

**The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders  
selling food: a case study in the Marabastad area of Pretoria**

Master's dissertation by

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS**

**ATM** - Automated Teller Machine

**CBD** - Central Business District

**CoT** - City of Tshwane

**IDP** - Integrated Development Plan

**POPIA** - Protection of Personal Information Act

**SASSA** - South African Social Security Agency

**SDP** - Spatial Development Plan

**SDGs** - Sustainable Development Goals

**Stats SA** – Statistics South Africa

**TMPD**- Tshwane Metro Police Department

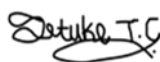
**UN** - United Nations

## Originality declaration

Full names	Tshiamo Setuke
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Topic of work	The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders selling food: a case study in the Marabastad area of Pretoria.

### Declaration

1. I understand what plagiarism is and am aware of the University's policy in this regard.
2. I declare that this dissertation is my own original work. Where other people's work has been used (either from a printed source, internet, or any other source), this has been properly acknowledged and referenced in accordance with the requirements as stated in the University's plagiarism prevention policy.
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Date: 12 December 2023

## Ethics Statement

The author, Tshiamo Setuke, whose name appears on the title of the page of this dissertation has obtained for this research described in the work and proposal, the applicable ethical research approval.

The author, Tshiamo Setuke, declares that she has observed the ethical standards required by the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for researchers and the policy guidelines for responsible research.

Signature: 

Date: 12 December 2023

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## **Dedication**

**Mom Lebo**, we did it!!! Yes, we did it mom....Your daughter is a Masters graduate, who would have thought? I really wish you were here with us to witness this. We love and miss you so much our guardian angel. I see you in every woman who stepped into my life and held my hand to help me make you proud. They always remind me of how proud you are of me and that you are with me in spirit as I marvel this journey called life. In all honesty, it is not easy, but I am doing well mom, your children are doing well. God is taking a good care of us. This one is for you and me, 3 qualifications later, after your passing. Thank you for holding it down for me in heaven, I know you are watching and are very much proud of me. I love you so much.

**REST IN PERFECT PEACE MOM, LEOGANG MARTHA SETUKE.**

## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores and analyzes the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders in the Marabastad area of Pretoria. The research for this dissertation was conducted from a socio-economic perspective as it observed the impact of the pandemic on the businesses of women street traders. Qualitative research methods were employed to collect data, which included making use of existing literature, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and observations. There were 20 research participants who were interviewed, consisting of 19 women street traders and one government official. The dissertation concludes that women street traders were negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic as they were forced to stop selling food and this meant a loss of income which resulted in them struggling to provide for their families. They then used various mechanisms to react to and survive the Covid-19 pandemic, which included depending on social support grants, borrowing money, and using their savings. This dissertation shows that poor communication and bureaucratic processes were hinderances to the local municipality administering effective service delivery to the informal food traders. The issues that came as a result of the pandemic should challenge the government and other stakeholders to establish strategies and policies that work towards advancing the informal food economy in the City of Tshwane and elsewhere. The government could consider having less onerous requirements and a more enabling environment for street trading businesses and for accessing social relief services in a time of socio-economic crisis. More could also be done to include traders in the policy making process to ensure interventions better respond to their needs.

**Key Words:** Social Embeddedness, Women street traders, Food Security, Care-work, Red-tape, Covid-19 pandemic.

## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Since the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020, it has had a great impact on the social, economic, and political landscape of many countries. The pandemic had a huge impact on people's lives, with women street traders being some of the people affected. This dissertation presents the findings from a study that aimed to understand the impact of Covid-19 on women street traders, specifically in Marabastad. Marabastad is one of the well-known transport hubs in the city of Pretoria, which falls under the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CoT) in South Africa, with a high level of business activity. Notably, "*Marabastad remains highly active throughout the day with informal trade and socialising the dominant commercial activities*" (Brandt, 2002: 52). It is located on the northern side of Pretoria, along Boom Street (Figure 1).

Women street traders are the focus of this project because, just like men, they make a great contribution to ensuring that there is food security, and because women play a leading role in providing care work in communities even in the middle of a pandemic. However, women are still marginalised in the informal and formal sectors compared to their male counterparts. Casale & Posel (2020: 1) indicate that "*women and men typically have different roles in both of these sectors, it is likely that they would experience the negative effects of the crisis unevenly, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities*". Furthermore, based on the NIDS-CRAM survey, women were more negatively impacted than their male counterparts during South Africa's early stages of the crisis, specifically the "hard" lockdown period (Casale & Posel, 2020).

This dissertation contributes to the available literature on the role of street traders in food systems and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular, how it affected the lives of women street traders and their businesses. Some of the key themes that the research unpacks are care-work, women's contribution to the food economy, policies on informal trade, and the responses to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the informal economy. These themes were chosen based on the current debates about the topic in question. This research project is in the form of a case study and followed a qualitative research approach for data collection. Lastly, it discusses the available data on the impact of Covid-19 on women street traders and some of the gaps in the literature on this topic, which will be discussed in the next section.

### **1.1. Background of the study**

The informal food economy is a key source of food and an integral part of the urban and rural economies in South Africa, as “[a]round 70% of households in poorer neighbourhoods in South Africa source some food from the informal sector” (Wegerif, 2020: 797). From selling cooked food to raw fruits and vegetables, the informal food economy also offers easy access to a wide range of foods in public spaces, such as taxi ranks, street corners, and parks. Street traders, as participants in the informal economy, make a great contribution to the food system. They contribute to food security in communities by giving people convenient access to food while also deriving their livelihoods from their businesses (Wegerif, 2020, WIEGO, 2020). Street trade has great consumer support because traders sell their food at a lower price and at more convenient locations compared to big food corporations. Another method of trade that street traders use to attract and keep their customers, is giving regular customers goods on credit without charging them interest. The same method of trade has contributed to social integration within societies as it is based on trust and creates a relationship between traders and their customers (Battersby et.al, 2016). This is something that customers cannot get from the big supermarkets or corporate food retail stores. These companies focus on maximizing profits and are not necessarily interested in the locality where they have branches or anything beyond monetary and goods exchange for profit (Wegerif, 2020).

The informal food economy plays a key role in the lives of low-income households, as it offers opportunities to earn income and create livelihoods. According to Wegerif (2020: 797), in Johannesburg over 50 percent of sales from South Africa’s largest fresh-produce wholesale market, City Deep, are to informal traders. The informal food sector is an important source of food security for most of the low-income households. It sells fresh produce - such as tomatoes, onions, and cabbage at prices that are often lower than supermarket prices (Wegerif, 2023). According to Skinner & Watson (2020: 2) “*The poorer the household, the more likely it is to source food from informal outlets, as their income is erratic*”. People living in low-income settlements also use public transport such as taxis to go and buy food from the supermarkets, which can be costly. This is also a challenge as they may not be able to carry many goods using public transport (Skinner & Watson, 2020). Recent studies (Wegerif, 2023; Nickanor et al. 2019) agree that this is the gap that is closed by the informal food sector as they are in close proximity to people, have flexible operating hours, and allow customers to buy food in small quantities and on credit, according to what they can afford. This reduces the need for people to

travel a long distance to access food, especially when people are restricted from moving in public areas, as they were during the Covid-19 lockdown regulations.

Most people around the world were not expecting that in 2020 world economies would be hit hard by a pandemic, leading to job losses and the loss of lives. Unfortunately, one of many economies that were intensely interrupted was the South African economy. From an international perspective, Asante, and Mills (2020: 171) mentioned that “*in Africa for instance, major cities such as Lagos, Accra, and Johannesburg have recorded the highest numbers of cases of COVID-19 disease in Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa respectively, altering their everyday social, economic, and political lives*”. The pandemic came at a time of the year (first quarter of the year), when business is slow or poor for the informal sector in South Africa. This was due to people having used their savings over the December holiday period and having expenses such as school fees to contend with. The pandemic happened unexpectedly and had a huge impact on small and vulnerable firms, as well as on the big firms.

Some of the socio-economic issues women street traders faced during the pandemic exacerbated issues that had long existed before the pandemic, such as: gender inequalities; the unfair burden of unpaid care work that women carry; marginalization of women; and many people living in poverty. Notably, “*The magnitude of inequality is striking using data and trends from unemployment surveys in the United States and India, where gender-disaggregated data are available, we estimate that female job loss rates due to COVID-19 are about 1.8 times higher than male job loss rates globally, at 5.7 percent versus 3.1 percent respectively*” (Madgavkar et al. 2020: 2). It has been indicated by the United Nations (UN) that the “*compounded economic impacts [of Covid-19] are felt especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty*” (United Nations, 2020: 1). In addition, because of youngsters not attending school, elderly people's increased care needs, and overburdened health services, the amount of unpaid care work increased during the pandemic (United Nations, 2020).

### **1.1.1. Contribution of women street traders to food systems**

A large percentage of the workforce in South African cities work informally. Street vending, market trading, and domestic work are the most common occupations in this sector (Rogan, 2019). Rogan (2019) defines informal employment as jobs that are not, or are only partially, covered by formal agreements made at work, such as the right to paid sick days or yearly leave, social security contributions towards pensions, and medical assistance. The statistical snapshot

by Rogan (2019) also indicates that 25% of the economically active group in Pretoria, where this study was carried out, are informally employed and approximately half of those informally employed people are women.

According to Nxumalo (2018), black women make up the majority of those involved in informal trading since they are compelled to work due to their need to provide for their families. Women frequently relocate from rural to urban areas in search of job opportunities and this is usually because there are more employment prospects in urban areas. Those who desperately need jobs are typically drawn to work in the informal sector because of not having had access to formal education which is a requirement when it comes to formal sector employment. This makes women informal traders a necessary thematic area of study because their contribution to the economy is currently not adequately acknowledged.

### **1.1.2. Impact of street trading policies and Covid-19 regulations on women street traders**

The President of South Africa declared a national lockdown on March 23, 2020, with effect from midnight on March 26, 2020 (Wegerif, 2020). The National State of Disaster ended at midnight on April 4, 2022, though some transitional provisions remained in effect for 30 days. "Full lockdown" referred to instances in which governments enacted regulations severely restricting citizens' social, cultural, and economic lives. These regulations typically mandated border closures, restrictions on movement within national borders, mandatory work from home where possible and closure of non-essential businesses and economic activities, school closure, ban on public gatherings and events, restrictions on domestic public transportation, curfews and, in some cases, stay-at-home orders for the general population (Marchiori and Assis, 2021). The term "partial lockdown" referred to situations in which governments enacted fewer and less stringent regulations affecting citizens' social, cultural, and economic lives. These regulations included border closures and other restrictions but did not include stay-at-home orders or the closure of non-essential businesses (Marchiori and Assis, 2021).

These laws and regulations had a significant impact on the livelihoods of informal traders. On the one hand, the use of public space, particularly informal traders' workplaces, became the target of restrictions and regulations aimed at controlling crowds and limiting vehicular and foot traffic. All people except those in essential services, such as food supply, were ordered to stay at home, and the police and army were deployed to enforce this (Marchiori and Assis, 2021). With the declaration of a state of disaster a week earlier and growing concern about the

spread and risks of Covid-19, business for informal food traders and others had already begun to decline. Despite the fact that food is considered an essential service, street traders, including those selling food, were barred from operating and lost their jobs (Wegerif, 2020). Most countries implemented lockdown regulations, which resulted in reduced working hours, unlocked job losses, and numerous other uncertainties in the global labour market. Many of the recorded job losses (71%), rather than unemployment, were caused by low economic activity (Kambule, 2022).

The Covid-19 pandemic has had massive global ramifications. Because of the lockdown of national economies, the coronavirus (Covid-19) has been disruptive to global socioeconomic production of livelihoods (Khambule, 2022). The Covid-19 lockdown exacerbated the precariousness of informal workers, as the majority of participants reported a decline in socioeconomic status, as evidenced by increased unemployment, poverty, and vulnerability. These difficulties are exacerbated further by the absence of proactive, targeted, and timely interventions to protect those in the informal economy from Covid-induced socioeconomic shocks (Khambule, 2022). According to (Thanh and Duong, 2022), street vendors are among the most vulnerable groups because they lack the skills and resources to deal with shocks. The urban poor and even middle-to-low-income families in developing cities rely on informal vending systems for daily necessities due to their convenience and low prices. Because of the combination of stay-at-home orders, fear of contagion that emptied the streets, and arbitrary enforcement of lockdown measures, informal traders struggled to make ends meet (Marchiori and Assis, 2021).

Most street trader's livelihoods were negatively affected by the hard lockdown restrictions with half of informal workers losing their main source of income (Rogan & Skinner, 2020). In addition, "*[n]ot surprisingly, more [sic] half of informal workers reported that their household ran out of food during the month of April*" (Rogan & Skinner, 2020: 19). This was after the government responded to the Covid-19 crisis by implementing a regulation that stopped street traders from operating to reduce movement of people in the street to curb the spread of Covid-19. Not allowing street traders to operate was a huge challenge to the traders as their occupation requires them to be in the streets to sell products to people. Operating requirements that the government had in place when the economy was open again, such as requiring permits from traders before they can resume work, showed a negative attitude towards the sector, a lack of consideration for traders' livelihoods and informal sector's contribution to food security (Battersby, 2020; Wegerif, 2020). However, the sector plays a key role in the food economy;

for example, “*the informal fresh produce sector in the Johannesburg area is worth at least R4 billion (US\$222 million) a year*” (Wegerif, 2020: 798).

Lack of capital to buy new stock post the hard lockdown and long processes to get permits to trade again, became stumbling blocks to their business recovery. Health risks and movement restriction in public areas affected what is at the core of street trader’s operating model, that is footfall in the market (WIEGO, 2021). A recent study by WIEGO (2021) indicates that While incomes have decreased, informal workers' unpaid care work has increased due to changes in household structures, school and childcare facility closures, and other factors.

There has been a great deal of interest among researchers in protecting the interests and rights of parties involved in the informal sector economy. Benit-Gbaffou (2016), Skinner, (1999) and Roy (2005) are some of the researchers that have written broadly on street traders right to the city and how that right can be exercised and protected by policy makers. This is with an observation that access to protection of informal traders’ ‘right to the city’ is a distant reality for street traders as securing a space and trading permits remains a challenge. Participants in the informal sector get limited information on how to apply for trading permits and limited space to trade, in addition, some stay on waiting lists for permits for too long because of the red tape imposed by municipalities (Benit-Gbaffou, 2016; Xolo, 2020). Yet, one of their key evaluations aspects when it comes to retail development applications is checking if the proposed development integrates and formalises informal trade (CoT, 2021). The question then becomes, how will the informal trade be formally integrated in the retail development plan when red tape is a top priority. In addition, street traders or the informal sector was not included in the 2020/2021 IDP (Integrated Development Plan) for the City of Tshwane (CoT, 2020). The poor administrative issues that come with acquiring permits or getting development projects applications approved remains to be a stumbling block when it comes to attaining spatial development plans or supporting street traders.

Researchers have been attempting to make policy makers aware of the challenges faced by participants in this sector. In so doing, they are advocating for street trading to form part of urban development plans. They also encourage street traders to learn more about their sector and have insights about their right to earn a living and the responsibility to look after their trading areas (Skinner, 1999). Most importantly, it is argued that street traders need to recognise that they have a “right to the city” as citizens (Roy, 2005). Skinner & Watson (2020) add that the right to the city may not be limited to South African women street traders only but may



also be applicable to non-South African traders, to avoid discrimination that could aggravate food insecurity.

Integration of the informal sector into urban planning and governance is another way of ensuring inclusion and empowerment of informal workers considering their contribution to the city's economy. Spatial planning and infrastructure interventions are a necessity when it comes to supporting and protecting the informal food trading sector (Skinner & Watson, 2020). It is of great importance for the traders to also learn about distributive justice, including how resources are allocated in the city and what is needed to acquire them. It is vital to also encourage street traders to take part in local governance and to know the correct channels to appeal any dispute they might have regarding distributive justice (Skinner, 1999).

## **1.2. Research problem and justification**

Women street traders have played a huge role in contributing to the food economy over the years and continue to do so even in the trying times of the Covid-19 pandemic. The informal sector's contribution to the overall food economy is largely overlooked and those involved in it are undermined. Women street traders selling food, are an example, as they form a more vulnerable part of this sector. They have been marginalised and their contributions often unacknowledged by policy makers in the cities where they operate (Wegerif, 2023 & Battersby, 2011). In trying to address this, it was equally important to discuss the challenges they encountered while ensuring food security in communities. With the pandemic that has claimed people's lives, jobs, and businesses, it was necessary to also find out how women informal food traders were affected. Special focus was given to women street traders because, as discussed above, they make a great contribution to the informal food sector and there are underlying issues that affect them such as care work and gender inequality.

Too often, this sector has been studied without enough attention to the voices, perspectives, and daily realities of the women involved. Thus, this dissertation unpacks the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders who sell food in the Marabastad area of Pretoria. It attempts to address and debunk the negative connotations associated with this sector and contributes to the available literature on the informal food sector.

This research is justified as it closes the gap of the general undervaluing of the role played by street traders in ensuring food security, contributing to food systems in low income communities, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. This dissertation also delves into the challenges traders face and how they can be mitigated in case of future economic

shocks given that the pandemic exacerbated the already existing issues they face in the informal sector. The United Nations has established the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a wide-ranging collection of goals and targets that direct the world's development efforts towards a sustainable and all-encompassing future. These goals include the following ones that all have relevance for the role of street traders and this study : Goal 1, No Poverty; Goal 2, Zero Hunger; Goal 3, Good Health and Well-being; Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth; Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities; Goal 12, Responsible Consumption and Production; and Goal 17, Partnerships for the Goals. These SDGs show the need for more research about the key areas that they are addressing. The research gap that this dissertation is trying to close is in relation to the body of knowledge on food systems, touching on the aforementioned SDGs, focusing on the impact that the Covid-19 pandemic had on the informal food systems and women in street traders in particular.

The first goal is to eradicate poverty. Food markets frequently act as significant means of support and subsistence for marginalised groups such as small farmers, migrants, and other economically disadvantaged groups. By conducting research on these markets, it is possible to discover means of improving their economic prospects and minimizing poverty rates. Goal two is about eradicating hunger. Unofficial food markets have a vital function in food networks, particularly in areas where there are inadequate official food distribution channels. By comprehending the operation and interactions within unregulated food marketplaces, investigations can discover prospects for enhancing food safety, advancing the availability of nourishing food, and lessening food waste and depletion (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Goal 3, which pertains to Good Health and Well-being, acknowledges that informal food markets can have consequences for nutrition and public health. By conducting research, we may evaluate the safety and standard of food products being sold in such markets, uncover possible health hazards, and devise methods to encourage safe food handling practices that can ultimately lead to improved health results. Goal 8: Promoting Adequate Employment and Economic Prosperity: Unofficial food markets frequently serve as crucial employment hubs, particularly for those who have limited means of access to formal job openings. Through research, it is possible to examine the socio-economic circumstances of employees in these markets, delve into their labour rights and working conditions, and discover methods to encourage both fair employment and economic progression (United Nations General Assembly, 2015).

Local and traditional food systems are strongly associated with informal food markets, and these markets can encourage sustainable consumption and production methods. As others have argued: “*It is a common phenomenon that food systems involve the informal sector in developing countries*” (Zhao, 2021: 2). Researching informal food markets can promote partnerships among different parties, such as policymakers, local authorities, market traders, and consumers, which aligns with Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals. This research has the potential to encourage collaborations that promote the exchange of knowledge, the strengthening of abilities, and the creation of strategies and actions that aid in reaching the SDGs.

