

# Gendered Mobilities and Food Access in Blantyre, Malawi

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**Abstract** Access to food, rather than a shortage of food availability, is the central problem for urban household food security. Blantyre presents a useful case study for demonstrating the importance of linking gender and urban food security. Rates of urban food insecurity are less severe than in other cities surveyed by AFSUN. Yet, female-centred households were twice as likely to be severely food insecure as nuclear households. This paper offers some explanations for the survey findings by drawing on qualitative research to understand the gendered geographies of food access in Blantyre. The first point is that gender shapes mobility, which in turn shapes a household's ability to increase its food security by procuring food from the most affordable sources, particularly peri-urban markets. The second point is that gender shapes a household's ability to produce its own food, a popular livelihood strategy in Blantyre that often mitigates the effects of low incomes on household food security. The third point is that gender influences a person's potential income, which shapes the household's economic access to food. These three points demonstrate the multi-dimensional relationship between gender and urban food security.

**Keywords** Food security · Urban · Gender · Mobility · Blantyre · Southern Africa

## Introduction

Food insecurity is a major problem in Southern African cities, where most low-income households struggle to feed themselves (Frayne et al. 2010; Crush and Frayne 2011a).

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For the majority of households, this problem is the result of increasingly insufficient and precarious incomes and steadily rising food costs. Food insecurity in this sense is emblematic of the region's deepening urban poverty, which also includes inadequate housing, water, education, and sanitation (Rakodi 1997; Murray and Myers 2006). Whereas food insecurity is integral to this overall picture of urban poverty, it is set apart because of the broad range of entitlements that can allow low-income households to become food secure in different contexts. Research has shown some households producing their own food (Mougeot 2005; Redwood 2008), receiving food through social networks (Hanson 2005) and obtaining food from rural sources (Frayne 2004, 2010; Lynch 2005). Household gender roles and gendered livelihood opportunities further shape the relationship between income and food security status (Dodson et al. 2012). Women, long economically marginalised in Southern African cities, are most likely to be tasked with processing, preparing, allocating and producing food at home (Blackdon and Woden 2006). The configuration and negotiability of household gender roles and the livelihood opportunities afforded to women within and outside their households are crucial factors for understanding and addressing urban food insecurity.

This paper seeks to make three contributions to the understanding of gender and urban food insecurity in Southern Africa. The first is to build on the analysis of the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) data presented in Dodson et al. (2012), by incorporating findings from a qualitative study in Blantyre, Malawi. The AFSUN data provided insights into how gender shapes household food security status, mostly through comparisons between household types of different composition in terms of male and female members. The qualitative study provides more detailed information about individual actors and about the local context of food provisioning in Blantyre. It also helps to address one of the major observations in the gender analysis of the AFSUN data, which was that there was a high degree of variability among the cities (Dodson et al. 2012). Examining a single urban case study can help to elucidate the significance of context and the limitations of generalising across Southern African cities.

The second contribution is to introduce the concept of mobility into debates on urban food security in Southern Africa. A geographical analysis of where people buy food in Blantyre revealed the central role of mobility, and the analysis guiding the qualitative case study foregrounded the practical ways in which mobility in Blantyre is gendered. Hanson (2010, p. 6) remarks that mobility and gender "are completely bound up with each other, to the point of almost being inseparable." Blantyre is an appropriate case study for observing the effects of immobility on household food security because there is minimal urban planning of markets and public transit (UNHABITAT 2011). Furthermore, urban–rural linkages are crucial for urban livelihoods, perhaps, to a greater extent than in other cities due to the agricultural productivity of the area surrounding the city and the lack of formal employment opportunities there (Riley and Legwegoh 2013). Reliance on rural resources to sustain urban households heightens the importance of mobility for food security in this context.

The third contribution of this paper is to provide additional analysis of the AFSUN survey findings as they pertain to Blantyre, which was an exceptional case in several respects (Mvula and Chiweza 2013). Most notable was (a) the exceptionally high rate of food-secure households in Blantyre, which belied Malawi's low development status relative to other SADC countries; (b) a high rate of engagement with urban agriculture (Crush et al. 2011); (c) a much higher rate of severe

food insecurity among female-centred households relative to other household types (Dodson et al. 2012); and (d) limited penetration of supermarkets, among the lowest in the region (Crush and Frayne 2011b).

