and Food Insecurity

Poverty and food insecurity are closely tied in Kingston (Thomas-Hope et al., 2019). The main question in the context of food security was the extent to which the receipt of remittances had a positive impact on food security among the poor. The overall LPI mean in Kingston was 0.46 which suggests a relatively low level of lived poverty overall. However, there were minor variations in the extent to which basic needs were met. Lack of regular access to a cash income was the most frequent problem, with 23% of respondents indicating that they had experienced inconsistent cash income at least several times over the previous year. Approxi-

mately 15% of households also cited inconsistent access to food, cooking fuel, and electricity as difficulties they faced.

The LPI subscales were compared with the HFIAP results to identify variables which could potentially moderate the relationship between food security and lived poverty. Households with no or low levels of lived poverty displayed minimal food insecurity. Of the various LPI scores, inconsistent access to cash income was most directly related to food insecurity, suggesting that income was the most important mediator in the relationship between poverty and food access.

Food security status was cross-tabulated with income to assess how the financial status of households was correlated with food insecurity. Table 3 shows the relationship between the mean food insecurity scores (HDDS, HFIAS, and MAHFP) and household income quintiles. Predictably, the data confirmed that the lower the income quintile in which a household fell, the lower the mean HDDS score, indicating that the diet was less diverse in poorer households. In addition, the poorer the household, the higher the mean HFIAS or the greater the degree of food insecurity. For example, the HFIAS for households in the lowest quintile was 10.6 compared to only 3.8 for those in the highest income quintile. In general, households in the lowest income quintiles also had a lower MAHFP.

Figure 9: Household Food Insecurity Access Prevalence in Kingston

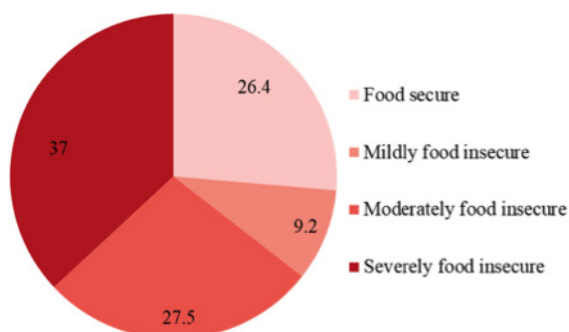
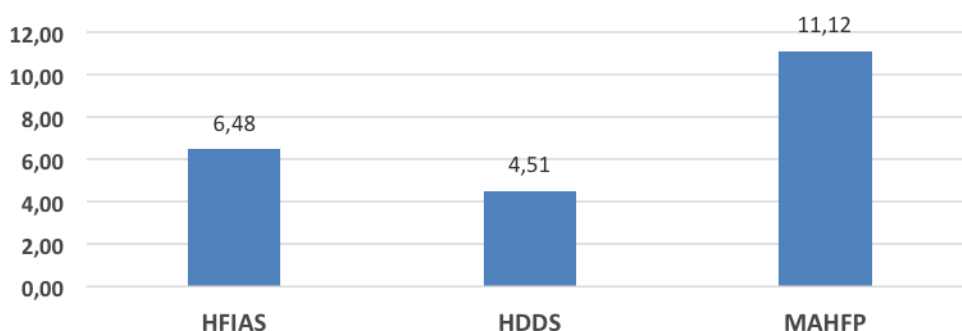


Figure 10: Mean Food Security Scores in Kingston



HFIAS: Household Food Insecurity Access Scale

HDDS: Household Dietary Diversity Score

MAHFP: Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning

Income quintiles	HDDS	HFIAS	MAHFP
1	3.87	10.57	10.42
2	4.12	9.08	10.88
3	4.78	6.06	11.21
4	4.67	5.40	11.58
5	4.71	3.75	11.47

Remittances and Food Security

Cash remittances were important for the survival and living of poor urban households, but the question is whether remittances make a significant contribution to the food security of poor households. To answer this question, the first step was to examine if there was a significant difference in the food security indicators (HFIAS, HDDS and MAHFP) between households that received remittances and those that did not. As Figure 11 shows, there were minor differences with poor households not receiving remittances having mar-

ginally higher food insecurity (as measured by the HFIAS) and lower dietary diversity (HDDS) compared to households receiving remittances. However, these differences were not significant.