In brief, examining the informal food markets in conjunction with the SDGs presents a significant opportunity to tackle interrelated development issues such as poverty, hunger, health, inequality, and sustainability. By utilizing it this research, one can pinpoint techniques and actions founded on evidence that can help achieve the SDGs and enhance the welfare of communities who participate in informal food markets. To make such a contribution, this study set out to achieve the objective explained below.

### **1.3 Research objective**

The objective of this research was to understand the contribution of women to the informal food economy and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their food-related street trade. It is anticipated that this research might also influence the responses of the CoT and other authorities in addressing the challenges faced by women street traders who sell food. The research included bringing forward the voices, experiences, and priorities of marginalised actors in the food system, specifically women in the informal sector.

The research questions to be answered in achieving this objective are set out below.

### **1.4 Key research question**

The main research question guiding this research was the following: What is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders who sell food in the Marabastad area of Pretoria?

#### **1.4.1 Research sub-questions**

The following sub-questions were formulated for the research:

1. How do women in the informal sector run their businesses and organise themselves?

2. How do they organise their care-work (including child-care) and other household chores?
3. What were some of the women street traders' experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic?
4. How did the pandemic affect their daily operations, and what are some of their fears and concerns about the Covid-19 pandemic?
5. What are government policies and regulations, including Covid-19 related regulations, that affect street trader's operations and how have these impacted women street traders?
6. How could the Tshwane Municipality's development plans and regulations be changed to improve the conditions for women street traders?

### **1.5. Dissertation chapter structure**

The following outline for the dissertation was adopted:

- Chapter 1 – Introduces the research topic and provides a background to the study. This includes information on the area where the study was conducted, the research problem, objective, and justification. In addition, it covers the main and sub questions that it are addressed throughout the dissertation.
- Chapter 2 – Covers a review of literature related to the impact of Covid-19 on food systems and the functioning of markets given that street traders are part of a bigger food system and play a huge role in ensuring that there is food security in our communities. Additionally, it unpacks the theoretical framework that informed the study.
- Chapter 3 – Explains the methods that were used to collect data and it further explains the research design, approach, study population sampling technique, and provides a brief reflection of the data collection experiences and study limitations.
- Chapter 4 – Presents the findings of the study in order to answer the research questions.
- Chapter 5 – Delves into the study findings, analysis, and discussion, and suggests recommendations for improving the situation of women street traders.

In the next chapter, the literature that informed and gave a theoretical framework for this research will be unpacked. Most importantly looking at the history of informal trade, food systems that street traders are part of and the overall impact of Covid-19 pandemic on these systems and street trader's care work.

## CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explores existing literature on concepts relevant to the research topic. This includes literature on the informal economy, food security and its dimensions, food systems, the impact of Covid-19 on food systems, women street traders, and urban governance. Additionally, it unpacks survival mechanisms that women street traders used to survive the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter will firstly provide historical background of the informal sector or economy within which the street traders operate, and then go on to unpack what the recent scholarly literature says about the impact of the recent pandemic on the subject matter. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key argument presented in the chapter.

### 2.1. The informal economy

The term “informal sector” became prominent in the 1970’s and it refers to economic activities which take place outside the framework of official institutions and protection of labour relations (Hart, 1985; Aguilar and Guerrero, 2020). According to Hart (1985: 54) the informal sector refers to the ‘hidden’ or underground ‘black’ economy. It is a social phenomenon that is prevalent or is known to be a feature of life among the developing countries’ urban poor. Individuals who work in this sector regard themselves as “positively” employed, regardless of their employment being informal (with no formal employment contract) and often being paid low. This type of employment contributes to economic development and transformation. Irrespective of the positive outlook that actors involved in it have towards it, the word informal has negative connotations associated with it (Hart, 1985).

The word “informal” implies behaviour that is lacking form. Identifying something as informal implies that it fails to reproduce the pattern of some established form. Many scholars find it hard to unpack or analyse this term “informal”, hence there are ongoing debates and research around the term. According to Wegerif (2020), to effectively study and understand what is often called the informal sector we need to change the language and find another term that could be used to refer to this important sector and form of economic organisation. This should be a term that will acknowledge the contribution this sector makes to the food economy and describes it for what it is, instead of it being based on assumptions we have about it compared to the formal sector (Wegerif, 2020).

It is not easy to define or describe the “informal” sector theoretically because there is more to it than just the “economy of the streets” (Hart, 1985). It implies a lot of other complexities associated with the term, and context matters because it means different things to different

people. For example, in most sub-Saharan countries or cities it means a positive employment sector as most of the urban poor work in the informal sector. Contrastingly, in first world cities it means casual employment (Hart, 1985). In addition, the informal sector is largely known as an unlicensed entrepreneurial sector, characterised by an ease of entry and exit into the market and it is unregulated by municipal authorities (Seymour, 1992). These characteristics are distinctly different from the formal economy characteristics, where written contracts, registration with authorities or licencing, taxation, and provision of employee benefits are familiar.

Many of the people within the informal sector are the urban poor, who are working for low erratic returns, and are invisible to bureaucracy. In this sector, it is argued that employees such as street traders do not pay tax and there is a limited, if any, control on the way this sector is run and organised. It is a free economic market where there is no control of who enters or leaves the market (Abebrese and Schachtebeck, 2017).

## **2.2. Food systems**

A food system is defined as “*all elements, environment, people, inputs, processes, infrastructures, institutions and activities that relate to the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of food, and the output of these activities, including socio-economic and environmental outcomes*” (Rwafa-Ponela, et al. 2022:3, Devereux et al., 2020: 770, HLPE Report, 2020, HLPE Report 12, 2017: 11).

### **2.2.1 Impact of Covid-19 on food systems**

The global food systems have been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak due to changes in consumer demand and behaviour brought on by the pandemic (OECD, 2020). This ranged from disruptions in the food supply chains, loss of income and livelihoods, interruptions in agricultural production, closure of food service businesses, and closure of food service facilities (OECD, 2020). Additionally, increased food waste, disruption of nutrition programmes, and challenges for small-scale food producers, also contributed.

All facets of the food supply chain have experienced shocks because of Covid-19, including farm productivity, food processing, transportation, and logistics, and finally, demand. Different products have experienced disruptions at different points of the supply chain, and not all industries and products have been equally impacted (OECD, 2020). Due to this, vulnerable communities have less access to food and there are shortages of some basic staples. Many households, especially those in low-income communities, have seen significant job losses,

decreased wages, and economic instability because of the pandemic (OECD, 2020). Due to this, fewer individuals can afford food to eat, which has increased food insecurity and malnutrition. Food security is “[a] situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Peng & Berry, 2019: 1). Whereas food insecurity is the direct opposite of that, poor to no access to sufficient and nutritious food which then leads to malnutrition (Peng & Berry, 2019). Malnutrition can be loosely defined as lack of proper nutrition, caused by not having enough to eat .

Notably, the definition of food security has evolved, and the recent debates shows that even the four pillars of food security have also evolved to six dimensions of food security. Food security evolved from being firstly formally defined in a policy context at the 1974 World Food Conference as: the constant availability of sufficient global food supplies of staple foods, especially to prevent severe food shortages in the event of widespread crop failure, natural disasters, or other calamities, to maintain a steady expansion of food consumption in nations with low levels of per capita intake, and to counteract variations in production and prices (Clapp et al., 2021). The four pillars have been: access, availability, utilization, and stability. More recently it has become common to include two more pillars: sustainability and agency (HLPE, 2020; FAO et al, 2023).

Developments in the concept of food security and its four pillars framework are focusing on finding out whether the framework adequately reflects the full spectrum of factors that affect food security (Clapp et al., 2022). Clapp and other scholars such as Moseley, Burlingame and Termine contend that the two additional dimensions, should be incorporated into food security policy and analysis frameworks to better ensure that everyone on earth has access to food, both now and in the future. For many years, agency and sustainability have each been extensively acknowledged in the academic literature as being important to food security hence there was a need to add the two dimensions (Clapp et al., 2022).

Agriculture production was impacted by Covid-19 as well, as farmers dealt with issues like labour shortages, restricted market access, and disruptions in the delivery of agricultural inputs. Restaurants, cafes, and other food service businesses were forced to close because of lockdowns regulations. This had a negative impact on the livelihoods of those who work in the food service sector like street traders and decreased demand for some food products, such as perishable goods like fruits and vegetables. There were imbalances in the supply and demand of food products because of practices like panic buying, stockpiling, and a greater reliance on

e-commerce for food purchases that have disrupted traditional food retail and delivery systems (Ritzel, et al, 2022).

Food waste has increased at numerous phases of the food system, including production, processing, distribution, and consumption because of disruptions in the food supply chains, closure of eateries, and changes in consumer behaviour. Children worldwide have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, although the effects on their health, nutritional status, and social environment have been more severe in low- and middle-income nations. Nutrition programmes, such as school feeding programmes, food assistance programmes, and nutrition interventions, have also been disrupted (Zhu, et.al, 2022).

The informal sector was rarely considered when developing Covid-19 responses. Since that the majority of low-income households in urban townships rely on the informal sector as their primary source of food, academics predicted that the impact on food access in this sector during COVID-19 may be significant (Rwafa-Ponela et al, 2022). Loss of income and livelihoods due to Covid-19 substantially reduced people's access to food and this is reflected in increased levels of food insecurity (UN, 2020). For instance, *“food insecurity among the South African population increased from 4.3% to 7% during the initial lockdown period”* (Rwafa-Ponela et al, 2022: 2). During the pandemic, severe impacts on economic and food systems, such as threats to sustainability and food security, have been reported. *“According to a report released by Statistics South Africa, Measuring Food Security in South Africa: “Applying the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, almost 23,6 per cent of South Africans in 2020 were affected by moderate to severe food insecurity, while almost 14,9% experienced severe food insecurity”* (Stats SA, 2022: 1). This includes households reporting lower food availability, switching their main food supply to farming, and cooking less frequently during lockdown.

Decision makers often marginalise the informal food system by failing to consider it as part of a job-creating sector and disregarding its contribution to local communities food security. In this case, it also shows that they disregard or overlook the sense of agency of actors within food systems. Vulnerability of informal traders was exacerbated during emergency periods, like the Covid-19 pandemic. The literature suggests that the needs of informal traders are wide-ranging, from political to practical (improved water and sanitation) (Rwafa-Ponela et al, 2022). To ensure the sustained contribution of informal traders to local economies, markets and food systems, there is a need to increase support for the sector through active engagement to understand needs for priority setting (Rwafa-Ponela et al, 2022).



## 2.2.2 Theoretical framework

In many countries, particularly in developing countries like South Africa, informal food markets, also referred to as traditional or local food markets, play a crucial part in ensuring food security in our communities (Wegerif, 2023). This study drew on a theoretical framework commonly used in food security analysis. The six dimensions of food systems framework that was proposed by the HLPE. The six dimensions of food security - availability, access, utilization, stability, sustainability, and agency - will be dissected based on the key impacts of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions on the urban local informal food system during lockdown.

### *2.2.2.1 Availability, Access, and Utilization*

Availability in informal food markets, refers to, when sufficient foods are available for a nutritious consumption be it through production, purchase, or donation.

Access speaks to the households' economic and physical capacity to buy food. This is dependent on them having an income to afford, and the distance in terms of transportation to access food. Informal food markets assist with access as they usually offer food at a reasonable price and in places that are convenient to the public, such as street corners, next to the road, and in front of building complexes. Places where they are located, are usually busy with movement of people, like where there are transport hubs for enabling access for those moving in and out of town, to and from work (FAO, 2008).

Informal food markets have a wide range of fresh, processed, cooked, and staple food items, such as fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy products available for consumers at a low cost (Ababulgu, et.al. 2022). Several factors, such as local agricultural output, transportation and distribution networks, market infrastructure, and market amenities, have an impact on the supply of food (Burchi & De Muro, 2016). Utilization refers to using food in the right amounts, properly prepared and absorbed by the body for eating-related nutrition and health. By offering fresh, locally produced food that may be more nutrient-dense than processed or imported food, informal food markets can contribute to increased food utilisation. In addition to encouraging traditional eating habits and ethnic food diversity, informal food markets can improve nutritional outcomes and dietary diversity (FAO, 2006).

### *2.2.2.2 Stability, agency, and sustainability*

Stability is another dimension of food security, which refers to a household having consistent, stable, and secure access to food without worrying about being without food due to economic or other shocks (FAO, 2006). The steady supply of food to individuals and households makes

them food secure in and out of season (FAO, 2006). Agency is exemplified by the informal food system's capacity to wield authority (Rwafa-Ponela et al, 2022). Whereas the HLPE Report (2020) and FAO (2022: 203) refer to it as “*the capacity of individuals or groups to make their own decisions about what foods they eat; what foods they produce; how that food is produced, processed and distributed within food systems; and their ability to engage in processes that shape food system policies and governance*”. Women street traders use their agency to create employment opportunities for themselves not waiting on the government to provide them with jobs. Wegerif (2023: 10) also illustrates their agency in this manner: “*They take individual actions to start their enterprises, taking over public spaces that are accessible to their customers, and in the process providing more choices (opportunities to exercise agency) for those customers*”. Street traders take initiative to provide for their families and ensure that there is food security, both for their immediate household members and the broader community of the urban poor. The urban poor who cannot afford most of the food products sold by the big supermarkets because they are usually costly compared to the prices of food in the informal food markets. Sustainability refers to ability of food systems to provide food in the long term. The HLPE Report (2020) defines it as food systems' long-term capacity to ensure food security and nutrition without jeopardising the social, cultural, and environmental foundations that support these needs for present and future generations

### **2.2.3 Bureaucracy and red tapism, a structural violence**

Informal food street traders in Marabastad form part of the larger urban food systems in the CoT. They contribute to the city's economy. They ensure that there is food security especially for those that cannot buy from big supermarkets or stores. The type of food that they sell needs to be washed and kept in a clean environment. However, because of poor access to proper infrastructural facilities to operate from, they do not have the required facilities. Lack of access to clean water, and other sanitation services, which are necessary for maintaining good hygiene and halting the spread of Covid-19, have raised health risks during the pandemic (Ostadtaghizadeh et al., 2022).

Street traders are still part of the urban poor that are not benefitting from municipal social support services because of bureaucracy and red tape. Many of them share how financial support services were made available for them, yet because of the daunting administrative processes that are required to access services, they do not get to benefit. These administrative processes that obstruct the delivery of services are often referred to as “red tape”, which “refers to the formal rules, policies, regulations, and procedures in organisations that are burdensome,

ineffective, and redundant or unnecessary in a way that prevents them from serving the intended purposes” (Jiang et al. 2022: 1).

Akil Gupta (2012) argues that an abuse of entrusted power for private gain, is a form of structural violence. It deprives the vulnerable groups who depend on state social support from receiving the promised services. The services like the social relief grants, do not reach them, yet, there is no accounting for the funds that were said to be released for that specific public service. Gupta also argues that bureaucracy is a form of structural violence as it hinders access to services. It is a deliberate exclusion of the vulnerable groups from development projects by the state. Making access to services difficult does not help the intended recipients or the government’s reputation. The public service programmes may be well intended, but bureaucracy hinders the end results thereof.

According to Kambule (2022) the South African government’s failure to prioritise financial assistance to the informal sector needs to be blamed on them requiring formal instruments such as tax registration, income statements and business registration for informal enterprises. This is noted in that 37.2% of the participants in Khambule’s study cited the cumbersome application requirements as the leading reason for not applying for the Covid-19 grant introduced by the government. “This was followed by 11.6% of the participants who cited the lack of knowledge about existing funding for businesses, and 9.3% cited that most of the requirements were designed to exclude the informal economy” (Khambule, 2022: 10). There is also the issue of illiteracy that is a barrier when it comes to public service programmes. Gupta argues that the state provides information on service delivery in English which is a challenge to some traders to comprehend as many did not go far with their studies. In some instances, government officials also take bribes instead of enforcing the law (Gupta, 2012). This was evident in the field when I was collecting data when I saw police coming for unexpected raids and confiscating stock. For traders to get back their stock that was taken, they would need to pay the police money for ‘cold drink’ (bribes).

In one of the worst abuses by the authorities, over 6,000 street traders were forcibly removed from a 24-block area in the City of Johannesburg's central business district in October 2013 by law enforcement officers of the City. The confiscation of the street traders’ goods went hand in hand with the evictions, leaving the traders and their dependents without any means of support (Social Law Project, 2014; Brown, 2015). Operation Clean Sweep, a programme started by the City of Johannesburg, was responsible for these evictions. It had been put in place by the city to ostensibly deal with street traders that the municipality believed were

engaging in unlawful businesses (Social Law Project, 2014; Bénit-Gbaffou, 2016). If it was not for street trader associations in Johannesburg, Operation Clean Sweep would have been effective in legitimizing the idea that street traders should be considered as human garbage and be completely driving from the streets of the inner city. The government's approach to addressing urban issues has been effectively resisted and delegitimised by organisations of the Johannesburg street traders, despite their divide (Brown, 2015).

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, street traders were being chased off the streets and this was said by the state to be to protect them from getting the virus. However, their rights were violated in the process. Wegerif (2020) also looked at how street food traders were negatively affected by Covid-19 and responses to it. That study highlighted that the street trading activities often took place in strategic locations, such as areas with high pedestrian traffic and in close proximity to major arterial routes and public transportation facilities. Unfortunately, these areas are close to the Tshwane Metro Police Department (TMPD) offices and that is the reason for the Metro taking advantage and frequently being on site, harassing traders without a search warrant.

This was no different to what happened to the traders in Marabastad area as they also lost their source of income and did not get any protection from the street traders' organisation as the municipality does not listen to them; they are overlooked and undermined. Even though they are split, organisations of Johannesburg Street traders have challenged and successfully delegitimised the state's violent, capricious, and disdainful approach to resolving urban problems (Brown, 2015). The CoT will need to identify alternative legal solutions; yet, doing so may have an impact on its restrictive policy. This is also true for Marabastad women street traders as their representatives are not being listened to and there is no protocol observed when it comes to enforcing the law in their sector. Women street traders have been alarmed at times, wondering if the officials who do raids are even licensed or not. The approach of the TMPD is usually harsh and they would not be in possession of a warrant from the municipality.

Urban informal work is significantly impacted by governance, particularly through land use management and planning systems. Most nations have comprehensive national planning laws and in African countries these are frequently carried over from previous colonial governments with little change. These regulations represent outdated, European ideals of what contemporary towns ought to look like. They place a strong focus on cleanliness, order, conformity to building and planning regulations, and single-purpose neighbourhoods (Duminy, 2022;

Wegerif, 2023). This modernist legacy is continued in the more recent plans for African cities, which also adhere to comparable orderliness and cleanliness standards.

The operation of planning systems does contain some significant conflicts, though. The main paradox is that informality is pervasive in most of these cities and villages and is mostly unplanned. Complex formal planning regulations rarely have an impact on the ground. People who live and work informally will still find it difficult. Politicians, government officials, even unofficial employees, and locals themselves use the ineffective and unworkable formal planning processes as a political tool. Politicians frequently displace thousands of informal workers and residents of informal settlements using planning justifications such as the need to "establish order", "modernise", and "clean up the city".