The following section outlines the two methodologies that provide the basis for this paper: the AFSUN survey's approach and categories of analysis, and the Blantyre case study approach, particularly with reference to the participative mapping activity. The subsequent section addresses three factors of household food access that are shaped by gendered mobilities: first, the physical access to markets, which is crucial in Blantyre's largely informal food marketing system with its strong emphasis on peri-urban markets; second, physical access to land for farming, which for low-income households often takes place on customary land in rural areas near the city; and third, the importance of mobility for the viability of informal economic activities, which are a common occupation for women and require mobility for sourcing and selling goods at the highest profit margins. The use of AFSUN data in relation to each topic helps to situate the Blantyre case study in a broader context of urbanism in the region. This serves as a bridge to extend the relevance of these locally specific findings to wider debates about how gender shapes urban food security in Southern Africa.

## Methods

This paper draws simultaneously from the Blantyre component of a regional household survey of 6,453 households in low-income neighbourhoods of 11 cities in 9 countries conducted by AFSUN and a qualitative case study conducted in Blantyre. The qualitative study adds depth to the baseline survey findings, while the baseline survey brings a broader comparative framework to the qualitative findings. The analysis seeks to integrate the two studies in order to shed light on how gendered mobilities shape urban food security in Blantyre and to build toward a conjecture about the importance of gendered mobilities for urban food security in other Southern African contexts.

### Urban Food Security Household Survey in Blantyre

The AFSUN survey in Blantyre was conducted in late 2008 and 432 households (including 2,730 individuals) were interviewed, all within the low-income peri-urban neighbourhood of South Lunzu (Mvula and Chiweza 2013). South Lunzu Ward is located at the north-east edge of the city, on the far side of Mount Ndirande. It was the last area annexed by the City of Blantyre (in 1988), and although it received substantial public investments in housing upgrades from the Malawi Housing Corporation, there is ongoing tension between indigenous groups and settlers. Like other parts of Blantyre, South Lunzu was administered under the Traditional Housing Area scheme, meaning that traditional authorities (Village Headmen, Group Village Headmen, and Chiefs) were kept in place to provide local governance under the guidance of the Malawi Housing Corporation. Recent changes to the institutions of local government have officially nullified the legal jurisdiction of 'town chiefs' (Cammack et al. 2009), and yet, they continue to exert de facto control over their territories because of the lack of capacity among formal local governing bodies (Tambulasi 2010). One of the implications for household food security is that some households in peripheral communities

within the City of Blantyre continue to have customary entitlements to the use of farmland in town granted by the local traditional authority, which provides a food security advantage over other low-income urban households.

### Qualitative Research in Blantyre

The case study in Blantyre used a gender lens focused on men's and women's roles within households rather than on household level food security outcomes. The research activities included 36 in-depth interviews; 32 were with individual men and women, one was with a husband and his wife, one with a father and his adult son, and two were with pairs of friends from separate households who requested they be interviewed together. These interviews provided detailed information about the challenges people face in achieving food security, the advantages that certain people have over others, and how residents perceive the link between gender and urban food security. Research activities were concentrated within six urban wards (Soche East, Soche West, Limbe West, Likhubula, Ndirande North, and Nkolokoti), which represented a variety of poverty rates, formal and informal spaces, prevalence of female household headship and household size. Semi-participant observation in markets, key informant interviews, newspaper analysis and participative mapping complemented the in-depth interviews.

The findings from participative mapping are a focal point of the analysis in this paper. The activity drew attention to the spatial dimensions of food access, which was a crucial element in linking mobility, gender and food security. Eight sessions were conducted in the six pre-selected wards. Local partners in each ward assembled groups of friends and neighbours. The size of the groups ranged from four to eight members. Most of the participants were women (although in three sessions, men also participated). A research assistant drew the maps schematically according to instructions from participants. The information was then plotted on Google Earth satellite images for spatial analysis, calculation of distances and cross-group comparisons.