The relationship between food security and remittance receipt was further explored for households with high Lived Poverty Index (LPI) scores (poor households). As Figure 12 shows, the experience of lived poverty did not significantly moderate the relationship between food security and remittance receipt.

Figure 11: Remittances and Food Security of Households in Kingston

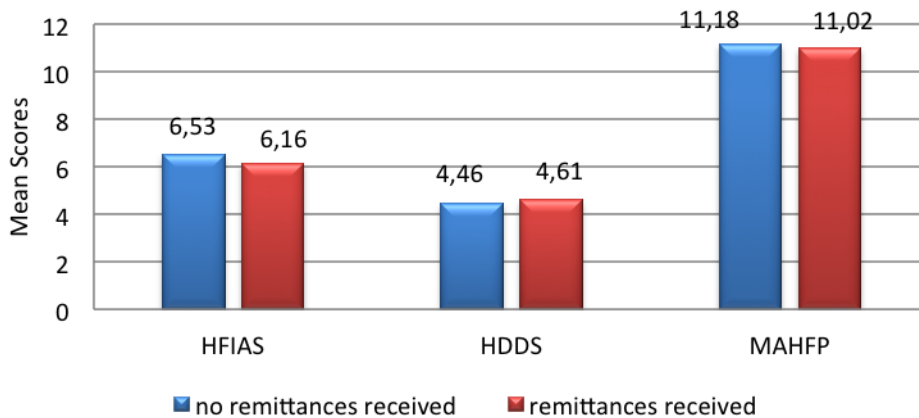
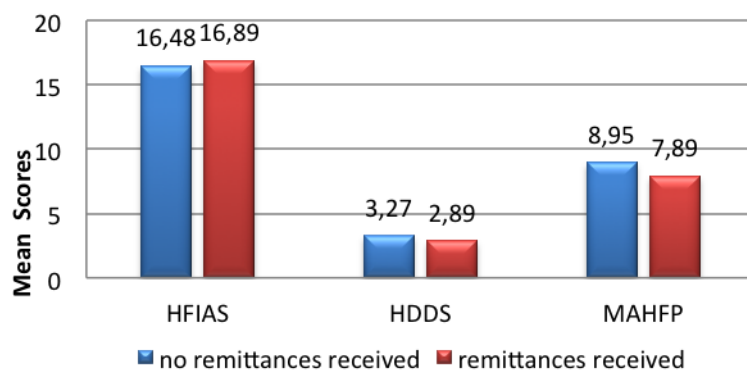


Figure 12: Remittances, Lived Poverty and Food Insecurity in Kingston



Conclusion

Contrary to expectations, there were no significant differences in the food security status of households receiving remittances compared to those receiving no remittances. Even when the sample was disaggregated by experience of lived poverty, there was no significant difference in food security indices in poorer households that had received remittances than in those that had not. In general, it could be the amount of the remittance that mattered more than whether or not remittances were received. Because the amount of remittances received by the poorest households was small, they did not appear to have a transformative effect in lifting households out of the poverty associated with food insecurity. but did appear to influence the households' ability to navigate food insecurity, despite poverty.

There was some evidence that remittances may have brought the food security of the poorest households to a level comparable to the mean level of food security within the poverty profile of their LPI category. This would mean that remittances contributed most to the food security of the most vulnerable, especially where other supportive practices, such as households sharing food or cooked meals, occurred. Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that cash remittances and food gifts received by poor households did contribute to reducing the severity of food insecurity than might otherwise have occurred, thus mitigating the consequences of poverty. While this would contribute to eliminating hunger, and thereby marginally to promoting inclusive social development, it hardly reduces the gap in terms of achieving levels of food security as a vehicle for promoting increased equity and inclusivity in Kingston's social development.

The primary factors that negatively affect inclusive growth in Kingston and Jamaica are, in general, low economic growth and high national debt leading to a lack of sustainable livelihoods and employment opportunities, a lack of basic infrastructure and social services, grossly uneven educational opportunities, and high levels of crime. These issues coincide with the areas in which migration could contribute to the development of the country. However, while migration and the associated remittances from overseas have improved the welfare of the individuals and households involved, the challenge is that such improvements occur at the microscale of the household. They have not been substantial enough to stimulate sustainable growth or sufficiently directed towards objectives at the national or city levels of development.

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