### **2.3 Increased care-work**

Covid-19 has demonstrated the detrimental consequences of ingrained gender disparities and caring norms (OECD, 2021). As indicated by the UN Women: "*Women's unpaid care work has long been recognised as a driver of inequality with direct links to wage inequality, lower income, and physical and mental health stressors*" (UN Women, 2020: 1). Care work is generally undervalued, as it is regarded as a role performed by women who do not necessarily get paid for it, nor do they get leave from this work (Bahn et al., 2020). What is usually overlooked is the fact that women who provide this unpaid labour can get drained and tired from managing their jobs and providing care work. During the Covid-19 pandemic, mothers were approximately three times more likely than fathers to carry childcare responsibilities. While 22.4% of fathers claim they did provide childcare, 61.5% of mothers of children under 12 say they provided most or all of the additional caregiving (OECD, 2021). The toll this care work takes on women can make these women suffer emotionally and physically especially when they carry this responsibility alone, which is usually the case because of gender roles (Dancer & Tsikata, 2015).

The recent Covid-19 pandemic drew more attention to some of the issues that come with care work, especially with childcare facilities and school closures, elder vulnerability, and work-from-home arrangements. There was a well-documented increase in the intensity of unpaid care work carried by women (OECD, 2021). Twice as many women compared to men, reported that childcare responsibilities in June 2020 (when most schools and early child development centres were closed) affected their ability to work or search for work (Casale & Shepherd, 2021: 2). More care work also meant women traders had to stay at home and focus on their

household responsibilities. These women took on the role of caring for the family and the sick while still worrying about how the family would be provided for if they are not trading.

#### **2.4 Chapter conclusion**

In conclusion, by making food more accessible, usable, and stable for communities, street traders and informal food markets significantly contribute to guaranteeing food security. They can contribute more to food security if policies and initiatives that promote and regulate them are implemented, especially in developing nations where informal food markets are common. Globally speaking, the Covid-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges to food systems, highlighting the need for resilient and sustainable food systems that can better withstand shocks and ensure access to safe, nourishing, and affordable food for all. These challenges include exacerbating problems like food insecurity, malnutrition, food waste, and livelihood losses.

The Covid-19 outbreak has disproportionately harmed women street traders, highlighting the vulnerabilities and disparities that already exist between men and women. Urban planning may help create more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable cities for all citizens by identifying and correcting these biases. It is necessary to take targeted actions that acknowledge and meet women street traders particular requirements, such as granting them access to financial services, social safety, and healthcare, in order to solve the difficulties that women street traders faced both during and after the pandemic. Supporting women street traders can increase their economic resilience and empowerment while advancing gender equality in underdeveloped economies.

## CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGY

Methodology is an essential part of research. It can be defined simply as the strategy or approach used to collect data for a research study. I applied a case study approach combined with qualitative research method, including interviews, observation, and secondary research methods to gather data for this study. This chapter unpacks the steps, processes, and approaches that were used to collect data. It is divided into nine sections outlining the research design, case study approach, study population sampling, primary data collection, participant observation, reflections on the research experience, secondary data collection, ethical considerations, and limitations encountered during data collection.

### 3.1 Research design

Research design is an outline (road map) of how a study will go from the research aim and questions through to the outcomes. It is a thorough planning procedure used to gather and examine data to better comprehend a certain subject (Creswell, 2009). According to Denscombe (2010) there is no single strategy or method to write good research. There are different ways to collect data or gather research information; it could be through interviews or surveys to mention a few. Researchers need to find suitable methods for their specific area of research. Hence there are various research designs that one can use to reach their specific research aims or outcomes such as case study, ethnography, content analysis, grounded theory, and phenomenology study.

From a pool of these research designs a case study approach was deemed suitable for this study. Creswell et al, (2007: 245) describes it as “*Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes*”. Whereas Rebolj (2013: 31), defines it as “*a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon*”. The strength of the case study approach is that it enables an in-depth and holistic exploration of a particular site. The weakness is that the experiences of that site cannot necessarily be generalised to other situations, but that does not mean we cannot gain useful insights and lessons that may well be of value elsewhere (Tracy, 2013; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Denscombe, 2010). It is also argued that a multiple case study design, while giving more generalisable findings, can be very expensive (Brink, 2018). Even with the strengths and weaknesses associated with this approach, the case

study approach was the best fit for this study because it enabled the researcher to immerse themselves into the field, which allowed for in-depth observation, data collection and holistic exploration of Marabastad (site) and women street traders (participants). The lack of resources available for this Masters research ruled out a multiple case study approach. The overarching research approach that is linked to this design is unpacked below.

### **3.2 Research approach**

There are two overarching research approaches namely, qualitative, and quantitative. Rebolj (2013: 31) argues that “*qualitative research is characterised by an interpretative paradigm, which emphasises subjective experiences and the meanings they have for an individual*”. The qualitative approach is used to gain an understanding of situations or relationships, by explaining, interpreting, or describing the data collected to create meaning of the experiences of the objects of study (Williams, 2007: 67). Whereas quantitative research approach involves “*a numeric or statistical approach to research design*” (Williams, 2007: 66). The information collected from the fieldwork is essentially used to objectively measure or quantify reality of subjects of study.

Case studies have often been part of qualitative research methods, but they may also be quantitative or contain a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Denscombe, 2010). In this case, the approach for the study is qualitative and it involved semi-structured or unstructured interviews for data collection. The case study research approach was suitable for this specific project because it was about trying to gain a deeper understanding of women street traders’ experiences on how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted their lives and businesses.

#### **3.1.1 The research area**

The primary research for this dissertation was carried out in Marabastad, which is a business area located in the northern side of Pretoria’s central business district. It falls under the CoT, alongside Boom Street, as shown on Figure 1 below. Christie (2009) indicates that this business area is also known as a transport hub where people change taxis to get in and out of the city centre. There is a large bus terminal there, called Belle Ombre. This transport hub attracts a lot of business because there is a high influx of people catching transport to and from work, and for shopping. Some of the commuters are regular customers of the women street traders who sell their goods on the pavements in front of shops mostly owned by people classified by the apartheid regime as “Indian”. Marabastad was an ‘Indian’ area under apartheid and still predominantly houses ‘Indian’ owned shops and places of worship (Brandt, 2002). Next to



South Street in Marabastad, there is a wholesale fruit and vegetable market, Tshwane Market that supplies shops and street traders in Marabastad and beyond. The close proximity of Marabastad to the city centre and Tshwane Market makes it a hive of informal business activity. Marabastad was chosen as a case study because it is a dynamic trading and transport hub and accessible to the researcher who often goes there to buy clothes and vegetables.

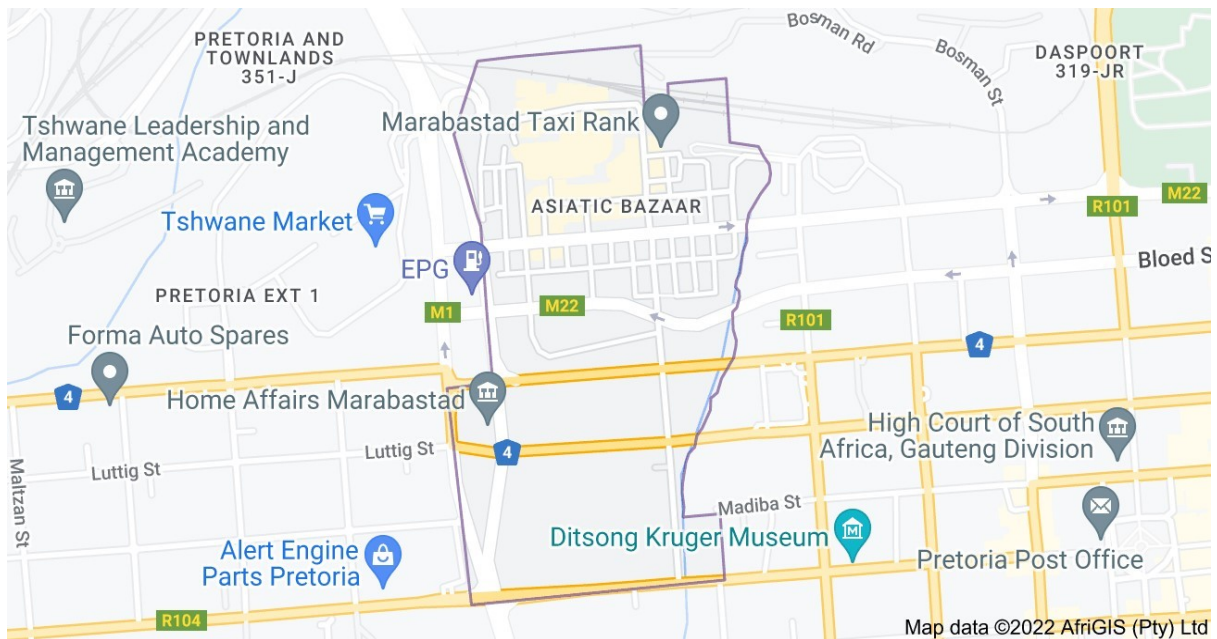


Figure 1: Marabastad Map (Source: Google Maps, 2022)



Figure 2: Mary Ngema cooks and sells food from a mobile kitchen (Picture: Jacques Naude/African News Agency, 2023)

### 3.3 Study population sampling

A population is an assortment of survey components that has been theoretically defined (Sa'id and Madugu, 2015). The population is made up of various items or variables, which are referred to as elements and subjects (Sa'id and Madugu, 2015). The subjects of the study were women street traders selling food in Marabastad. Having scoped the area of study before and bought from street traders in Marabastad for six years, I approached the field knowing some of the women street traders who sell the type of food that I am interested in doing research on, and where they are mostly located. Participants were chosen based on the type of food (fruits, vegetables snacks and cooked food) they were selling. This criterion was chosen based on the kind of food that most street traders who have small operations in the area are generally selling. This criterion was best for the researcher as participants' (both traders and suppliers) accessibility was important for the research.

A total of 20 research participants were interviewed, inclusive of the Barekisi forum secretary from Pretoria Central Business District (CBD) and a government official. There were 19 women street traders involved, 18 operating in the Marabastad area, and Mary who sells in the CBD. Some basic demographic information on the 19 women research participants can be seen in Table 1 and information on their business operations in Table 2. The initial research participants were approached individually at their stalls. To further identify research participants, the snowball sampling method was adapted and used to consider the provisions of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPIA). POPIA governs data flow in South Africa and the processing of personal information for research purposes to protect people's right to privacy (Adams et al, 2021). Leo Goodman (1961: 1) defines snowball sampling as "*A random sample of individuals drawn from a given finite population*". He further explains it as a method where an already existing study population gives you referrals to potential participants. When it came to referrals, I would interview one trader I know and ask for referral to others in the area who are either associates or friends with the one I interviewed. Instead of the research participant passing on anyone else's information, in most instances they introduced me to other participants, and I would then take over from there by introducing myself too, giving more information on what my research is about and ask them if they would be willing to participate. Most of the street trader that I was introduced to were willing to take part, whereas those I just approached at their stalls with no prior introduction were more suspicious and reluctant to participate in the research. Five of the participants were known to the researcher to some extent due to buying in the area.

I contacted eight further research participants through the Barekisi Forum, that I had read about, with the assistance of their secretary Mary. Mary was part of those interviewed as a street trader herself and in her role as the secretary of the Forum. She was helpful as she willingly contacted some of traders, she usually works with at Barekisi offices. She provided contact information from the forum database after she had explained to those people what my research was about and obtained their permission to share their information with me. I was able to contact traders, set appointments and meet up with them at their stalls. The secretary also gave me a referral to the CoT official who works in the Department of Economic Development, which is the department that is directly involved with street trading in the city.

Ensuring my participant’s constitutional and legal rights in terms of the Protection of Private Information Act (POPIA), of 2013, which came into effect in 2021, was of utmost importance to me as a researcher. This involved ensuring the protection of the participants’ personal information during the data collection and that no third-party information was passed onto me or others without the individual’s consent.

The women street traders that I approached gave several reasons for their reluctance to participate in the research. These included, trying to get as many customers as possible after been out of business for a while, participation in the research would be time consuming for traders, and wanting monetary compensation for participation. Those were some of the reasons that street traders mentioned when I went there to buy food and still trying to figure out what would be my approach when I go there for interviews. The reason that they provided were understandable and made me more considerate when I approached them for the interviews.

*Table 1: Study population demographics*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>Citizenship</b>	<b>Education</b>
Mam Becky	42	Pretoria Central	Mozambican	Grade 6
Mam Sophie	46	Soshanguve	South African	1 <sup>st</sup> Year nursing
Thoko	51	Atteridgeville	South African	Grade 11
Mary	50	Atteridgeville	South African	Grade 12 drop out
Julia	40	Atteridgeville	South African	Grade 8
Nkefi	64	Atteridgeville	South African	Grade 7

Hlamalani	25	Soshanguve	South African	LLB degree
Maria	67	Marabastad	South African	Grade 6
Nkele	51	Soshanguve	South African	Grade 6
Busi	43	Atteridgeville	South African	Grade 10
Lucy	38	Pretoria Central	Zimbabwe	Grade 11
Lerato	28	Pretoria Central	Zimbabwe	Grade 10 (O levels)
Sphiwe	43	Soshanguve	Zimbabwe	Grade 12
Tumelo	36	Soshanguve	South African	Grade 12
Violet	54	Marabastad	South African	Grade 8
Charity	50	Marabastad	South African	Grade 12
Koketso	29	Soshanguve	South African	Grade 12
Elizabeth	50	Soshanguve	South African	Grade 11(Form 3)
Thandiwe	50	Soshanguve	South African	Grade 12

The following table has the key information on the street traders businesses including the place of operation, the type of food products they sell, years of experience in street trading, and the number of employees each trader has, if any. This information is to help provide a clearer picture of the nature of the street trader's businesses.

*Table 2: Research Participants Business Information*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Place of operation</b>	<b>Food products sold</b>	<b>Years of street trading experience</b>	<b>Number of employees</b>
Mam Becky	Marabastad taxi rank	Boiled Mealies	3years	None
Mam Sophie	Marabastad taxi rank	Bananas, boiled mielies, scooper Nartjies, bananas, sweets, tomatoes, and onions	6 years	None

Thoko	Marabastad taxi rank	Tomatoes, sweets, peaches Simba chips, raw peanuts, boiled mealies	3 years	None
Mary	Pretoria Central	Cooked food (pap, gravy, salads, chicken, and beef)	13 years	Three
Julia	Marabastad taxi rank	Peanuts	22 years	None
Nkele	Marabastad Oriental Complex	Roasted peanuts, and sweets	21 years	None
Hlamalani	Marabastad Oriental Complex	Raw and roasted peanuts	7 years	None
Maria	Marabastad Oriental Complex	Cooked food (Pap, gravy, vegetables, salads, and meat)	17 years	None
Nkefi	Behind Marabastad Shoprite	Cooked food (Pap, gravy, vegetables, salads, and meat), clay soil, and peanuts	31 years	None
Charity	Marabastad Oriental Complex	Clay soil and peanuts	13 years	None
Lucy	Marabastad bus rank	Braaiied mealies	5 years	None
Lerato	Infront of Marabastad bus rank	Boiled mealies	5 years	None
Sphiwe	In front of Marabastad bus rank	Boiled mealies	4 years	None
Tumelo	Marabastad Oriental Complex	Bananas, apples, oranges and kip-kip pop corn	13 years	None
Violet	Inside Marabastad bus rank	Raw and fried peanuts	20 years	None
Busi	In front of Marabastad bus rank	Tomatoes, onions, bananas, apples, nartjies, sweets, and Simba chips	11 years	None

Koketso	Marabastad Oriental Complex	Pap, gravy, steak, chicken intestines, beetroot, chakalaka, cabbage, butternut, and coleslaw salad.	9 years	None
Elizabeth	In front of Marabastad bus rank	Raw peanuts, AmaKip-kip, Apples, braaied mealies and bananas	22 years	None
Thandiwe	In front of Marabastad bus rank	Marie biscuits, Simba chips, cold drinks, Cool time ice, juice, Nartjies, bananas, sweets, tomatoes, and onions.	28 years	None

### **3.4 Data collection techniques**

In this section, the data collection techniques that were used to collect research data are explained in detail. The techniques that were used are aligned with the study's research design and qualitative research approach. The three main techniques are interviews, participant observation, and desktop research.

#### **3.4.1 Interviews**

From 1 October 2021 to 4 April 2022, the adjusted Covid-19 alert level 1 of lockdown was in effect and it was then lifted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 2022. Primary data collection was carried out between the June 2022 and September 2022 four months after the National State of Disaster had been lifted and after the harsh lockdown restrictions had been relaxed. However, some restrictions, like social distancing requirements, remained in place. Primary data collection focused on interviews and participant observation that were used to get experiences of women street traders on the impact of Covid-19 on their businesses and lives. One-on-one interviews were an essential part of the research study as interviews form an integral part of various ethnographic methods and play an important part in any research project in the Social Sciences. Interviews can provide deeper insight about people's lives, giving the researcher valuable data about what some people may not publicly talk about or show. Participants can share about their life experiences and answer more personal questions, if a sense of comfort and trust can be built. It is also an opportunity to learn about participants' beliefs, ideologies, goals, aspirations, and networks if the researcher asks such questions (Knott et al, 2022).

Regular and easy access to the field because of distance has allowed the researcher to have follow up interviews with the same street traders. Follow up interviews enabled the researcher to close some gaps on the field notes and to make sense of the observations and street traders' responses to the interview questions. They also helped with reflection on the researcher's role in the field, as well as how their existence in the trading space has influenced the traders' behaviour. In between interviews the researcher would take a break where they would focus on writing detailed fieldnotes while reflecting and would notice the downside of case study approach. Some of the notes reflected on the researcher's subjectivity when it came to gender disparities and police harassment on traders, more especially having not just read about it but also having witnessed it. It was hard to withhold personal views on some of the injustices which might have steered the traders' emotions in a certain way.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 research participants, 19 of whom are women food street traders, all from the study area except for Mary, using an interview guide (Annex I). One government official from the City of Tshwane was also interviewed using a different interview guide (Annex II). The core of the primary research involved the interviews and observations with the women traders. The interview with the official was not to get a representative sample of officials but to complement the perspective of the women with some perspective from the municipality. Participants were asked to share their experiences of street trading during the Covid-19 pandemic and information about where they source supplies, their customers buying patterns, and support from the local municipality. Whereas the government official was asked about the type of support, if any, that was given to street traders by the municipality.

There are a variety of languages spoken by women street traders in Marabastad. Some of the main languages are Setswana, Sepedi, and Sesotho, and Sepitori, which is a commonly used local slang language. Isizulu is another language used that street traders from the neighbouring countries tend to speak. English was also spoken and understood, to some extent, by many of the street traders. My mother tongue is Setswana and I have a reasonable knowledge of the other languages used by most of the women street traders. I, therefore, used a combination of these different languages during interviews and other interactions in my research.

During the interviews in Marabastad, I was mindful that the participants were busy and sometimes unable to engage in conversation as they were attending to their customers while doing interviews with me. I was respectful of their businesses, and time and engaged with them when they had breaks in between attending to customers or interacting with other street traders. It was important for me to work around the traders' schedule and approach them with the utmost respect as they were an essential part of the research project. I was also realistic and honest about my expectations and showed them consideration in the process (Boellstorff et al., 2012).