Despite the differences in methodology (quantitative and qualitative), scale (regional cities and one city), and units of analysis (households and individuals), both studies show that gender shapes food security. After a summary of the gender breakdown of the Blantyre survey findings in comparison to the overall regional AFSUN survey findings, each subsection of this paper focuses on a central feature of food access in Blantyre. Each begins with a summary of what the regional AFSUN survey found in terms of gender differences and then follows with evidence from the qualitative case study that provides locally-specific insights into the implications and possible explanations of the AFSUN findings. The common thread throughout these subsections is the centrality of the issues of space and mobility, and the ways in which space and mobility have a gendered effect on household food security.

### **Gender, Household Type and Food Security: Blantyre in Regional Context**

The link between gender and urban food security is evident in the comparison of food security status by household type in the AFSUN survey results. Table 1 provides the aggregate findings for all 11 cities and shows that female-centred households had the lowest proportion (14 %) in the food secure category, only slightly lower than the extended

**Table 1** Household food security levels by household type

	Female-centred households	Male-centred households	Nuclear households	Extended households	Total
<b>Regional</b>					
Food secure	14	19	18	15	16
Mildly food insecure	6	6	8	9	7
Moderately food insecure	19	17	21	24	20
Severely food insecure	62	59	53	53	57
Total	100	100	100	100	100
<b>Blantyre</b>					
Food secure	22	52	34	39	34
Mildly food insecure	12	16	13	17	14
Moderately food insecure	26	16	34	30	30
Severely food insecure	40	16	19	14	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100

households (15 %), but less than nuclear households (18 %) and male-centred households (19 %). Although female-centred and extended households show a similar proportion of food-secure households, far more female-centred households were severely food insecure (62 %) relative to extended households (53 %). Nuclear households were also less likely to be severely food insecure (53 %) relative to female-centred or male-centred households (59 %). Some reasons for this unevenness lie in the composition and size of the households. Female-centred and male-centred households by definition have fewer adult members to earn money, procure food and perform domestic chores, which often creates an inherent economic disadvantage (Dodson et al. 2012).

The survey found significant inter-city differences in the food security status of female-centred households relative to other types of households (Dodson et al. 2012). In eight cities, the difference between the proportion of female-centred households that were severely food insecure and the proportion of nuclear households that were severely food insecure was less than 6 percentage points, but in Blantyre it was 21 percentage points (Dodson et al. 2012, p. 27–28). The difference between the proportion of severely food insecure female-centred households and severely food insecure extended households in Blantyre was even greater (26 percentage points) (Table 1). Female-centred households were far less likely than nuclear households and extended households to be food secure (22 %, 34 %, and 39 %, respectively). The AFSUN survey findings in Blantyre raise compelling questions about the link between gender and urban food security because, while households in the Blantyre sample had much higher food security overall, they also showed much more variation by household type relative to other cities.

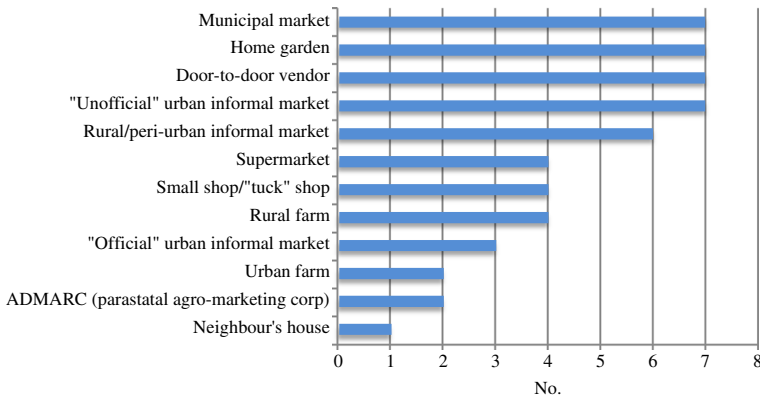
### Food Sources, Mobility and Access

The issue of physical access to healthy food for urban populations has risen to prominence largely in the context of ‘food deserts’ in cities in the Global North. With