### **3.4.2 Participant observation**

Participant and non-participant observation are other methods of research that were applied in the field as part of data collection (Tracy, 2013; Denscombe, 2010). For participant observation, I asked a few of my participants if I could also sell with them so that I can interact with their regular customers and fellow street traders, becoming part of their daily business operation. They had a huge customer base and within those customers, most customers were



taxi drivers. This research method is the one where one gathers data while observing participants without asking them questions. The research project participants were made aware of the observation taking place even when they were not asked questions. Observation was not limited to what I saw (such as how the space is used), it was also on what was heard (conversations held), smelled (environment), and touched (such as food sold).

I observed the way traders relate with their customers, how they would even give their regular customers food on credit without any written contract because of the long-term trust relationship they built with them. I also observed how they interacted with other traders. In addition, I observed how the area looked, from the way stalls are placed and organised, how the food smelled, and I bought some of the food and ate it. This method was used because “*observations of objects can be a quick and efficient method of gaining preliminary knowledge or making a preliminary assessment of their state or condition*” (Walliman, 2017: 117). Notes on the observations were taken with the participants’ consent. The researcher made use of a notepad to record the notes on the daily observations and used the “everyday talk” concept to reflect on data collection experience outside the field (Kohl and McCutcheon, 2015).

I also engaged in small talk with other traders and customers, as some customers were also interested in what my research was about. Some voluntarily shared about how they have been working well with some of the traders I was interviewing. They also spoke about how difficult it was not having traders in the street during the Covid-19 pandemic because their food is affordable, and it is convenient to access them. These were some customers who remained in town during the lockdown. In this case, a small talk, means “*light talk or conversation, chit-chat and gossip*” (Driessen & Jansen, 2022: 250).

According to Kawulich (2005) participant observation is a process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in their natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. To understand the participants within their social context, the study employed a combination of direct and participant observation techniques encapsulated in the ethnographic tradition and popularly employed by anthropologists. According to Uwamusi and Ajisebiyawo (2023), a qualitative research methodology known as participant observation has been described by a number of authors as one in which the researcher observes a group while simultaneously fully engaging in its activities. The everyday interactions of the subjects, including their formal and informal conversations, habits, and exchanges with one another, are all visible to the researchers. It gives researchers the chance to get direct and personal data about individuals.

During fieldwork I immersed myself in the field by taking part in trade operations by asking some of the traders to sell with them at their stalls. One of them whom I had known for some time was able to go and buy electricity for her house at the other side of the taxi rank leaving me running the stall, because she trusted me enough to look after her stock. When it came to other traders around, who were her associates, she did not have security issues as they relied on other traders keeping an eye on their stalls and said that they are familiar with me and do not perceive me like an outsider. From which I asked if they usually get comfortable like that with other student researchers, one of them said no, they only do so when they know you. She went and came back, and I had only sold to two customers, and they were asking about her whereabouts and assumed that I was her daughter. I also looked at how traders responded to an alert about the police raids and unfortunately witnessed one instance where they confiscated fruits and vegetables from one of the traders.

Participant observation taught me that there will be a lot of incidents that happen in the field and information that I could find related and unrelated to my research. During my observation I took pictures, made some audio recordings, and wrote notes about what I observed and heard. I also made sure to write more notes when I got home after interviews and added more information to the skeleton notes I wrote in the field. I did that because in most instances it was difficult to write detailed notes while talking to participants or observing what they do.

### **3.5 Reflection on the research experience**

For the purposes of this research, the concept of reflexivity and positionality were employed. This was with the understanding that how a researcher conducts themselves in the field influences the responsiveness and responses of their research participants. Dylan Harris (2021: 78) argues that the field is “*spaces where people live, work and where we visit to collect ‘data’*”. He further argues that it “*remains imbued with power relations that require sensitivity and thoughtfulness for us as researchers*” (2021: 78). I found his argument profound as sensitivity and thoughtfulness were necessary because the information shared with me as a researcher was about the daily realities of the researched. Some of the information they shared might compromise their positions, source of income, or implicate some officials involved in their workspace as they form part of a local government system. This could have been the case in this research where I was doing research on street traders who are not licenced and operating unregulated hence anonymity is important in such research to protect their identities. The research participants could have wanted to withhold some information as a way of protecting

themselves and other stakeholders involved in their work setting, however, they seemed sincere, open, and honest about their experiences.

Kohl and McCutcheon (2015) also support the reflexivity approach that was employed in this research, with the “everyday talk” concept which is about exploring an individual’s positionality and relationship to their research carried out through formal or informal conversations with others. They demonstrate how everyday conversations between the researcher and participant expands their understanding of their fluid identities in relation to one another. This is taking note of the similarities and differences between the researcher and the participants to reflect on how the research process relates to the broader societal and academic environment where research is carried out. My position when it came to fieldwork was that of a regular customer and to other traders it was that of a researcher.

The two positions are distinct because I already had a relationship with those I used to buy fruits and vegetables from, while to others I was just a student who came to do research. After being introduced to some traders whom I did not have a relationship with before doing research, they were welcoming and one of them said “Oh! Le wena o tswa ko Unisa?” which directly translates as, are you also a student from UNISA (the University of South Africa)? This indicated to me that, they are used to having students coming to do research on them. Throughout the interviews I did my best to ensure that I am not subjective or biased when it came to them sharing their complaints, such as about the municipality, but I showed a lot of empathy and understanding as I listened to them.

In my field research, I constantly reflected on my behaviour to check how my actions or approach might have been influencing the way I was received and responded to by my research participants. For reflection purposes, I was constantly vigilant about where I was (the field), why I was there and what types of relationships I wanted to sustain while I was in the process of gathering knowledge (Harris, 2021). This meant that I needed to be open minded to understand the field from the angle of women street traders, and not just as a regular vegetable shopper who purchases, and then leaves. The process changed how I viewed the traders and their businesses. The research process required me to move from the point of familiarity with the place to being open to learning, exploring with a different mindset, and empathizing with street traders to understand their experiences and the nature of their businesses during the pandemic.

The data collection stage of this research granted me an opportunity to address some of my preconceived notions about the field which were founded on what I read on the news and saw on television before and during the pandemic. Some of which are, women street traders who are said to be struggling mothers who live from hand to mouth because they do not make enough money to buy monthly groceries. It was an interesting experience to gain clarity and have my prejudices challenged by my observations and how interview questions were answered. The women street traders who agreed to take part in the research were very open with me, sharing their experiences in detail and elaborating a lot on some aspects. For some it was like an opportunity to vent about how they felt about being excluded from the social welfare benefits within the city and discriminated against due to the violation of their rights they tend to experience.

When I went for follow up interviews, they explained how sharing about some of the challenges they faced during the pandemic was therapeutic. They said they understood that I do not have much capacity to help them but sharing their story in my research might catch the municipality's attention and encourage the authorities to attend to their needs. There were some who said that they felt unheard, and their concerns were not taken into consideration as traders, not even by the street trading representative forums that are supposed to fight for them and address the injustices that they experience.

The researcher gained a lot of insight into what a regular day in the life of woman street traders in Marabastad looks like and how the street trading economy of that particular area works. One of the highlights of the data collection was how most street traders embraced me into their workspace and their personal lives. I got a glimpse of how their personal lives look based on how they represented themselves and what they shared about their lives outside work, even though they spend most of their time at work; they work from Monday to Saturday, from the early hours of the morning (around 5am) till about 5pm in the evening. Immersing myself in their lives in a space of three months and visiting the field site for follow up interviews on different days enabled me to have a better understanding of different dynamics of human interaction. Some of these dynamics are complex because it is easy to misunderstand street traders when what they say seems somehow contradictory to their actions.

The unpredictable nature of informality, specifically street trading, necessitated a research approach that allowed the researcher to be there, at the forefront of what was happening. This in turn provided greater validity to the research process. As Creswell (2009) indicated, such an in-depth understanding would not have been captured through a quantitative approach.

Part of what made the reflection process easier was the qualitative research checklist for interviews and focus groups by Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig (2007). It was an essential tool for the data collection process as it made me understand my position in the field as a researcher, from my relationship with participants, participants characteristics, and the study setting which influenced how participants responded to the research questions. Tong *et al.* (2007: 356) indicated that “*Researchers should also report whether repeat interviews were conducted as this can influence the rapport developed between the researcher and participants and affect the richness of data obtained*”. Follow up interviews were conducted, and they brought more clarity on some of the issues that were raised by women street traders. During the second interviews, the participants seemed more relaxed and comfortable as they elaborated on what seemed like short answers in the first interviews. Issues like harassment from the TMPD were clearly sensitive to most of them as they would first glance around to observe who might have been listening to them before they shared their experiences. The checklist also helped with how I reported my findings, as it emphasised the inclusion of quotations they were provided; “*If supporting quotations are provided, researchers should include quotations from different participants to add transparency and trustworthiness to their findings and interpretations of the data*” (Tong *et al.*, 2007: 356).

### **3.6 Data analysis**

Data analysis is key to producing sound and reliable qualitative research. Usually, a qualitative researcher is regarded as a research tool because of their capacity to understand, explain, and interpret experiences and perceptions in order to give certain situations and contexts meaning (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data that was collected in the field. Thematic analysis is a method for “*systematically identifying, organising, and offering insights into patterns and meanings across a data set*” (Braun and Clarke, 2012: 2).

After the data was gathered, it was coded and categorised in preparation for analysis. Notably, the field data were continuously recorded after every interview at every stage of the fieldwork to avoid leaving out any data. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was used for cleaning the data for analysis by categorizing information into personal background, and research questions, which enabled picking themes easier for this study. The data was ready for processing after the second or follow up interviews when there was nothing more to discover in line with the research questions as the answers were becoming repetitive and I did not want to get more data than necessary. The qualitative study approach served as the basis for the data analysis.

The overarching themes that were prevalent in terms of the thematic analysis were security and interpretation of the laws and regulations. Security in terms of access to social protection and safety nets. Interpretation of by-laws in terms of what they mean to them in relation to their daily realities, which then influences how they use their right to the city and use encroachment as a way of communication that meaning. These themes were central in addressing the objective of the study. By bringing forward the voices, experiences, and priorities of marginalised actors in the food system, especially women in the informal sector, the study looked at how the research participants constructed their own meanings in context of their environment.

Detailed transcripts of the oral interviews were used to supplement the study's theoretical assumptions. It was easy for the researcher to pick up on key phrases in relation to a certain theme based on what the research participants shared in the interviews. Raw data were also used, such as direct quotations, because direct quotations bring more detail and clarity to the information provided.

### **3.7 Secondary research**

Secondary research, generally known as desktop research, is the use of data or information that has been organised and published by other people (Bouchrika, 2020). This method was used to bring context and further information to support the primary data collected. The sources collected focused on the impact of Covid-19 on street traders and the contribution of women street traders to the food economy and food security. Other secondary sources that were used include the internet, blogs, academic and subject specific databases, and academic publications.

Various search engines such as Google Scholar were used to gather existing information and publications on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Library databases and e-book collections were also used to access articles, books, and journals. Most of the books and articles that were used for this research were materials that have been written about the Covid-19 pandemic and existing literature around informal street trading. Lastly, other platforms that were used to access information were the CoT website to get the publicly available policies, regulations, and spatial development plans.

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

All the activities and processes involved in collecting data for this research, followed the University of Pretoria research ethics policies outlined on the ethical clearance obtained from the faculty of Humanities Research Ethics Committee (Annex A). The CoT also provided me

with clearance (Annex B) to interview them, which was obtained from their research hub ethics team representative.

Some of the ethical considerations were ensuring that participants are treated with respect and dignity, not exposed to harm, and not deceived into participating or doing anything they were not comfortable doing. I introduced the topic to the traders and explained to them what the research is about in detail, and they were able to ask me questions and I was able to answer them. It was clearly explained to the participants that participation in the study was voluntary, and that there were no financial benefits for participation.

In addition, I asked for, and got informed consent from research participants before conducting any interviews. I accepted it when women street traders were not willing to participate, for whatever reasons, such as those who felt participating will take too much of their time. Consent was confirmed in writing by the participants signing the consent form (Annex C). The traders and the municipality official were thanked for their willingness to participate in this research project.

I further explained to the participants that the information they provided will only be used for academic and research purposes. In addition, they were notified that their identity will not be used or shared, and they do not have to give their names if they do not feel comfortable in doing so. Some, such as Mary of the Berekisi forum, said that I can use her real name. All other names are protected, and pseudonyms (fictitious names) are used in this research instead of the participant's real names, and sensitive information is not disclosed, to protect their identities (Tracy, 2013).

When it comes to ethics the importance of transparency should be emphasised because it is vital in a qualitative research process as it enhances the quality of research and contributes to a better distribution of data produced (Tuval-Mashiach, 2016). I was transparent and regularly kept the researched informed about what is expected of them and checked with them if they were still comfortable taking part in the study. Furthermore, they had the freedom to also decline answering questions whenever they did not feel comfortable answering them, although that seldomly happened during the interviews.

Another crucial aspect of conducting a study during the pandemic was adherence to health protocols while collecting data. I adhered to the Covid-19 regulations when they were in place, such as the wearing of masks, sanitizing regularly, and maintaining social distance.

### **3.9 Data collection limitations**

The data collection stage of my research was an exciting part for me as a researcher because I was looking forward to engaging with research participants and getting to know them better. It is undeniable that as an outsider arriving in a new space comes with its own challenges, some of which being the anxiety that comes with the fear of how one will be received in that space. In as much as my approach was good and respectful, some traders felt like I was just there for my own benefit because they have had people coming into the field to interview them, but they did not benefit anything, though those people might have benefitted. Some traders raised this issue when I approached them and explained what my study is all about. Further limitations are discussed on the following paragraphs.

Another limitation that came up within the study was the remuneration for participation in the study. Some women street traders expressed their issue with people using their stories to benefit themselves, getting qualifications and high paying jobs yet excluding them as traders from the benefits. Despite this I did not provide any payment or material reward to those who participated in the research. There were still more traders who were willing to participate because they said that they wanted to help me do well at school, because some day someone will also be able assist their children with schoolwork too.

A further limitation was related to the mobility of street traders because there were some that moved quite a lot between different locations in Marabastad and there were two that relocated to the central business district during my research in the field because they felt that competition was high in Marabastad, and for other unknown reasons. Due to the unpredictable nature of street trading, there were days when I went to the field for follow up interviews only to find some participants had moved to other locations.

On one occasion interviews were disrupted because of the TMPD being in the area Street traders were notified by other traders of their presence and traders had to pack their stock and hide because they were scared that it would be confiscated. The participants became hesitant to continue with the interviews because they were worried that the police might come in the area where they were also selling.

Lastly, there were health hazards that both the researcher and the respondents got exposed to with regards to being at risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus. There were some instances where all participants including the customers did not have a mask on and did not sanitise before touching the food.



## CHAPTER 4 : FIELDWORK FINDINGS

### 4.1. Introduction

The findings from the field research that formed part of the study are presented below. The findings are organised around key themes related to the research questions and the interconnected dimensions of food systems. The dimensions consist of access, utilization, agency, sustainability, and stability.

#### 4.1.1. Street trading in Marabastad

Marabastad is one of the biggest trading hubs in Pretoria, under the CoT as indicated in Chapter 3 about the research area. It is well known as a trading and transport hub with huge number of street traders from different walks of life, who sell to customers, who come from all over South Africa. The street traders that were identified as the primary research participants of the study are women street traders operating in the area and coming from South Africa and neighbouring countries like Mozambique and Zimbabwe. There is Belle Ombre bus rank between the Belle Ombre Plaza and Marabastad Taxi rank on the 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue where you will find women street traders who sell a variety of foods. Foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables (mealies, bananas and etc.) whereas others sell fresh meat (chicken, beef, cow heels etc.) as shown in Figures 3, and 4.



Figure 3: Meat sellers opposite the Belle Ombre Bus terminal (Photo by: Author, 2022)



*Figure 4: Fresh produce stalls opposite the Belle Ombre Bus Terminal (Photo by: Author, 2022)*

Some of the street traders sell boiled mealies, while others sell fresh fruits and vegetables as well as snacks at the bus terminal. They sell from the benches at the bus terminal, from tables they set up, or from the top of crates or shopping trollies. Those that sell by the Marabastad Taxi Rank sell from wooden tables with either corrugated iron or thick plastic on top of poles as a shelter from the sun and rain over their tables. Some of the traders move around, such as Julia who sells by walking to customers with a bucket full of small packets of raw nuts. The government official indicated that there are more than 50 women street traders in and around Marabastad. I have seen almost 30 of them, 19 of them were selling food products, such as snacks, cooked meals, raw fruits, and vegetables. Most of the women street traders who were participants in the study, were located at different parts of Marabastad.

The women street traders who were interviewed sold a wide range of food products, such as peanuts, boiled mealies, snacks, cooked food, and fresh produce. Cooked food such as pap, gravy, beef, chicken, salads, and many other kinds of foods depending on the menu of the day. Women street traders that sell peanuts, either sell raw or roasted ones and those that sell snacks, sold sweets, chocolates, biscuits, Simba chips, Cool time ice, Disco pops, and energy or fizzy drinks. While those who sold fresh produce sold items such as apples, bananas, pears, grapes,

onions, potatoes, avocados, green, yellow, and red peppers, and raw chillies, and they were mostly located at the Marabastad taxi rank on Mogul Street and at the Belle Ombre bus terminal.

The research participants have different degrees of experience as street traders, ranging from Thoko who has been selling for 3 years, to Mme Nkefi, Kgomotso's mother, with 31 years of experience. Some of the women street traders, like Violet, have been selling at the bus terminal for 20 years and there are women, like Nyengeterai, who have been in operation for 5 years. Some are new entrants into the market, such as Sipiwe who started in 2018, followed by Thoko in the same year. As you come from town, next to Boom Street there is Belle Ombre Plaza, there are women street traders who sell raw and roasted nuts and have been in operation for between 5 years and 22 years. In my individual interviews with them they shared how they have been moving from one location to another, around Marabastad. They were scouting for a good spot to find customers as there are a lot of other street traders who sell the same products they were selling.

Women street traders who were interviewed are mothers, sisters, and grandmothers from the neighbouring townships like, Atteridgeville, Hammanskraal, and Soshanguve. Some are from countries like Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and different villages in the Limpopo Province. Some were very proud to share about their roles in their families because they felt it was important for me as a researcher to know the kind of responsibilities their roles come with. Among them there are single mothers who are heads and sole providers of their households and some of them also mentioned that they take care of their nieces and nephews whose parents passed on.

Koketso, Mary, and other women who sell cooked food opposite the Maraba Small Market stock their meat from Maraba meat sellers opposite the bus rank. The meat sold in that area sells fast because it is affordable and fresh. The meat sellers in that area buy their meat every day from their supplier, while it is still fresh from being slaughtered. The meat is sold from the table in an open space, next to the road opposite the bus rank under corrugated iron stalls. The most interesting thing about this set up or arrangement is that customers are not concerned about the health hazards associated with the space where the meat is sold from. The researcher observed how customers stand in a queue on a hot sunny day to buy mogodu (tripe) and shout at each other that the meat might finish before they get a chance to also buy. This showed that they are comfortable buying meat from there and do not even worry about the weather as long as they can get the meat.

To keep the meat fresh after they purchase it, Mary Mathe and Koketso wash it with warm water mixed with salt and vinegar. They keep it in there until they cook it since they do not have fridges or coolers to keep the meat in. They usually buy in small quantities that they will be cooking and serving on the day of purchase. On the days that they do not find meat where they usually stock, they buy it from Yellow Butchery where it is also sold cheaper compared to big butcheries like Roots. During the pandemic and just before the pandemic in February 2020 a 2kg brisket was sold at R50, now in August 2022 it is R58,99 . Prices of food have gone up after lockdown as most businesses have been recovering from the financial loss that was caused by the pandemic. Businesses made a huge loss because they did not have customers who greatly supported their businesses, like women street traders selling food. These are women who buy from their supermarkets and butcheries daily. Keeping their businesses afloat during that time was difficult and close to impossible because most people did not have permits and were afraid of getting caught on their way to Marabastad without trading permits. It was a must for traders to be in possession of one when they went to buy stock.

Unlike, Koketso's mother, Mary started selling in the streets with cigarettes and fried fish, then went on to other cooked food after seeing that there was a great demand from her neighbours' stalls. The food would finish during the day and her neighbour's customers would come to her stall to ask if she can also sell cooked food considering when they get there late, the neighbours' food would be finished. They now serve pap with chicken intestines and vegetables like cabbage and chakalaka. Mary stocks her meat three times a week and Koketso stocks on the last week of the month as her customers would want meat (beef and chicken particularly) month end when they get paid. Customer usually come in great numbers at the end month. Some of their regular customers take food on credit and they would agree with the women street traders to pay at the end of the month. It was explained that it is not every customer that can take food on credit. Only loyal and regular customers who have been approved by Koketso's mother would be able to get food on credit. These are usually customers who have been loyal for more than 2 years by consistently buying from their stall, who qualify for credit. When many customer come to buy at the end of the month some regular customers would also be there to pay for the meals they took on credit during the month.

Koketso does not work alone in her family's business, they have another lady that works with her, and it has been five years since she started working for them. She is someone whom they have known for a while as they come from the same village. Mary and Koketso both use small gas stoves with a 3kg gas to cook their meals. Delivery services have also increased.

#### **4.2. Entry into the street trading market**

Street trading has far lower barriers to entry into the market than almost any other economic activity. One can start with very little money and build up the business; there is almost no capital outlay needed. Low barriers to entry make it a haven for people in poverty to make an income and support their families. One would not necessarily need a whole lot of documentation for approval to start a business in this sector. Although, relationships and networks facilitate women starting as traders, they can also be a big obstacle for those who are outside such networks. It is easier to start with a network but not impossible to start without it. For example, some street traders just showed up at the trading area with their stock at the taxi rank, set up their stalls, and started selling.

In some other areas like Pretoria CBD there is more restricted entry into the market, through the control of the area by existing traders, contrary to the popular belief and experience elsewhere that there is an easy entry and exit into the market. Other street traders gatekeep who gets into the market, if a new entrant is selling the same products as the existing one, they get chased out. Networks were important for getting space to trade in Pretoria CBD as otherwise traders would feel threatened that the new arrivals will take their customers. Being new in the space is somewhat perceived as competition according to most women street traders that were interviewed. Conversely, in Marabastad some shared that they got their stalls through either their relatives or friends. A few had been working at the shops in and around Marabastad and built relationships with traders who sold at the spots they targeted over the years. It was only two that said that they identified a spot based on observation while shopping in Marabastad and town who did not have anyone who introduced them into the space. That did not exonerate them from being perceived as competition and a threat to taking customers from other traders who had been there before them.

Marabastad is located 2.2 kilometres away from Pretoria CBD. It has more street traders compared to Pretoria CBD because of little to no restriction to entry and exit into the market. It has a number of areas where the municipality prohibits traders to operate from like in Pretoria CBD where at some building traders are not allowed to place their stalls and sell. Entry into the market in most streets in Pretoria CBD is limited by the other existing street traders who will force what to be new entrants to move on in order to minimise competition. The largest number of women street traders came to Marabastad looking for employment or seeking growth for their businesses.



A small number of the women started directly in Marabastad. For them to get fully operational they got financial assistance from family members or friends while for others it was from many years of saving money. They were supported with access to information about the trading area or capital to buy their first stock. When they started to make profits, they were able to repay them, and some did not even have to return the money that was given by a friend or relative. Although some had challenges with entering the market because some traders are territorial about trading spaces, such as in Pretoria CBD, where they did not want new traders to sell in the same area with them, especially the same products. This indicated a certain level of defence for their livelihoods, although it came with denying the new street traders an opportunity to earn a living. When there are restrictions to entry into the market, it is unfair on those who are denied the opportunity to exercise their rights to trade and earn a living.

The women street traders that were interviewed in CBD and in Marabastad mostly got to use the space because of referrals from either a friend or relative and were assisted with start-up capital for their businesses. A few were able to save money from their previous jobs and one of them got money from her husband's pension fund to start her business. Some had visited their relatives in the city seeking employment and when they could not find jobs, they decided to become street traders. They became self-employed and operated independently or with other associates, such as family members or friends. While others came straight from the rural areas to join the market in the city after hearing from their friends about how they were making money from street trading. Among the self-employed women, there are those that joined the family business and are carrying on the family legacy while others started selling from a young age in high school because of having grown with an entrepreneurial mindset.

Each street trader had their unique stories about how they started trading in the streets and came to either Marabastad or CBD. Mary said, "*I always had to make a plan to have pocket money at school*". She explained that having to make sure that she had pocket money at school motivated her to start her small business. Thoko started in Atteridgeville, where she lives, selling snacks, non-food products and atchaar at the street corner. In 2019 she felt that a lot of people from the political party she was affiliated with knew that she was making a living from selling snacks, and she decided to move her business to Marabastad where most people do not know her. She felt shy about her business because people in her area used to mock her saying that she knows political leaders who can give her a better job, yet they are not, and she just continues to work for them. When she was asked about the other things people said to her regarding her street trading, Thoko said that one of the community members said "*Dipolotiki*

*di a go dia, tsamaya o batla mmereko o berekele bana ba gago*". This directly translates as "Politics are delaying you, go look for a job and work for your children". She said that she took it to heart because she felt used and did not want to continue to be a laughingstock.

Some of the street traders have been in operation for more than 30 years, like Mam Dikeledi who has now retired. Her daughter Koketso is now continuing with the family business. Mam Dikeledi had been selling cooked food since 1992, by then she was selling fat-cakes (Magwinya) with tea in Limpopo. She started selling plates (pap, gravy, chicken intestines, beef, or chicken) in 2005 when she relocated to Marabastad. She was told by one of her relatives about the area, and she saw that it is a good business area because she used to buy stock in Marabastad for her business back home. In Marabastad cooked food is in demand as there are churches around the area, such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) with lot of congregants who want cooked food during the week and on weekends. They were her regular customers and she also received support from people who worked in Marabastad or who used the transport hubs in that area.

#### **4.3. Where women street traders source their supply**

Marabastad has a huge pool of suppliers that women street traders choose from as it is a trading hub. Women street traders source their supplies from different places for various reasons. Those who sell peanuts sourced their supplies from Bela-Bela in Limpopo province which is approximately 111 km away from Marabastad. Fortunately, the supplier delivers the nuts in Marabastad and the delivery price is included in the price paid by the street traders. Street traders who sell fresh produce do not have to go far to get the supplies for their business because Marabastad is very close to the Tshwane Market and there is also the Maraba Small Market which is also a fresh produce supplier. Tshwane Market is approximately 10 minutes' walk from the Marabastad bus rank and 5 minutes' walk from the taxi rank. Women street traders usually walk there to source their supplies, or they send trolley drivers to get what they need from there. Most mentioned how reasonable prices at the local supplier are. Thoko who sells fresh produce said, "*We get fruits and vegetables half price at the Maraba Market in the afternoon*" (Thoko, 2022). When she was asked how come that was the case, Thoko explained that it was because fruits and vegetables go off when left for long hours in hot temperatures as there are no coolers at the market, so some are not fresh enough to be sold the following day. A similar reason was provided by the other street traders who bought from the Maraba Market, who were the majority of the research participants.

According to the CoT reports “*The Tshwane Market is a unique centre where prices are formed, and fresh produce is traded to the mutual benefit of suppliers, buyers and consumers*” (CoT, 2015: 1). The Tshwane Market is just across the road from the Marabastad Taxi Rank. Despite the proximity of the Tshwane Market, those who sell fresh produce mostly buy from the Maraba Small Market because it is more convenient. It is right next to their stalls at the Marabastad shopping complex, whereas the Tshwane Market is across a large road. The traders at the Maraba Small Market get most of their stock in bulk from Tshwane Market. The street traders usually buy at the Tshwane Market when there are discounted prices there. Tshwane is under the management of the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality and is currently managed by Tshifhiwa Madiwa. The market is one of the biggest street traders’ suppliers in the area. Most street traders mentioned that the Tshwane Green and Fresh Way is the agent they usually buy from. Tshwane Market houses various agents to maintain the market and sell different products to customers. Some of the other agents are, Botha Roodt, Farmer’s Trust, Du Plessis en Wolmarans, Noodvaal, RSA Market agents, DW fresh produce, Fresh Way, Mabeka market agency, Prinsloo & Venter, and Subtropico Protea Mark. Street traders seldom go themselves to buy stock, they usually send trolley drivers to go and buy. Some place an order over the phone with their regular assistants working for the agents and send the trolley men to collect, pay, and deliver to their specific stalls.

The street traders who sell cooked food, bought a lot of their ingredients and stock from Big Save Hyper which is well known for selling affordable starch (maize meal or rice) and meat products. Alternatively, they buy fresh meat from the meat sellers opposite the Marabastad bus rank, Meat Express or Waltloo butchery. Traders selling mealies source their supply from Maraba Pharmacy and those who sell snacks buy from the Maraba Sweet Shop. Maraba Pharmacy is housing mealies suppliers hence it is called Maraba Pharmacy. Even though there are different suppliers in and around Marabastad close to the women street trader’s stalls, after buying stock there is usually a need for a delivery as they cannot carry most of the things using their hands. There are delivery services to and from different suppliers offered by the trolley men who wear reflective vests. Trolley deliveries, prices start at R30 per trip. Delivery prices have gone up from R20 to R30 post lockdown. The women street traders explained that the delivery fees have increased because the people who offer these services are also trying to earn an income to provide for their families. Those that sell peanuts got them delivered by truck once a week, usually on Tuesday. They place orders for the following week after receiving the delivery as their supplier comes from far. The delivery truck is driven by a man who works at



the Jumbo peanuts farm, and he delivers at two locations, the bus rank and inside the Marabastad shopping complex next to the Maraba Small Market. Sometimes they use trollies to collect their stock from the truck to their stalls as they tend to buy in large quantities.

Hlamalani, is a 25-year-old law (LLB) graduate whom, after completing her degree, decided to work for her mother full time as her mother could not continue working in Marabastad. They sell raw and roasted peanuts and supply people Marabastad and in Soshanguve, and in Polokwane in Limpopo Province. In Polokwane they supply their old customers, and they buy in bulk (2-3 sacks of 50kg raw and roasted nuts) once every month. Daily, they sell in small quantities, from 20g packets for R10, to 4kgs for R120 and 50kg for R1,400. Like many other women traders they get their peanuts' stock delivered to them with a truck. The supplier comes twice a week to the market, and women street traders who sell peanuts flock there to buy stock in bulk. One bag of 50kg peanuts from the supplier goes for R1,100.

#### **4.4. Social embeddedness in action**

Women street traders in Marabastad have been working together for many years prior to the recent Covid-19 pandemic. They support each other by collaborating when it came to buying stock, looking after each other's stalls, and sharing information on the food specials where they source their supplies. This high level of interdependence was created by the main factor that brought them there, which is to earn a living. The interdependence of street traders is also evident in their family relationships. There is collaboration within families, and the collaboration goes beyond the family as the women collaborate with other traders.

The relationship they have is characterised by collaboration and mutual support. Even though they collaborated, there were some underlying issues such as exclusion of traders from neighbouring countries from certain local municipality benefits by some South African street traders. This became more evident during the pandemic. Some South African women street traders felt that the Municipality was unfair to them for allowing international women street traders to also benefit from the assistance that was given to them. A few who benefitted and are from the neighbouring countries, did so because they had South African friends. South African street traders said that first preference should be given to them especially when it came to municipal assistance by virtue of their birth right.

Many of the women street traders in Van Der Walt Street in Pretoria CBD believe in the power of collaboration as they share information on food sales and stock transportation, and they have business stokvels together. The way they are organised in that street, has influenced their

trading relations as the setup, including their common vulnerability, made them get along and collaborate. One of the traders named Koketso mentioned that she would meet up with other traders to go and buy stock the following day. She confirmed that they use the same transport to buy stock to cut transport cost as they were sharing an Uber Van. She also explained that it was cheaper to use an Uber as it charges fees per trip not according to the number of people who boarded the transport. Stokvels are savings or investment societies to which members regularly contribute an agreed amount, and from which they receive a lump sum payment (Oxford dictionary, 2022). Members of a stokvel agree on a set amount of contribution and how each will get a turn to benefit from those contributions.

How the stokvel works is up to the members. In the case of these women street traders, they each contribute R200 per week and take turns to get paid. This is mainly to help each other with buying stock. The group consists of four members so each member gets R800 every 4<sup>th</sup> week. They intend to assist each other with buying stock and gas as the majority are using gas stoves for cooking. There are different stokvel groups, and they range between 4-8 members each. Nkele added that the majority generally prefer having a small number of members because if it is a huge number it would be challenging to manage. Not only do they share information about food sales but about current affairs as well. For example, they regularly updated each other about information on the Covid-19 pandemic and assistance from the government. They informed each other about the food parcels from the government and some benefitted because they got information from other street traders.

#### **4.5. Importance of street trading for livelihoods and families**

There is a great contribution made by street trading to reducing unemployment especially in rural communities where people would relocate to urban areas seeking employment. When they do not find jobs, they resort to street trading. There are however those who started trading because they have entrepreneurial skills and a passion for trading. There are people who derive their livelihoods from street trading like, Mam Sophie. She said, “*Tafole yona e, e re kgodisitse le go gosisa banake, o sa ba e nyatsa*” loosely translated as, this table (referring to the table she is selling from) raised us and our children, do not undermine it. She meant that, she was raised with the money that was made from street trading. She also raised her children with the money she makes from street trading as well. Mam Sophie, and a number of my other research participants, would come with her children to the stall to sell during school holidays before the pandemic. This stopped during Covid-19 because they did not want to expose their children to the virus. Thandiwe Ndou’s children have resumed coming to assist her, and on the days I

interviewed Thandiwe her daughter was the one selling. During the interview she mentioned how one of her daughters will take over the business in the coming year as they have enough experience and the young lady kept on nodding her head to show that she was agreeing with her mother. I would describe their family relations as one form of strong social relation because they trust each other enough to grow their legacies through collaboration in running the family business.

#### **4.5.1. Contribution of family relations to street trading**

Family relations are an important part of the social relations that enable the street trading to work. Over the years women like Mam Dikeledi and Mam Nyaki regularly brought their children to their work place so that they can teach them how their family businesses were operated. This was an opportunity for their children to build a relationship with their regular customers in preparation for the time when they will take over and carry on the businesses. Hlamalani is a daughter to Mam Nyaki who has also retired because of having some chronic illnesses and being scared that she might get Covid-19 because of being exposed to a lot of people on a daily basis. She also added that it is was time for her to enjoy her state old age grants with her grandchildren. Hlamalani and Koketso decided to take over the families' businesses because they believed that their parents would not survive being infected by the virus and they were prone to get it and they were old. This belief is aligned with medical research findings that those who have chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, are less likely to survive Covid-19 (Caballero at al, 2020). Hlamalani has also helped the family business with a much more efficient way of supplying her mother's oldest customers who sells at one of the high schools where they stay in the township. Hlamalani is the one who makes deliveries to the school with her friend's car on weekly basis and the customer places orders through WhatsApp.

#### **4.5.2. The case of Mary and Pretoria CBD traders**

According to the secretary of the Barekisi Forum, Mary, there is great opportunity for growth in the informal sector as street traders make a significant contribution to the economy by ensuring that there is food security in communities. She added that there is power in collaboration and working together as traders. Working together to regulate entry and exit into the market operating at Corner Truce and Van der Walt Street in Pretoria CBD since 2009, has proven to be one of the contributors to their growth as traders. Mary emphasised that their space has reached its maximum capacity, and they do not allow new people into the cooked food,

fresh produce, and snacks market because they already have enough people selling these items. An exception is only made to new entrant who will not sell the same products they are selling. In cases where someone comes and disguises themselves as a seller of non-food products just to get space and then starts selling what other traders already sell, the traders come together and chase that person from their area.

Mary has two permanent employees who work for her. She was fortunate enough to find a trading spot in an area that works in her favour when it comes to customer base. She sells cooked food in what used to be the corner of Truce and Van Der Walt Street, and what is now called Johannes Ramokhoase Street. Her stall is opposite the Department of Home Affairs, and close to National library of South Africa, and the Department of Labour. Most of the cooked food customers are from these departments, with some from the clothing shops around the area. As a cooked food trader, Mary makes approximately R1,000 profit or more per day from selling plates of food for R35-R55 per plate. Loyal customers queue at her stall and most of her cooked food is finished before the end of business (16:00) each day. One meal consists of pap, gravy, two salads of choice (coleslaw, chakalaka, or cabbage), and meat (chicken or beef). Different salads are served daily, and customers have a variety to choose from.

Mary operates from a trailer. She usually starts selling her plates from 10:00. Some of her customers, if not the majority, are government officials and some come there in full work uniform, such as police and correctional services uniforms. Mary said that she makes enough money to make a good living, provide for her family, pay employees, and still save money daily. The stand she operates from is bigger than the 3 by 3 metres that is indicated on the street trading By-Laws document. There is a trolley and a braai stand at her stall where they prepare meat, four chairs, two long tables with benches, water in a jar and cups for customers.

Customers come there to sit, eat, and go, though some just buy take-aways instead of sitting down. Next to Mary, there was only one other trader who is a man and selling snacks and cigarettes. I asked her why there were not lot of traders next to her like in Marabastad or other streets in Pretoria CBD and she said that because of wanting to limit competition as explained above. There were cooked food sellers, with similar operations in Marabastad employing people, but these were not part of my research participants. Participants in Marabastad did not employ people and only got help from their children.

### **4.5.3. Street trading organisations and representation**

Street traders in the Marabastad area of Pretoria, form part of the Barekisi Forum that represents street traders as an entity at the local municipality meetings. Among the 16 street traders interviewed who knew about street trading forums, they only knew about the Barekisi Forum. The 'Barekisi' (meaning the 'sellers') Forum is the principal and dominant street trader's forum in the CoT. It was started by street traders in response to harassment of traders by city officials in the form of Metro Police and was officially recognised in the year 2012. Barekisi Forum was formed after a realisation that street traders' rights were being violated, and there was no one to represent them to get justice. In 2014, some traders got arrested and assaulted, and some of their goods were confiscated without any tickets being issued to them (Sapa, 2014). This is a ticket that proves what goods were taken, and on what grounds were they taken, and by which TMPD official. Sadly, their right to the city and to trade continues to be violated even today, almost 10 years after the establishment of the Barekisi Forum.

Barekisi Forum elected representatives are mediators between traders and government officials. They are elected based on years of experience in trading and how well known and confident they are when it comes to speaking to authorities. Each region has two representatives, which is the spokesperson and an administrator. Traders make submissions of their issues and concerns to the Barekisi Forum, which brings them to the attention of the relevant stakeholders at the CoT. The Forum committee is based in Pretoria CBD as it was formed by traders in that area, and has representatives who are based in different regions such as Marabastad, Mamelodi and other surrounding areas.