weaker planning capacity in most cities in Southern Africa, particularly for low income and informal settlements, where people are accessing food and the implications of this geography for household food security pose more serious challenges (Battersby 2012). While urban food systems in the Global North are overwhelmingly dominated by supermarkets, low-income households in Southern African cities draw on a wide variety of formal and informal sources (Crush and Frayne 2011b). Many of these sources are outside the purview of urban planners and urban food security researchers. The complexity and diversity of informal food marketing systems compound the problem of political ‘invisibility’ of urban food security (Maxwell 1999), in part, because urban policymakers and planners have a limited perspective on what low-income households require. This paper demonstrates that policy actions such as improving intra-urban mobility networks to improve food access can emerge from spatial analysis of people’s daily experiences of accessing food in the city.

Blantyre belongs to a set of cities that rely more heavily on informal than formal food sources. Ninety-five percent of households buy food from the informal economy at least once per week (compared with a regional average of only 59 %). Only 21 % patronise supermarkets with the same frequency and 48 % never shop there. In cities such as Blantyre, where the informal food economy is ubiquitous within low-income neighbourhoods, it is important to highlight the diversity of informal sources. The qualitative research in Blantyre found a variety of types of informal food sources, based on such observable characteristics as the built structures; the type, quality, origin, and prices of food; the proximity to roads and modes of transportation; and the availability of amenities such as piped water, toilets, and shelter from the sun and rain. Vendors and customers identified other differentiating factors such as whether markets were administered by the City Assembly or a local or traditional authority; whether vendors paid a daily fee to operate; and whether vendors were independent or sub-contracted to occupy the market for a wholesaler. These factors begin to describe the variability of the informal food economy, which in some cases provided affordable, accessible, and high-quality food and improved food access. In other cases, people were disadvantaged by inconvenient, unsafe and expensive informal sources.

The diversity of informal food sources prompted the formulation of a longer list of food source types to summarise the findings of the participative mapping sessions (Fig. 1). Four of these sources were mentioned in seven of the eight sessions, suggesting that these were the most widely used sources among participants (although not necessarily the most frequently used). Unofficial markets were completely informal in the sense that vendors did not pay fees to the City Assembly, and the market structures were constructed and managed through informal or traditional governing structures. The three municipal markets (Blantyre, Limbe and Ndirande) were the only ones formally recognised in the city’s urban plan. They were relatively well built through public funds and offered some amenities. Most people said they shopped at unofficial markets because of the convenience, even though the price was often higher and the quality lower. By contrast, people would travel across town, walking an extra hour each way in some cases, to go to Limbe Market on a market day when cheap and high-quality food was plentiful. One group in the neighbourhood of Angelo Goveya emphasised the benefit to their food security that came from being able to walk to Limbe Market on a weekly basis (about 50-min walk) while also drawing on unofficial markets nearby for smaller daily purchases. As this group lived in a newly constructed



**Fig. 1** Food sources in Blantyre and number of times named in participative mapping

self-help housing project, most had come from informal settlements where they said it had been much more of a challenge to access affordable food.

Someone in virtually every group named door-to-door vendors as a food source. Door-to-door vendors were expensive alternatives to going to the market, and yet, sometimes, it was necessary to pay a premium when there was no time to walk to the market. Small shops ('tuck' shops) addressed this same need for convenience at a higher price. The group in Misesa Village, a squatter settlement on Mount Soche, said they often wasted money on these more convenient sources because they lived so far from the nearest market (about 30-min walk each way). For the most part, economic marginalisation had caused them to live in these extra-legal settlements, where impoverishment was exacerbated by the physical inaccessibility of affordable food. The effect was magnified for women with small children, who often found it difficult to carry children up the steep slope or to leave them home alone for long enough to go to the market.