As predominant as Barekisi Forum is, there are some street traders who do not know much about the Forum, what it is about, and who to talk to about their grievances. The researcher noted that the majority of the traders in Marabastad who had been there for many years and those who recently joined the street trading market, did not know about the existence of the Forum. To be a member of Barekisi Forum, there is a once-off joining fee of R60. However, since the pandemic, traders say they had decided not to pay it because they have not selling most of the time and the Forum is not giving traders enough support. These financial constraint issues were expressed by a few traders that knew about the Forum and had been part of it for more than five years. The Barekisi Forum committee used to meet once a week if there were some issues that needed urgent attention to be addressed and met every other month if there are no urgent matters. The Forum Committee was allocated an office space by the municipality to run their operations from and Mary confirmed that it is in between Marabastad and the

Central Business District (CBD), situated in Boom Street. Accessibility for street traders in both areas was taken into consideration when it came to choosing office location for the Forum. In addition, one of the Forum members also confirmed that Forum committee members used to receive stipend of R2,000 per year for 3 years after the establishment of the Forum, however that is no longer the case. The forum representatives are no longer paid for their service to the organisation. Passion and advocacy for street traders' rights is what sustains them as leaders of the forum and as traders. They continue to attend meetings with CoT representatives to try to address some of the key issues that affect street traders, and they did so before and during the pandemic. Issues raised included problems with trading permits, sanitation facilities, and integration into the city planning. Sanitation infrastructure is a big concern for the traders. They operate in crowded areas with limited space, which are often dirty with poor access to clean water, and traders have to fetch water close to the public toilets which are far from most of their stalls.

#### **4.6. Care-work and gender inequalities**

Increased childcare responsibilities have implications for women's labour market prospects. They must consider who is going to take care of their children when they seek employment, and how far the workplace is from the schools. This sometimes forces women to leave some good jobs and business offers they might get, if they are in areas far from their homes especially if they cannot afford to relocate. As was seen in the literature, the women street traders, like other women, carry out most of the household responsibilities and care work. The women street traders said that they had to leave their children either at pre-school or with other family members when they go to work. Whilst most of them have older children who go to middle school or are adults, some are married and have their own families.

Three women street traders mentioned that they struggled quite a lot during the pandemic because they are single parents with toddlers and they had to carry the responsibility of daily chores and looking after the children on their own. During that time, pre-schools were closed, and they could not find much rest as two of them said that they packed up everything and continued with selling from their homes. They sold from their houses because they did not want to get arrested by the police for not obeying the lockdown regulations. Home schooling for those that had older children who would normally go to school was one of the challenges they had during Covid-19 as some of traders are illiterate. Most of the school homework required them to be computer literate and unfortunately they were not. After they returned to

work in Marabastad, those that were taking their children to pre-school, could no longer afford it because they had exhausted all their savings. They started leaving their children with neighbours or relatives.

#### **4.6.1. Access to social services**

Social services are services that are provided by the government to communities to promote welfare of its citizens. These range from, medical care, education, housing, and other social protection services. Effective social services relieve the burden of care work often carried by women. It was the government's responsibility to ensure that citizens are protected and catered for during the pandemic to ensure survival during those dire economic times. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the issue of poor service delivery was already there, and there were daily reports on the news about the government's mismanagement of funds. Street traders have also shared about how they had to complain about not getting services such as proper clean water and shelters to operate from as some of their goods go off due to the weather and lack of proper storage. Participants shared experiences which demonstrated that social welfare services are often not received by the intended persons and there is poor monitoring of the delivery of services when tenders go out.

There were three traders who shared how they still have not received child support grants for their children even though they applied in 2018 and 2019, and they qualify. They do not have a stable income and are not making the minimum wage rate as outlined by the Labour Department from their businesses. Some of the children of those who applied for the grants are now in secondary school and are about to reach 18 years of age, which is the last year that their mothers can still qualify to receive the grants for them. The parents of these children have been going to the SASSA offices tirelessly without receiving assistance. When the pandemic hit, they are some of the traders who said that they had little expectation that they were going to get the social relief of distress grant or even the food parcels that they were promised.

#### **4.6.2. Access to education facilities**

Women street traders in Marabastad predominantly have children and some are single mothers raising their children on their own. Taking care of their families is their sole responsibility. As it is every child's need to have access to education, they have had to ensure that this need is met, and their children are also safe at school. They have had challenges with finding the best affordable schools close to where they work. Finding a school close to work was important to them because it was going to be convenient for them to fetch their children from school after

work and go home with them. Paying for aftercare at pre-schools and getting a nanny for weekends was more expensive compared to paying for the pre-school close to their workplace. Some of the traders have taken their children to primary school without attending pre-school because they were fortunate enough to have one of their family members volunteer to take care of the children while they were at work. For those that have older children, older siblings would take care of the younger ones by bathing, cooking, and assisting with homework before the parents get home. There is a risk, however, that these children missed out on the learning they may have had at a pre-school or early childhood development centers.

Lockdown of our country included school closures, including pre-schools and some traders are parents to children who still go to primary and secondary school. Some, had to send their children to schools at a younger age than the required age at those institutions because they did not have care givers due to the costs. Some children did not return to school as soon as the lifting of Covid-19 regulations allowed. This was because, as their mothers explained, they could not keep children enrolled at schools during the Covid-19 pandemic because they did not want to waste money on paying for school fees because their children while the children were at home most of the year 2020.

The issue of access to education facilities during the pandemic was a problem, especially during the hard lockdown when schools had close and women street traders had to tender to their children on a full-time basis. One of the traders Kgomotso, shared how tiresome it was because she was a single parent and had to homeschool her two children, take care, and look after them on her own. Remember, “Some of us are not educated and these children’s schoolwork is hard”. She added “Ne go se bonolo leseng”, directly translated as “It was not easy at all”. Other women street traders shared how the experience was a bit challenging because not having access to these facilities close to work made them lose touch with looking after their children most days. It took an emotional toll on them because they also had daily chores and other family members to look after. Little to no involvement in their children’s education stressed them a lot when it came to having to homeschool their children. They also had a challenge with understanding their children’s curriculum as some considered themselves to be illiterate due to being school dropped outs and not having had opportunities to go to school.

Juggling making a plan to provide for the whole family and extended family members, and the children’s academic needs were indicated to be one of the biggest challenges among other issues during the lockdown. Some women street traders indicated that it was not easy to stay with their children at their relatives houses for too long because they did not have much to



contribute to the household needs. However, they did not have any other option but to stay with relatives because their children wanted to spend time with their cousins, or some had visited and got locked at their relative's homes and did not have travelling permits to return to their homes.

#### **4.7. National regulations, by-laws, and local government**

Street trading is critical to the South African economy, providing employment opportunities to a large portion of the population. Regulating street trading entails enacting By-laws that govern where, when, and how trading may take place. This responsibility is assigned to a specific level of government in South Africa. The Local Government in South Africa is the level of government that makes By-laws for street trading. Local governments are in charge of developing, implementing, and enforcing regulations governing street trading within their respective jurisdictions. Setting rules for permitted trading areas, trading hours, health and safety standards, and licencing requirements is part of this. During the pandemic, the government passed on regulations that restricted traders from trading in public places and required them permits to trade when the regulations were eased during the lower levels of the lockdown.

##### **4.7.1 Local government's response to the pandemic**

Covid-19 was one of the most unpredictable world economic disasters to hit the world in a while. On 15 March 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the declaration of the Coronavirus pandemic as a "national disaster". Since then, a number of announcements have been made regarding limitations on travel, business, and movement, among other things, all with the goal of preventing the national disaster from getting worse and of lessening, containing, and minimising its effects (CoT, 2020). The personal, social, and economic impact of Covid-19 is unlike anything experienced by the world in the past 75 years (Stats SA, 2020: 1). It was, and still remains the responsibility of both the national and local government to help the residents to survive under such dire conditions given the impact the pandemic had on their social and economic well-being. The women street traders selling food in Marabastad as were greatly affected. The CoT devised an Economic Recovery Response plan in an attempt make the city's economy survive and recover from the dire state while also offering support to small businesses, even post the Covid-19 lockdown (CoT, 2020).

Part of the response plan was to facilitate access for qualifying small-business to access to National Covid-19 Relief Funding Programme (Informal Businesses, Cooperatives, SMMEs,

Tourism, Agro-processing) (CoT, 2020). In order to retain current investors, the CoT offers preferential procurement opportunities to small businesses (SMMEs, Cooperatives, and Township businesses), primarily owned by black women. They also honour infrastructure service delivery and maintenance agreements with businesses located in major industrial nodes, such as Roslyn, CBD, Centurion, Menlyn, Babelegi Industrial Park, etc. (CoT, 2020). Webinars, incubators, mentorships, coaching (business rescue, etc.) and “back-to-work” programmes are examples of capacity building. The Covid-19 necessities for small enterprises. Building application automation and expedited business permit and clearance certificate processing (CoT, 2020).

With regard to the plans, when street traders were asked if they knew about them and if there was anything they benefitted from them, they indicated that they did not know about the plans. However, they were promised that they will get business relief funds. Some of the traders got them while the majority of those that were interviewed were still waiting for them. They also mentioned that they did not get assistance with applications for business permits, and they struggled to get them as they would usually get turned away because of the system being slow or offline. The women street traders who received the R3,000 business funds also attended workshops where they were trained on food safety measures and the use of the city by-laws.

The CoT representative mentioned that the municipality prides itself in service delivery to people who live in Tshwane. He added that over the years the municipality has always had regulatory systems in place to maintain order in the city. This was to ensure that the needs of the people and development of the city are a priority. This has proven to be one of the ways that as a governing body of Tshwane, they sustain a good relationship with the residents. Among those residents, are women street traders selling food in the Marabastad area of Pretoria. The CoT has always made efforts to keep the streets where traders operate clean as they have waste pickers from the Waste Removal department that do the cleaning.

The municipality representative also indicated that there is clean running water at the complexes that street traders operate in proximity of and that it is one of the things that the municipality does for the street traders. Street traders who has stall close to those complexes, fetch water from the taps inside those complexes. In addition, the CoT issues trading permits to traders to maintain order in the city and monitor their contribution to the city’s economy.

I was able to interview the CoT representative to find out how they responded to the issues that were raised by street traders during the pandemic. According to the representative, CoT assisted

with the facilitation of the R3,000 grant applications that were given to street traders to buy stock. The funds came from the National Treasury. He added that they assisted traders with trading permit applications to operate from home and to be able to go buy stock from areas close to them. There was a recovery plan that was put in place to assist them with cancellation of their debts with the municipality that were mostly unpaid old trading permits of R150 per month. Notably, that was before the President of South Africa announced the free trading license legislation as part of the Covid-19 relief package.

The Department of Economic Development under the CoT offices were made accessible in the areas close to the street traders' regions for convenience. They did not have to go all the way to the centre of town to apply for permits. As with any other government department, the experiences of the women street traders showed that there were issues of poor service delivery to the intended recipients. The government official was asked about the plan to ensure that does not happen again and he said that their department sends out communication to the traders through the Speaker's Office to call traders in to come and apply for permits and bring all the necessary documentation such as ID, proof of residence and other relevant documents. Communication is also relayed to them through public platforms such as the CoT monthly newsletter, notice boards at the regional offices, and various social media platforms. The traders on the Economic Development databases were called to the municipal offices with the contact details (cell phone numbers) they had previously provided.

There are by-laws that street traders in the CoT are supposed to adhere to as per their constitutional right to operate in the city streets. The by-laws are there to regulate the operations to maintain law and order in and around the city. When the CoT representative was asked how they ensure adherence to these by-laws, he said that *"firstly, we ensure that they are aware that there are trading laws by taking them through a workshop where they are taught about what is expected of them before their trading license application is approved"*. The workshops are mainly there to ensure that they know what by-laws are, their purpose, and the consequences that come with failure to adhere to them. After applying for a trading permit, they attend workshops on the use of trading spaces, by-laws, and safety awareness. Health and safety, firefighting and environmental practitioners are called on site to give more insight on safety in their line of business.

In case of a breach of contract or disobedience of by-laws by a trader, communication is established with the trader to rectify the situation. In case of continued offence, the Metro police officers are sent on site to confiscate their stock, and this, according to the official, is usually done as a last resort to enforce the law. The Metro police officer should be in full uniform (with a name tag). In

cases where stock is confiscated, there should be an official storage letter where the information about the trader will be recorded including the name of the trader, list of the stock taken, and date of collection. The collected stock is kept in storage for 24 hours and if it is not claimed when the period lapses, the stock is destroyed, and the trader will receive a storage fine of R150 with no criminal record. In addition, CoT usually have trader verification visits, where they go on site to check if the traders, they issued permits to are the ones operating at the stalls they applied for.

It is the Department of Economic Development and Spatial Planning's vision "*To lead integrated planning in Tshwane by maximising spatial efficiencies for inclusive economic growth*" CoT (2015). The department is also mandated to provide specialised economic services to priority sectors within the CoT to drive the growth and development of the City's priority economic sectors, as well as to stimulate competitiveness in support of economic growth, diversification, and transformation (CoT, 2015).

As per the mandate of the CoT, the Tshwane Integrated Development Plan document is available on the public domain for access by the public. An Integrated Development Plan is a super plan for an area that gives an overall framework for development. It aims to coordinate the work of local and other spheres of government in a coherent plan to improve the quality of life for all the people living in an area. It considers the existing conditions and problems, as well as the resources available for development. It looks at economic and social development for the area. It is used by municipalities as a tool to plan short- and long-term future development of the city (CoT, 2022). The CoT official said that based on the plan, they intend to formalise the street trading business to ensure that the proper equipment is used by traders at their stalls. This is equipment that is allowed by the department of health and is considered legal according to the street trading policy.

The spatial planning document outlines the plan to place street traders in spaces that are surveyed (good land that is close to their suppliers and customers). For example, they have built a street trading market structure at the Corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Boom Street in Marabastad, and with each trader having their own space to sell from. The street traders were required to register to be allocated the stalls at that new street traders market that is still under construction and about five street traders who were interviewed registered. The facility is not yet opened for street traders to use. The National Treasury allocated a budget of 7 million Rands for the project to revamp the street traders' stalls and build these street trading markets.

#### 4.7.2 Trading permits and licenses

As a street trader in the CoT area, it is mandatory to have a trading licence (CoT, 2015). A trading license is a document that gives a trader legal permission from the CoT to trade in the area. It contains the personal information of the trader, what they sell, and the location of the business. For one to apply for it, they need to have a copy of their South African identity document, licence with the seller's name, the required application fee and they must know that the licence is renewed after 12 months. The requirements do not state the requirements for foreign nationals. As per the licence requirements, traders are obligated to pay R199 annually and R150 per month for the stand permit. When lockdown started, traders were given a grace period from March 2020 to 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2022 where they were not required to pay. Two years prior the pandemic 2018 and 2019, the Barekisi Forum had been meeting with government officials to address some of the issues, as elaborated below, related to street trading permits, particularly around trading stalls allocation and permits to sell in the streets.

The main concern that was raised by the street traders about trading permits was the tedious and long process of applying for them. There is a lot of documentation that is required from them, and it is also costly when it comes to transport to and from the municipal offices. It is rare for one to get it approved immediately, or the first time applying for it. Street traders had been having grievances regarding street trading permits long processes yet the local government responsible for issuing the permits seems to have turned a blind eye to them. This is due to most women street traders complaining about it and still not getting any communication on how their grievances are dealt with. Some traders have not been paying their licences since 2015 because of the municipality's failure to address their demands and some are using overt resistance to get their demands heard. They built stalls bigger than the permitted stall size. According to the Barekisi Forum Secretary it has been more than six years since they wrote to the government about street traders demands for better services and support. The support they said they needed includes support with start-up capital, affordable pre-schools close to Marabastad, more taps for clean running water, and protection from Metro-police harassment, yet little has been done about their demands.

To apply for a food vending licence, street trader applicants are required to submit a copy of their identity document, a sketch of the proposed site (location), trailer size (Length 2750mm, Width 1910mm, Height 2500mm from ground), application fee, modus operandi (description of the kind of business, days and hours of business, photos of inside and outside of trailer. If on private property, permission of the landlord and written proof of access to toilet facilities

must be provided. Given the requirements of a permit and licence application, some traders who originate from neighbouring countries, did not have the required documentation and equipment such as trailers to operate from. The majority did not have money to apply for a permit and to pay for the stand, hence they opted for open spaces close to the taxi rank or bus station where people commute so that they can find customers, and not pay rent as it is expensive, and they cannot afford it.

There are many reasons why engagements between traders and government officials about the traders' needs end up in conflict. Traders said that they often feel voiceless when engaging with local authorities, and this sometimes leads to protests. However, after the altercation between traders and police in 2015, street traders have been avoiding street protests because some of them died during the unrest. Other factors include conflicting interests between relevant stakeholders (traders, property/business owners, local government, and their agents), and the hierarchies that exist amongst traders. The most significant conflict is between registered and unregistered traders. Some of the registered street traders indicated that they have the right to make demands to the local authorities because they are recognised by the system. Whereas the unregistered traders are put on the sidelines. The majority of those who are side-lined are international traders because they do not have the required registration documents.

#### **4.7.2 Harassment of women street traders**

Street traders have been subjected to intimidation for many years and this may be an indication of how they are not recognised and valued for the contribution that they make to the local and national economy. Mary indicated that they constantly hear about how their colleagues are evicted from selling in the city streets or taxi rank as part of cleaning the city. Some of the women street traders that were interviewed mentioned that they have been subjected to harassment for many years because of being part of the informal sector. They had to pay bribes to the police officials to get their confiscated goods back, using up the little profit they made either that day or week.

Some raised concerns about Metro Police randomly coming to the area to confiscate their stock, hence they were always on the move so that when the Metro police officials come again, they do not find them in the same area. As a researcher, it was sometimes difficult to find these women again, unless I had taken their contact details. I would only find them by calling them to find out where they had relocated. The two traders who relocated to town also mentioned

that the Metro Police would sometimes ask for their identity documents (passports) when they carried out raids, and they did not have them. They expressed fear of getting arrested because of not having legal documents to live in South Africa. They said that they were worried that if they go to jail, there will be no one to take care of their children. These were foreign nationals who did not have legal documents to be in South Africa anymore as their Visas had expired a long time ago.

When the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown started in 2020, women street traders were taken by surprise and were concerned about their future in their line of business and were scared for their health. The fear was created by the thought of catching the virus while interacting with their customers or while they are at the market buying stock. Even with the fear of being in contact with the virus, they knew that selling in the street is what puts food on the tables in their households. They took the necessary precautions of wearing masks and sanitizing when they were at work. As time passed, the virus no longer became their biggest worry or concern as they became stressed about the Metro-police confiscating their goods. This meant having to make another plan to replace the stock they lost, which was especially difficult during those dire economic times.

The traders told me that the TMPD came to their trading areas on Fridays and Saturdays to forcefully take their stock and inform them to leave the area with immediate effect. They would do this violently by throwing their stock in the streets and destroying their stalls. Later in the day there would be someone who would tip them off that the trucks that loaded their confiscated stock are behind the railway and they can go buy their stock back from the police officials.

As I was interviewing one of the traders Lerato, she said she recalled the day she had just returned to trading in Marabastad bus rank, it was on the 18 June that day when two Metro-police officials came to her stall and asked her if she had permit to sell, and she said no but explained that she was in the process of getting one. She said that one of the police officials said she is not allowed to sell, and she must buy him cold drink. She explained that cold drink is another way of asking for a bribe. She made it clear that she does not have cold-drink money and they took her tomatoes, potatoes, cabbages, onions, and some snacks and threw them into the truck. They went to the back of the bus rank, and she followed them and one of them said that she must give them R500 because they have to share it. She paid them and they returned the stock to her and left. She said that she had been forced to use the money she had made that day plus the R150 that she had just gotten paid by one of the customers who paid for vegetables

they had taken on credit. This kind of experience transpired during the pandemic and even after easing of the lockdown regulations.

One Friday afternoon while I was interviewing Nkele she received a call where she was notified that there were raids taking place opposite the bus rank and her stall is situated inside the taxi rank. She started packing up while telling others close by that they must get ready as police were coming. Others also started packing and putting their stock in trollies to get ready to go into hiding. The anxiety of the traders on days when raids are anticipated becomes high because they fear that they will lose stock and profits. When it came to fieldwork appointments, we usually arranged for any day between Tuesday and Thursday because the Metro Police conducts raids on either Mondays, Fridays, or Saturdays.

The main function of the CoT's by-laws is to ensure that Tshwane is an orderly city to live and work in. Most of the by-laws formulated and enacted across South African municipalities are based on section 6A of the Businesses Act 71 no. of 1991 and emphasise strict controls, restrictions, and enforcement procedures (Khuzwayo, 2018). Marabastad is one of the areas that are under the CoT's jurisdiction. It is the municipality's responsibility to see to it that the street traders are also included in the planning of the city because they contribute to the economy and the image of the city.

Given the contribution that women street traders have made in ensuring food security in the city, their right to freedom of trade and commerce was violated. As it is their constitutional right to have the freedom of trade and commerce because is a constitutional norm that conceives the sale and purchase of goods and services among or within sovereign states and customs territories as an exchange without government discrimination (Puig, 2017).

Another aspect that the women street traders touched on was their exclusion from policy making. They believe that if policies will be made concerning their daily reality, they should be included. The street traders' forum representative should be invited to the meeting where the policies are made. They said that the traders' forum representatives have been excluded for too long and they are the ones who understand the market as they are also selling in the streets. They believe that their involvement in policy making will enable the municipality to empathise with them and see the need to respond to their issues urgently before they are prolonged and increase. An example that they gave about the downside of not being included in policy making was how the local municipality is building the street traders marketplace a far distance from their customers.



There is a new street traders' market that is still under construction, on Boom Street (Figure 4). To them, this showed the disadvantage of having people who are not participants in the market making decision for them and about them as they do not know much about what is going on in the field. Barekisi Forum secretary expressed the Forum's unhappiness about how the municipality did not adhere to what they had agreed on about the building project. They mentioned that they had agreed that stalls should have enough space to accommodate bulk stock, e.g., "a trader with 200 crates of tomatoes should be able to store the stock inside the stall" (Moatshe, 2022: 1).



Figure 5 : Current building progress of the street traders stall shelters opposite the Belle Ombre taxi rank (Photos by: Author, 2023)

By-laws create order in the city, but they can create a barrier to entry into street trading. Traders do not abide by all the by-laws which somewhat disrupts the system. When they do not abide by the by-laws, the law enforcers get involved and their involvement comes with its own challenges. This includes harassment, and it is most problematic because it makes traders operate in fear of being forced out of trading spaces anytime, or having their stock confiscated.

#### **4.8 Tenure security on trading sites**

Safety and security were of a great concern to my research participants. They mentioned that they were sometimes feeling uneasy about their physical and tenure security in the shopping complex. They mention tenure security as a challenge referring to the unpredictability of the street trading spaces that they can be forced to leave. They mentioned having less to no control of the municipal space they are selling from. Those who joined the trading space many years ago knew that they did not have to pay for street trading license to operate there. They would just put out their stands, arrange their stock, and start selling. When the police came, they would run away from them because the police used to accuse them of making the city dirty and tried to force them to stop operating. The women said that they are worried that the municipality has the power to evict them from their trading space any time to either build more infrastructure or just to keep the city “clean”.

One of the traders further indicated how she used to sell in the CBD next to the South African Reserve Bank but she was evicted and told she was not allowed to sell in close proximity to the bank. This was just before the first national Covid-19 lockdown. She then had to move to Marabastad, because there was not much space in the street where she wanted to relocate her stall to in the CBD.

##### **4.8.1 Physical safety for women street traders**

Given the increased crime rates, crime has been one of the social ills that the country has had to deal with to date. Everyone is somewhat affected one way or another, regardless of their economic status or place of residence (Stats SA, 2022). It has been found that in 2021 and 2022 *“A total of 246 000 (0,6% of adults aged 16 and older) individuals experienced street robbery, with a total of 295 000 incidences, about 34% of the victims reported some or all incidences to the police, a 21,2-percentage point decrease compared to the previous year”* (Stats SA, 2022: 1). The statistics are somehow an indication that street traders may have been affected as their businesses operate in the streets. This was confirmed in the interviews. They mentioned that they have been greatly affected by crime over the years directly or indirectly.

Research participants told me they had to run for their lives during some ATM (Automated Teller Machine) robberies. They also fear that the owner of the complex they sell around might want to leave because of feeling unsafe in the area and a new owner might chase them away. The frequency of the incidents happening in Marabastad led to a decline in the sense of safety

among women street traders selling in that area, both at work, and at home. They live in fear that they might lose their lives anytime while trying to make a living for their families.

There are some key concerns that were raised by some of the cooked food and fresh produce women street traders, who sell inside the Maraba complex as ATM machine are placed inside the complex. They said that they think there is more crime in the complex because most of the times when there was a robbery it was at the ATM. These includes the fear for their tenure safety within the complex they are operating from. The Maraba complex (it is a shopping building that is divided into small shops where people rent to use those units) was said to be owned by an old Indian man whom they fear might sell it to someone else should his children decide not to continue to use the facilities then they would get evicted. The street traders within this complex do not pay rent to the owner of the facilities, even though they benefit from the 24-hour security. The street traders do pay the security guards an R50 per month to protect their goods at night while they are away. The ones who sell fresh produce and snacks push their trollies to the storage facilities next to the Shoprite in Mini Belle Ombre Plaza when they knock off. Some pay for storage to the Indian shop owners who provide them with the storage facilities, and those that store their stock at the storage next to Shoprite do not pay because it is inside a municipal building.

The storage facilities that they usually use are shops in the area, where they have an arrangement with the shop owner to pay weekly for storage. They would then pay R50 per week to store their goods. The ones who sell food cover their tables and take the meat home with them to store in the fridge and eat themselves as they rarely bring meat to cook another day. Another issue that they raised with operating in that complex was their safety from the ATM bombers who steal money from ATMs. These attacks sometimes takes place during the day. There are a lot of ATMs in the complex since most people do their shopping. When these bombings happened, they would run for their lives. Upon returning to their stalls, they would find them broken and the food would be on the floor because of what happens when people run to safety. These incidents happen randomly and occasionally. During the period of my research it happened once in 2022 and more than twice in 2021. Sometimes it happens in the evening when they are not there, and the traders would get the news in the morning about what happened the night before.

#### **4.8. Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders**

On a global scale, the Covid-19 pandemic has had enormously negative consequences. Street traders are one of the most vulnerable groups because they lack the skills and resources to deal with shocks. The Covid-19 pandemic and restrictive measures to control its spread disrupted South African agri-food supply chains, increasing the vulnerability of informal food traders to business failure. Women account for a sizable proportion of informal food traders, but they are more likely than men to face negative outcomes as a result of structural, social, institutional, and administrative biases. These disparities were exposed during the pandemic's early stages. Informal food traders were unable to avoid Covid-19 containment measures, which invariably hampered their ability to source supplies or sell foods to consumers. This section focuses on the impact of Covid-19 on women street traders selling food that were part of this study in Marabastad, Pretoria.

##### **4.8.1. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on street trader's livelihoods**

It is undeniable that Covid-19 had an impact on the South African economy as a lot of people lost jobs and some went out of business due to the pandemic. The pandemic came with a lot of restrictions on what residents could do and not do especially under the hard lockdown period which was in effect from 26 March to 30 April 2020. The National Government implemented regulations to protect the public and reduce the spread of the virus. The restriction of movement of people in public spaces, however, had a negative impact on the street traders' businesses. It was impossible to access or offer their services and products as they were instructed to stop trading. Being out of business and losing their source of income had a negative impact on the livelihoods of traders (Tewfik et al., 2021; Wegerif, 2020).

The South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, announced that there were Social Relief of Distress Grants that were released to support unemployed South African citizens. Recipients of the grants received an amount of R350 per month. When the announcement was made, this social service benefit included unemployed citizens, where they were informed that they are eligible to apply for a relief grant of R350. Eligible beneficiaries would apply through the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) online platform, once approved they would have to collect it from any post-office or bank around the country.

Before the pandemic, there were Social Support Grants that were given to parents for their children, pensioners and people with disabilities. These Social Support Grants were increased as a special measure for Covid-19 relief. Another social support service that was given by the

government to citizens was food parcels, and these were distributed by social workers who identified the beneficiaries. One of the greatest challenges for the research participants was access to food because most of the social support grants received for their children were not sufficient to buy enough groceries for the entire family.

One of the women street traders, Nkele, shared about how frustrating it was for her because she had her grandchildren and her sister's children to feed. Nkele then started borrowing money with the hope that she would get the social relief of distress grant. She eventually got the extra grant but it took a while and but then she was in more debt. She shared that there were days she and her family went without electricity, because they did not have money to pay. Fortunately, even though the water bill kept on increasing the municipality did not cut their water supply. Some street traders went to the municipality to make arrangements for electricity and water subsidies. However, many of the participants did not know about this arrangement. Only a few of the interviewed participants knew about it. The remaining participants only found out about it when I asked them about it and it was new information to them.

When traders were asked if they ever benefitted from the social services that were available to, the majority of them said they did not benefit. As Nkele put it: "*We never benefit from any of those things, we only hear about them from other people*". Lucy added that, "*Even some traders also got R3,000 business fund but we have not received them*". There was R3,000 start-up capital that was sponsored by government and distributed by Nedbank in collaboration with the CoT to registered street traders. These funds were released with the intention to help street traders get back into business. Street traders had to apply for this funding when the Nedbank representatives were on site to assist people with applications. Financial assistance was given to any trader who applied and qualified for the grant. The eligibility criteria were proof of identity, an affidavit that confirms unemployment and no source of other income, and personal information (contact details and residential information). It was also compulsory for them to attend a three-week workshop at the Barekisi Forum offices or CoT Offices.

When asked the reason they are not benefitting, the women mentioned the long administration processes of applying for these funds and grants. Some women street traders complained about how tiresome it is to go to the municipal offices to apply, get turned back because they have some required documents missing, and try again the following day only to still not get assistance. Some of the reasons for getting turned away included the computer system being offline, the queue being cut because the offices are closing, and missing documents. Even after

successfully applying, some of the women have had to sleep at the post office waiting to collect the money.

Women street traders are still struggling to recover from the setbacks that were caused by the Covid-19 pandemic after two years since lockdown was lifted. When they were forcefully removed from selling in the streets, during the lock down, they lost their main source of income which had a negative impact on their family's well-being. Recovering has not been easy. Over the years some women street traders have been able to save money and when the Covid-19 pandemic hit, they were able to use their savings to sustain provision for their families and rebuild their businesses post-lockdown. However, they said that they do not think they will be able to survive another pandemic should there be one. The pandemic wiped out their business accounts. These are women traders who are the sole breadwinners in their households with no alternative sources of income to provide for their families. Some had to go to lengths of selling from their backyards because it was prohibited to sell in the street at the time. Some had to depend on their children's social support grants and their old age grants to feed their families. One can imagine how hard it was to stretch the budget to feed everyone, since family members were back home in one place at the same time. There were more mouths to feed and people to look after. This meant providing them with items from food, clothing, to toiletries.

Unfortunately, the grants did not cater for street traders who are foreign nationals. Lucy, one of the street traders from Zimbabwe, reflected on a time where she unfortunately could not even afford toiletries and had to depend on her friends for that and food. At the time she had even moved in with her sister because she could not afford to pay rent as well. On the other hand there is a negative impact of care work, being a burden on women street traders. The toll care work took on women caused them emotional and physical distress especially those that carried this responsibility alone, which is usually the case because of gendered roles (Dancer & Tsikata, 2015; Berg et al, 2022). Some traders shared that they are not worried about contracting the virus while taking risks to provide for their families as they believed that the virus never existed. As Hlamalani said: *"this Covid-19 pandemic story is just an agenda by powerful people in higher places to control the economy and instil fear in people disregarding people like us, who get money from selling in the streets"*.

It goes without saying that the Covid-19 pandemic has done more harm than good to many people's lives and the economy at large. Yes, there are heroic stories that came from the pandemic, where some people came up with new business ideas, implemented them and they are doing well. Others, like street traders, are still recovering from the ramifications of the pain

and loss that was caused by the pandemic. Competition in the market has increased because there are more traders who joined the market after losing formal sector jobs. Keeping afloat in business is hard because prices of food and petrol keep on increasing and this is hitting many of the traders' pockets hard. Not only are their businesses affected negatively, but also their livelihoods. Buying groceries, paying rent, children's school fees and paying other bills have taken a toll on the traders' mental and financial health. Mam Thandi mentioned that *"It is painful to see your children going to school without pocket money and walking to school because there is no money for transport"*.

Street traders are in constant fear of price hikes because this increases the cost of their supplies, which pushes them to increase their selling prices. This will negatively affect their customers, most of whom cannot afford to pay more. Customers usually complain that traders have increased their prices and as much as they did not want to, it did not make business sense to keep the prices low when the cost of supplies increased. One trader shared an example about tomatoes: she mentioned that tomatoes are now more expensive, and it is the one product that is high in demand. They used to buy a box of tomatoes for R65 but it is now R90 at the Maraba Small Market. When some of the customers were asked why they buy tomatoes regularly, they explained how tomatoes can be eaten in different ways, as a gravy, as a fruit with salt and pepper, and as a salad. They also complement the meat with it because meat is expensive so they would make chicken or beef stew with more tomatoes, for instance. They had a huge customer base before the pandemic and within those customers, most were taxi drivers. However, it decreased a lot during and after the pandemic because most people had gone out of the city to live elsewhere due to the pandemic.

#### **4.8.2. Impact of Covid-19 on the business**

Amongst other implications of the pandemic on the South African economy were loss of jobs and business for street traders which then resulted in the loss of customers. According to Stats S.A Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2021: 12) *"The number of unemployed persons increased by 584 000 in Q2: 2021 following an increase of 8 000 in the previous quarter of 2021"*. Whereas the official unemployment rate was 32.6% in the first quarter, and it remained unchanged until the second quarter (Stats S.A, 2021). When people are out of jobs, unemployed and do not have source of income they do not have a buying power (money). When customers do not have financial means to buy goods and services from street traders, it is a loss for traders their customer base decreases. After people lost jobs, some moved out of the city, and some could not come back to Pretoria for work after the pandemic.

Some street traders lost the stock they had before lockdown because most of their food stuffs got rotten, especially fresh produce. All the traders that were interviewed were saddened by the fact that they lost both profits and the money they spent buying stock to sell not knowing that they will not make any returns. Unfortunately, there was no one to blame other than blaming the pandemic for the loss. Some gave away most of the fruits and vegetables to family members to eat at no cost for eat them to avoid seeing them go to waste.

Street traders bought more stock just before the lockdown was officially announced. Some unfortunately went into panic buying with the hope that they still had a few weeks to sell, and the stock would be finished before they went into lockdown. They went into panic buying because they thought the stock would run out from their suppliers and they would close before they could buy. They shared about how much pressure and distress they were under because of hearsay about the impending lockdown which came sooner than expected.

The pandemic made some of the traders lose their long-time customers who no longer come to Pretoria for work because of they lost their jobs. For some, it was rumoured that they were scared of getting infected by the Covid-19 virus because the street traders' foods are too exposed to the people who may not have been wearing masks. Some street traders shared how they felt about how they were right to have those concerns, but now they did not know about their efforts to keep good hygiene when it comes to their food products. Nkele (2022), "*Re senyegetswe, Covid e ya bona e sentse*" she said this in Setswana. When asked who she referred to as 'bona', she said the government officials. When her phrase is translated, it means "It ruined for us, their Covid ruined".

#### **4.8.3. Uncertainties about the future**

One of the main issues that street traders brought forward was their fear of possible further Covid-19 outbreaks. They were concerned that one day they might wake up to a new pandemic like they did to Covid-19 when there was not much that the government could do to protect them. At first, they took it seriously when they heard people talking about it when they came to the stall to buy their products. They feared for their lives every day after the announcement on the news because they were worried about both their health and putting their family members at risk of contracting the virus from them. They had to face their fears and go to the streets to work for their children regardless. They also shared how the unpredictability of life had made them live on the edge (fear) planning their finances and other aspects of their lives



in such a way that if there were another outbreak, they will be able to protect themselves and their families.

Mam Sophie shared how she still wants to go back to school so that she can be able to home-school her children as she was so sad that she did not know how to help her children with their schoolwork during school closures during the lockdown. She added that her children really missed school as they always asked about schools re-opening and missing their teachers and friends from school.

It is undeniable that the Covid-19 pandemic redefined the economic system. E-commerce, which is about the digitization of services, made people become aware of their shortcomings when it comes to computer literacy and technology. Some were able to adapt, and some are still adapting to the digital era. Consumer preferences have shifted slightly. Most people do not mind paying a little extra money for convenience, as they would rather order groceries and pay for it to be delivered at their doorstep than to go to the shops, even if they are close by. It has also re-defined the labour force as machines have now taken over some jobs because of the digitization of services. Another aspect that was raised as a concern by traders was the future of street trading.

One of the traders, Hlamalani was worried about how the nature of their business might be phased out one day after she observed the way online shopping has grown. The nature of their business is dependent on physical interaction and hard cash transactions. If online shopping were to be widespread, street traders might suffer as some of them do not know how to use most digital devices. Online shopping or trading requires one to have a professional website, good marketing platforms, and platforms that are user friendly for their customers. It might be challenging for them to adapt to the new trading system. The gradual phasing out of physical interaction by the digital era is a threat to the sustainability of their business and social cohesion. There is a threat to social cohesion in this space because moving online could undermine the networks and connections created in the informal food market.

#### **4.8.4. Resilience and adaptation to the “new normal”**

The pandemic and all the setbacks it brought, meant that women street traders had to find ways to adapt to the circumstances they found themselves in. When the first lockdown was announced, people may have thought it would be for a short while, but it lasted much longer. The lockdown levels were adjusted, and that made people think that it would not end with some, such as Hlamalani, saying, “*this is our new normal*” They could not foresee life going

back to the way it was before the pandemic. Some of the street traders had to start borrowing money from friends, families, and loan sharks because they could no longer afford to afford their basic needs such as food, electricity and paying rent, or other necessities.

Some got involved in informal money borrowing because they could not afford loans from the banks, and they were expecting social relief funds pay-outs from the government. Some did not get them a month immediately after applying as expected because of delays in service delivery. Sometimes, they would be turned away from the collection point because machines were offline, and payments could not be processed. If they had applied, got approved and did not get it, they were usually promised that they would get it as a lump sum for the months they missed it when it finally comes through. They would continue to live off the money they borrowed. The one challenge they had in common was with the loan sharks who would add 45% interest which was steep and having to leave their identity documents with the lender. When the money came, it was not enough to cover the debt increment as it went up because of the interest charged. They would have already faced the harsh realities of informal money borrowing. The poor funding administration from the national to the provincial and local governments was the main issue, and it led to some street traders having to repay the people who lent them money, exorbitant interests.