The link between mobility, gender and food access was most apparent in the popularity of rural informal markets as a source of food. Six of the eight groups named one or more rural informal market as a place where they would go to buy food (Fig. 1). A group of mostly older women in Nkolokoti, an area that until recently had more rural than urban characteristics, listed several rural markets that they would go to on a monthly basis to buy maize, groundnuts, millet and sorghum more cheaply than in town. They would visit unofficial and official markets nearby on a daily basis to buy vegetables, dried fish, meat and beans. The popularity of rural markets was again apparent in a subsequent participative mapping session in which most of the participants were women food vendors. They noted that they visited rural informal markets to obtain food for resale in town, with the added benefit that they could buy food there for household consumption at very low prices. The savings on the cost of food augmented the profits of their businesses. One participant said she would pay 360 kwacha (approximately USD 2.40) in bus fare to travel to Mkando Market, 25 km away, where she could buy chicken for 300 kwacha (approximately USD 2.00) that would cost 800 kwacha (approximately USD 5.33) in Blantyre. Several others said they simply do not have the time or money to make such journeys. Although they were aware that they could save

money by going to rural markets and buying food in bulk, they were living hand-to-mouth and never had adequate sums of cash for such ventures.

One of the most frequently mentioned rural markets was Lunzu Market, located about 15 km north of central Blantyre, and very close to South Lunzu Ward where the AFSUN survey was conducted. Participants in three participative mapping sessions said they go to Lunzu Market at least once a month to buy food items such as groundnuts, millet, sorghum, and onions. This pattern of low-income urban residents buying food at Lunzu Market dates back decades to an era when urban formal food sources catered to Europeans and Asians (Chihana 1994). At that time, African urban residents procured most of their food from rural sources. Contemporary patterns of mobility between rural and urban spaces are thus a well-established and normal aspect of food consumption in Blantyre.

The popularity of Lunzu Market helps to contextualize the extremely high rate of patronage of informal food sources in the AFSUN Blantyre sample. In South Lunzu, many households have good access to this popular and vibrant informal market, which is an integral part of the urban economic fabric and food system. Their proximity to Lunzu Market, and, hence, the reduced cost of mobility to access affordable food, might contribute to the greater degree of food security in the Blantyre sample, including among female-centred households. Given that physical inaccessibility of affordable food sources is less of an issue in South Lunzu, it would seem that other factors are contributing to the differences in levels of food security by household type in Blantyre.

### **Food Production, Gender and Mobilities**

Food production by urban households is a longstanding practice whose appropriateness in the urban setting has been the subject of controversy among development professionals, urban planners and politicians (Castillo 2003; Hovorka 2006; Crush et al. 2011). The AFSUN survey found that agricultural production by urban households was less important as a food source than previous research suggested. Three cities stood out as having exceptionally high rates of urban agriculture: Blantyre (64 % of households), Harare (60 %) and Maseru (47 %), whereas the majority of cities had 10 % or less of households growing food.

Blantyre's high rate of urban agriculture relative to other cities is partly a consequence of where the survey was conducted within the city (Mvula and Chiweza 2013). Blantyre's households were far more likely to rely on field crop cultivation as an additional livelihood strategy (62 %) than households in other cities. Whereas urban agriculture can refer to a diverse range of food production activities in and around cities, it is important to note that for the households sampled in South Lunzu, urban agriculture that contributed to household food security mostly consisted of field crop production. The field crop in question is most likely maize, the staple food in Malawi. The fact that so many households in South Lunzu were producing their own staple food and that the survey took place in a good agricultural year shortly after the harvest, partly accounts for the higher rate of food security in Blantyre.

To the extent that maize production can help account for the higher level of food security in the Blantyre sample, it also helps to explain the differences in severe food



insecurity status by household type (Table 1). In an economic context in which a majority of households partially rely on urban agriculture for their livelihoods, not being able to produce food can have dire consequences for a household's food security. Smallholder maize cultivation requires access to household labour, land, seeds, water and, to an increasing extent, fertiliser (Mkwambisi et al. 2011). Female-centred households generally have less access to labour because, by definition, they have fewer adults. Women's land access is a complex issue, but even in matrilineal communities in southern Malawi, unmarried women can be marginalised from communal and commercial land access for various social and economic reasons (Peters and Kambewa 2007). Farming in Malawi is becoming increasingly expensive. In the context of population pressure and climate change, commercially available inputs are increasingly vital for smallholder agriculture to be viable (Dorward and Chirwa 2011). The cost of farming puts pressure on unmarried women's limited incomes, exacerbating the gender gap in household food security status. A recent study of urban agriculture in Blantyre found that female-centred urban farming households consistently had lower yields because they farmed smaller plots on average, had less cash to buy farming inputs, had less access to labour (household members and hired labour), and faced gender-specific challenges in accessing education about farming methods (Mkwambisi et al. 2011).

The participative mapping sessions in Blantyre revealed a strong emphasis on household food production as a food source. The basic question, "where do you obtain your food?" elicited references to home gardens in seven of eight sessions (Fig. 1). People said they grew leafy vegetables, tomatoes and maize in these gardens. They also had fruit trees on their compounds and raised chickens, rabbits and pigeons for food. In two sessions (Ndirande and Nkolokoti), participants had access to customary and public urban land on which they could farm maize on a larger scale, which was a boost to household food security. As mentioned above, the group in Nkolokoti was mostly older women for whom access to land for cultivation near their homes made it less arduous and less costly than the alternatives of farming a rural plot, renting land in town or earning enough money to rely on purchased maize. Several in-depth interviews, including an interview with a traditional authority (Group Village Headwoman), confirmed the continued practice of distributing urban farmland among members of traditional communities whose claims pre-date the designation of an urban area. This practice is related to the broader governance problem of *de jure* formal government and overlapping *de facto* traditional government structures at the local level (Cammack et al. 2009). It is probable that this opportunity for urban agriculture in Blantyre is unique among Southern African cities.

Many households without access to customary farmland in town were able to grow food in their rural home villages or to rent farmland relatively cheaply in the peri-urban areas around Blantyre. In four participative mapping sessions, rural farming was named as a source of food (Fig. 1). Distance was a crucial factor in the decision to go to the rural areas to farm. In the session in the formal housing area of Naperi, one woman said she goes to her home village near Bvumbwe (15 km away) several times per month to farm and to procure food to take back to town. Another participant said that she had been cultivating at her home village in Ntcheu District, about 100 km away, but that the cost of her own transportation to go to the farm, and the cost of paying to transport the maize, made it more expensive for her household to farm than to buy food in town. In

several interviews, people pointed to the increasing cost of transportation and the amount of time needed for urban livelihood activities as reasons for choosing to rely on purchased food rather than producing their own food in rural areas. Since 2010, when the fieldwork was conducted, fuel has become extremely expensive, suggesting an indirect impact on urban food security through the rising price of transportation (Wroe 2012).

The AFSUN survey did not reveal where households were producing food, and questions about land tenure, productivity and proximity of farms remain unanswered by the survey data. Yet, it is clear from the inter-city diversity that the place where each survey was conducted was a crucial factor in whether or not households relied on food production for their food security. An important finding from the participative mapping sessions and interviews in Blantyre was that mobility and space were major considerations for households deciding whether to invest time and money into food production. This point shows the indirect effects of economic policies that lead to rising costs of transportation on urban households' food security. It also highlights the fact that money and income issues cannot be separated from food production even though food production can, under certain circumstances, mitigate the effects of low incomes on household food security status.

### **Informal Livelihoods, Income and Economic Access to Food**

A final way in which gendered mobilities shape household food security is through income generation in the informal sector. It is well documented that women earn less money for similar work in Southern African cities, especially in the informal sector. The AFSUN survey found that overall, income was the factor most strongly associated with food security. Food is a major expense for low-income urban households of all types in all cities, but there was relatively little variation by household type within each city (Dodson et al. 2012). There was much greater variation by city than by household type. Households in Blantyre (46 %) were below the regional average (50 %) in terms of the proportion of household income spent on food, possibly reflecting the opportunities to buy food cheaply at informal markets and to reduce food budgets by producing some of their own food. Yet, although female-centred and nuclear households spend a similar proportion of their incomes on food, female-centred households on average had lower incomes from which to budget their food expenses and, therefore, spent less on food (Dodson et al. 2012). In all cities, lower income levels are a crucial factor for understanding why female-centred households have lower food security status.

The qualitative study of Blantyre highlighted the importance of gendered mobilities for understanding the different opportunities and constraints that men and women face in earning a living. The in-depth interviews aimed to reveal more about women's economic contributions to households and how these contributions were related to household food security status. Childcare was one factor curtailing women's mobility to engage in business activities. One roadside vendor in Nkolokoti said that, as a widow responsible for young children, she was limited to conducting business close to her home. Despite paying a daily fee to the City Assembly, she conducted her business in an unprotected outdoor location in all weathers, while vendors in the relatively formalised municipal markets paid the same fee and had amenities and many more

customers. She said that the first obstacle to selling at a busier market was money for transport to go to one of the municipal markets. Another major factor was that she was a single parent and had to stay close to her children during the day. The household was operating hand-to-mouth, such that when she sold something, even a few leaves of leafy vegetables for the equivalent of a few cents, she would send one of her older children to buy some maize and then start cooking it so they could have lunch. The responsibilities of being a mother and single parent kept her close to her home and directly compromised her ability to increase the profitability of her business. This woman's story serves to illustrate a constraint on mobility that pertains to single mothers of young children. In a city such as Blantyre, where there are no state social grants, this immobility can be detrimental to income-generating activities and hence household food security status (Miller et al. 2011).

At the other end of the spectrum was a woman trader in a nuclear household who travelled frequently to conduct various trading businesses throughout Malawi. Her male children were old enough to cook their own dinner and clean up if she spent the night away, and even though men rarely cook at home in Malawi, her husband would cook for himself when he was alone. Another advantage was that as the wife of a senior police officer, her family had been stationed in several parts of the country, giving her geographically-dispersed business contacts. The profits from her business, the money she saved on their food budget by buying directly from farmers on her business trips, and her husband's wage and housing allowance, meant that this household was very food secure. This interview showed the potential for greater mobility, directly contributing to greater household food security, when a man takes on some of the domestic workload (even to the minimal extent of cooking for himself when his wife is conducting business). Gendered mobility goes beyond issues of transportation and infrastructure; it strikes at the heart of the ideological problem that women are often tied to their homes by their domestic responsibilities and their household's food security status can, thereby, be reduced.

Findings from the qualitative study in Blantyre resonate with the broader literature on gender, livelihoods and mobility (Uteng and Cresswell 2008). Household food security in all types of households could be improved by facilitating women's ability to generate income through enhanced mobility within and beyond the city (Uteng 2011). The positive effects would be heightened for many female-centred households, as they typically rely on fewer income earners. These linkages observed in households in Blantyre raise compelling questions for further research on the gendered effects of daily mobilities on livelihoods and food security in other Southern African cities.

## Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated several ways in which gender is linked to food security in Southern African cities and how gendered mobilities are often implicated in these linkages. The AFSUN survey findings produced insights about urban food security that invite theorisation about the socio-spatial dimensions of urban poverty in the region. The qualitative findings in Blantyre provide a more nuanced understanding which brings forward the everyday spaces, activities and relationships that shape food access. The single city case study allows the particular opportunities and challenges that men

and women in Blantyre face to become apparent in ways that are less clear from the household survey findings. Some of these opportunities and challenges are unique to Blantyre, but others will resonate with people's experiences in cities throughout the region and contribute to a broader understanding of the importance of mobilities for food access and food security. The three features of food access discussed in detail—access to affordable and reliable food sources, access to resources for food production and access to income-earning opportunities—reveal the gendered geographies at the heart of urban food security. Mobility is shown to be a useful framework for theorising the gendered dimensions of urban food security in Southern Africa as well as for designing potential policy interventions to alleviate food insecurity. The case study of Blantyre presents a working model for future research questions linking gender and household food security in Southern African cities.

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