Women street traders shared about their aspirations and plans for the future. Some said that they see themselves owning supermarkets, chisanyamas (meat grilling places) and restaurants one day. They also believe that with government support, they can get ahead in their businesses and create employment for more people in their areas of business. There were three that said that they would like their children to carry on their business legacy even if they have other and better jobs because this is the business that provided for them and even paid their registration fees at university. There was an expression of emotional attachment to the businesses.

A pension fund plan from the government for when street traders retire was indicated as a need by Barekisi Forum. Street traders Forum secretary shared that it was mainly because of the challenges street traders went through during the pandemic. The forum has made a request for trading shelters, electronic permits, a pension fund plan, and less complicated process for applying for a permit or licence especially because the market is not formally regulated. Even though the demands are fulfilled they are efforts towards adaptation and being in a better position for future crises.

#### **4.9. Chapter conclusion**

The informal food sector is an interesting, fast growing, and impactful sector when it comes to food security, especially in the cities. It was interesting to know how street traders organise themselves, from their social embeddedness, collaborations, and the way they have taken up spaces in the city. They have taken up spaces where there is mobility people going to work or doing shopping, and that is where they easily access customers. The positive and the negative experiences were shared and most of the shortfalls came as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of the positive experiences were starting businesses when the economy opened and getting financial support from the government although not every street trader received it. Whereas the negatives were the loss of income due to movement restrictions, not getting financial support from the government for some, and losing stock due to police harassment during evictions from the streets.

Indeed, the majority lost their livelihoods during the pandemic as they lost their source of income, and it took time to recover. The government tried to protect citizens and help them survive the economic crisis by putting regulations in place that restricted movement, which then affected the street traders' businesses negatively. Upon opening the economy to allow more trade, street traders were required to have street trading permits which were not easily accessible as they required a lot of documentation which most traders did not have. It also had a negative impact as their form of trade requires them to be out there in the streets as that is how they access their customers, without whom, it was difficult to continue operating. For some, it meant they had to go back home and out of the city to be with their families during the pandemic. Some had to grapple with the harsh realities of a pandemic, especially during lockdown.

In the midst of it all, there were traders who sustained themselves with their savings or by borrowing money from friends or relatives and some indicated that they exhausted their savings. There were stories of women who benefitted from the social relief funds such as the unemployment grant, business relief grant and child support grants, which helped a lot in terms of their daily necessities and going back to the streets to sell again. The findings exposed some of the challenges that street traders and the local government have. Street traders hoped that the government was going to provide them with a safety net to fall on during the pandemic. Unfortunately, things did not pan out as anticipated and that led to much rage and anger towards the municipality, not only for the issues that were brought on by the pandemic, but for all other issues that were there before.

Some of the key issues that were reiterated by women street traders were poor access to social services, lack of sanitation infrastructure, loss of income, and the negative repercussions of being out of business. Street traders do acknowledge that when government restricted movement in public spaces even if it was not for long periods of time, it was for their own health and safety. However, they still felt unsupported by this regulation as it meant restriction from making an income to support their families.

## **CHAPTER 5 : DATA ANALYSIS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The socio-economic impact of Covid-19 on women street traders selling food will be analysed discussed and concluded in this chapter. Moreover, the conclusion and recommendations on how the government can better support the actors involved in the informal sector in case of future economic shocks will also be shared.

### **5.1 The impact of Covid-19 on women street traders**

Women street traders all around the world have been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the numerous limitations and procedures put in place to stop the virus spread, street trading, a typical form of informal work, had been severely affected. The following are some of the main effects of Covid-19 I found on women street traders in the study: loss of livelihood, which heightened the lack of social protection; increase in care work responsibilities; and restricted access to financial and entrepreneurial assistance.

#### **5.1.1 The burden of care-work responsibilities on the women street trader's health**

As shown, the social impact of Covid-19 on women street traders selling food has been multifaceted. Women street traders are often the primary caregivers in their households. The closure of schools and childcare facilities due to the pandemic increased their caregiving responsibilities. Balancing caregiving responsibilities with running a business has been a daunting task for many women street traders, resulting in increased workloads and stress. The Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on the health of female street traders selling food due to caregiving. Women street traders frequently work in crowded, unclean settings where it is difficult to maintain physical distance and follow stringent hygiene procedures to secure an income and take care of their families. They had higher probabilities of contracting the virus, which increased their vulnerability to infection. As indicated in the previous chapter, women who operate as street traders sometimes do so in filthy, crowded conditions with little access to proper infrastructural facilities such as clean running water, rest rooms and proper storage facilities. Lack of access to clean water, and other sanitation services, which are necessary for maintaining good hygiene and halting the spread of Covid-19, had raised their health risks during the pandemic.

They have had trouble accessing healthcare when they required it due to lack of social protection and limited financial resources. This put the health of women street traders at risk, as well as the health of their communities and families as they worked in places that were more exposed to movement of a lot of people. This was also raised as one of the concerns for

customers and the researcher while collecting data because they were also exposed to health hazards in the field.

### **5.1.2 Poor access to social services due to regulations**

As indicated in the previous chapter, women who operate as street traders sometimes do so in filthy, crowded conditions with little access to proper infrastructural facilities such as clean running water, rest rooms and proper storage facilities. Lack of access to clean water, soap, and other sanitation services, which are necessary for maintaining good hygiene and halting the spread of Covid-19, have raised their health risks during the pandemic.

Without official contracts, access to safety nets, or social security benefits, women street traders work in an unregulated sector. Due to a lack of social protection mechanisms during the pandemic, there were some women street traders who got support such as getting food parcels and social relief grants, however, the majority who did not benefit found it challenging to deal with the loss of their livelihoods and income and felt marginalised. The pandemic has made it much more difficult for women street traders to obtain official loans and banking services. They were promised social relief grants by the government however, when the majority applied, they did not receive it. The municipality focuses on what has been delivered, whereas for the street traders, especially those who did not benefit, understandably focus on what has not been done and who is left out. Both views are true in their own right – some have benefitted, many have not – but neither view is the whole picture.

It is challenging for many women street traders who work in cash-based economies and have no access to formal credit or digital financial services to get financial support or loans to deal with the economic effects of Covid-19. Additionally, because of their informal status or lack of official documents, women street traders may not receive the benefits of government stimulus packages and business support programmes. Mainly because of bureaucracy and red tape, street traders in Marabastad remain among the urban poor who do not benefit from municipal social support services. Many of them described how financial assistance services were made available to them, but they were unable to take advantage of them due to the lengthy administrative processes required. Although public service programmes are well-intended, bureaucracy impedes their success. In the case of the research participants, the municipal requirements for accessing services were unreasonable as most traders were not in possession of the documents that were essential for benefitting from social services. However, according to the local government official, the administrative processes were easy and quick, and their

representatives assisted many traders on the ground to get support. He emphasised that the official progress reports on the support they gave for the street traders by the Economic Development representatives on the ground was great and effective as many traders had listed their names for business support services and were grateful to the state for service delivery. Notably, only a few from the majority were beneficiaries according to street traders who were interviewed.

### **5.1.3 Impact of loss of income on street trader's livelihoods**

Many women street traders rely on the money they make each day from selling things on the streets to support their families and themselves. For an example, one of the traders called Mam Sophie indicated that the money from selling in the street raised her as her mother was also a street trader. It is now raising her children, as she is paying for their school fees with it. However, due to lockdowns, curfews, and travel restrictions, her capacity, and many other street traders to sell goods, has been significantly reduced and stopped altogether at some point. Women street traders have been forced into poverty and economic insecurity because of the loss of their livelihoods and income.

## **5.2 Conclusion and recommendations**

Understanding how women contribute to the informal food economy and how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected their street food commerce was the main objective of this research. It is hoped that the findings and lessons presented in this dissertation will also have an impact on how the CoT and other authorities respond to the difficulties experienced by women street traders who sell food. The dissertation highlighted the perspectives, priorities, and voices of women working in the informal sector. The overarching question was how Covid-19 affected their daily operations and how did they respond to the effects and based on that, what are some of their fears and concerns about future economic shocks.

Firstly, finding out how women street traders organise themselves in their area of work was key to understanding the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their personal lives and line of business. As Mary the secretary of the Barekisi forum said, there is a lot of room for expansion in the informal sector because street vendors play a vital role in the economy by ensuring that communities have access to food. She continued by saying that cooperation and collaboration have power, referring to the way in which the two have helped them grow as traders. This included things like looking out for other traders' stalls and sharing food sales information. Social embeddedness and working together has proven to be key to the growth and resilience

of the informal sector. In addition, it has also helped them with dealing with care-work pressures which is also very important because it is one of the major responsibilities that these women street traders have. They are integrated into and make a positive impact on these communities' social and economic fabric.

In general, women do most of the household duties, particularly when it comes to daily housework. In 2020, when the majority of schools and ECD facilities were closed, care work responsibilities increased, and this took a toll on women because most family members, especially children, were at home and had to be looked after full time. Some of the women street traders who were interviewed stated that they had to leave their children at creche or with other family members in order to go to work before the pandemic and during the beginning of the pandemic before lockdown. Some women street traders had to do all the daily chores all by themselves and they expressed how movement restrictions in public spaces with everyone being home for most parts of the day, has affected them. It increased the load of daily chores and has then become burdensome. Especially for those that did not have helpers and are single parents. It meant that they had to carry all the responsibilities on their own.

Caregiving is typically devalued because it is seen as a woman-dominated role that does not always come with compensation or paid time off. It is frequently forgotten that women who perform these unpaid daily home chores can become exhausted from managing their jobs and providing care.

There is no denying that Covid-19 had an effect on the South African economy because of the numerous job losses and business closures. Many restrictions on what residents could do were imposed by the state due to the pandemic, particularly during the lockdown period. Many traders temporarily went out of business and lost their source of income during lockdown, which had a detrimental effect on their quality of life. Poor access to food was one of the ripple effects of the loss of income because the social grants that traders' children received did not cover the cost of feeding their entire families. Unfortunately, some could not even afford basic necessities such as toiletries and groceries, especially foreign national women street traders.

Sadly, when it came to social support services foreign nationals could not benefit at all as beneficiaries had to be South Africans and in possession of a South African identity document or identity card. Unfortunately, this requirement excluded many from benefitting as some did not even have passports or South African citizenship documents. Some of the social support



services were free food parcels, a social relief of distress grant of R350 per month and many others which street traders could not benefit from.

The informal sector was rarely considered when creating Covid-19 responses. Since it serves as an important source of food for many low-income households in urban townships, researchers predicted that the impact on access to food in the informal sector during the Covid-19 pandemic could be significant, and it was. Increased levels of food insecurity resulted from the severe reduction in people's access to food caused by the loss of income and livelihoods brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and responses to it as explain in the literature review (Rwafa-Ponela et al, 2022). This relates to what the researcher found in the field, where street traders shared how they became food insecure when the pandemic started due to the loss of income and not being able to afford enough nutritious food and other basic needs for themselves and their families.

According to street traders, the state seemed to be responding to the economic shocks and issues worsened by the pandemic as if they were brought by Covid-19, whereas some issues had been there before the pandemic. The analysis identifies bureaucracy and regulations as the main factors that made the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic harsher on traders. The pandemic hit, and the state devised measures to protect the country from this health and economic shock by implementing lockdown. Lockdown had regulations that restricted interaction of people and that slowed down some economic activities. Women street traders' businesses were affected as the nature of their business requires human interaction, as they need to exchange goods with customers for money. The regulations restricted them from trading, and they were then evicted from their trading spaces. Some traders were harassed in the form of having their stock forcefully taken from them and they had to get the stock back by paying bribes to the metro police.

Response measures, such as free food parcels, the social relief of distress grants, and business relief grants were not received by most women street traders. All the participants in this study confirmed that they knew about these measures. Many had applied and provided proof of application by showing the researcher the SMSs from their cell phones, but they were still waiting to get assistance even post the pandemic. Regulations for administering social relief measures to people seemed practical on paper. However, when it came to the daily realities of women street traders, they were impractical because the regulations did not show much consideration for the needs of traders. Traders had to find other survival mechanisms to provide

for their families such as using their savings or borrowing money from relatives or friends after losing their source of income.

When the economy started to open a bit during later stages of less stringent lockdown measures, the traders were required by the state to get permits to go back to operating. However, accessing permits that were required to go back to trading was a long process, as they were required to have identity documents and proof of residence. Traders shared that they were not given all the information about what was required for permits, they found out about certain things only when they got to the municipal offices. The issue of long grant and permit application processes which required too many documents and did not even guarantee approval were cited by most street traders as the main problem. The social protection measures and programmes that were administered show a lack of empathy from the local government and a lack of consideration for the traders' needs.

What was commendable about the traders was their resilience to economic shocks as some were still able to continue with stokvels, and start small gardens in their yards, while others were operating their business from their houses or street corners. This is because they still had to provide for their families. When notified about police patrols, the traders would warn each other and shut their stalls on the times and days that the police were anticipated to come. Post-lockdown, the majority were able to go back to trade in Marabastad and in town. Most of the research participants went back to work a week after the lockdown was lifted, especially the internationals who were staying around town. Some mentioned that they started by selling opposite Maraba Small Market and they were just risking as they did not have trading permits. This brings about a few recommendations that could perhaps be taken into consideration for the betterment of the informal sector in the city.

- Since the street traders took the initiative to start businesses to create employment for themselves and others, the state could create an enabling environment for them to trade. For instance, ensuring that the city is cleaned regularly, and that there is proper clean running water and sanitation in the areas where traders are operating. These are areas where the state already has the responsibility to maintain for the betterment of the city and its development. They could also ensure that roads and other infrastructure are well maintained.

- In addition, they can come up with an easy way of recognising street traders right to trade that would protect them from harassment. This can be combined with better policing for security and an independent complaint mechanism to deal with complaints of harassment.
- Another recommendation would be providing social protection for informal traders in the form of insurance. This could protect them from future economic shocks. Instead of promising them money or handouts in a time of economic crisis, the state and street traders could both contribute to an insurance fund which they could use in a time of economic crisis. Street traders may also have an option to claim this money when they retire as a form of pension fund. It will be a form of social protection so they do not have to get as a handout but rather the state and traders could equally contribute to this fund and be part of its design.
- Growing existing social and business networks would be helpful for the women street traders especially through stokvels, where they can increase their monthly contributions and buy each other trollies to operate from and other equipment to improve their businesses.
- Lastly, the government needs to ensure that street traders are included in the policy making process for the informal sector when it comes to by-laws and city development plans.

In any research process there are challenges and lessons. Many of the challenges were experienced during the data collection process, and in this section, I share how I overcame some of those challenges. For instance, conducting one on one interviews for a research study is not always easy as it involves people and how a researcher relates with the participants in the field, sometimes about their personal and sensitive stories. Even though I had a customer and trader relationship with some of the research participants before the research, we had not engaged in-depth about their lives and businesses whereas with some traders it was the first time engaging with them. It was not easy for those I approached directly, without networking and recommendation from one of the traders, to just trust me from the onset. More than half of the traders had expected some sort of compensation for their participation, which I did not provide. They expressed displeasure at people leveraging their experiences for their own gain by obtaining degrees and getting well-paid employment opportunities while excluding them as traders from the rewards. However, I was able to explain to them how their participation is going to help me as I student, which they understood and decided to participate.

Another constraint was the wearing of masks, as some traders did not see the need to wear masks and that posed a health risk for me as a researcher and other customers. Metro-police site visits were an issue as well, as traders had to sometimes relocate to a different trading places because they were worried about their goods getting confiscated. Reconnecting with the

traders after they moved was sometimes not easy, especially for those whose contact details I did not have.

The lesson taken from this research project was to never judge a book by its cover. It is easy to make an assumption that street traders are just mere sellers who are struggling to make ends meet, probably living from hand to mouth. This research has proven that to be false as these street traders make a large contribution to their families, communities, and the economy. The informal food economy is a key source of food and an integral part of the urban and rural economies in South Africa. Lastly, the government needs to ensure that street traders are included in the policy making process for the informal sector when it comes to By-laws and city development plans. Given the lessons from the building of the new market structure in Marabastad of trading stalls, that should be one of the reasons why it is important to work with traders on development plans. The plans need to speak to the needs of traders if those plans are intended to support and improve the lives of traders.

In conclusion, street traders' tenacity and resourcefulness in becoming entrepreneurs in their search for employment opportunities and making a living are proof of their unwavering sense of agency. As previously defined by Rwafa-Ponela et al. that agency is the informal food system's capacity to wield power, in this instance it refers to street traders acting proactively to come up with means to support their families and continue to make food available to customers. They have chosen the route of entrepreneurship, creating employment opportunities not only for themselves but also for others in their communities, rather than relying on government handouts for support. It is also quite admirable that they are able to respond to difficult situations, such as Covid-19, to come up with solutions and support their families and local economies. This is an example of the strength of individual agency in promoting sustainable development. For future research, what could be further explored are the ways in which policy and city planning can be developed with less bureaucracy and to protect the interests of street traders.

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## ANNEX I: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA



### Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo



6 May 2022

Dear Miss TC Setuke

Project Title: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders selling food: a case study in the Marabastad area of Pretoria  
Researcher: Miss TC Setuke  
Supervisor(s): Dr MCA Wegerif  
Department: Anthropology, Archaeology and Development Studies  
Reference number: 15181635 (HUM014/0422)  
Degree: Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 28 April 2022. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Harris'.

**Prof Karen Harris**  
Chair: Research Ethics Committee  
Faculty of Humanities  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof KL Harris (Chair); Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noorid; Dr J Okeke; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Tajjari; Ms D Mokalape

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 420 4853 | Fax +27 (0)12 420 4501 | Email pghumanities@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities

## ANNEX II: PERMISSION LETTER FROM TSHWANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



### City Strategy and Organizational Performance

Room AOE 044 | Ground Floor, West Wing, Block D | Tshwane House | 320 Madiba Street | Pretoria | 0002  
PO Box 440 | Pretoria | 0001  
Tel: 012 358 2182  
Email: [ThabisaMb@tshwane.gov.za](mailto:ThabisaMb@tshwane.gov.za) | [www.tshwane.gov.za](http://www.tshwane.gov.za) | [www.facebook.com/CityOfTshwane](https://www.facebook.com/CityOfTshwane)

My ref: **Research Permission/ Setuke**  
Contact person: **Pearl Maponya**  
Section/Unit: **Knowledge Management**

Tel: 012 358 4559  
Email: [PearlMap3@tshwane.gov.za](mailto:PearlMap3@tshwane.gov.za)  
Date: 18 July 2022

**Ms Tshiamo Setuke**  
Hatfield Square  
1115 Burnett Street  
Hatfield  
Pretoria  
0083

Dear Ms Setuke,

#### **RE: THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN STREET TRADERS SELLING FOOD: A CASE STUDY IN THE MARABASTAD AREA OF PRETORIA**

Permission is hereby granted to Ms Tshiamo Setuke, Master of Social Science in Development Studies Degree candidate at the University of Pretoria (UP), to conduct research in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.

It is noted that the objective of the research is to understand the contribution of women to the informal food economy and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on their food related street trade. The City of Tshwane further notes that all ethical aspects of the research will be covered within the provisions of UP Research Ethics Policy. You will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement with the City of Tshwane prior to conducting research.

Relevant information required for the purpose of the research project will be made available as per applicable laws and regulations. The City of Tshwane is not liable to cover the costs of the research. Upon completion of the research study, it would be appreciated that the findings in the form of a report and or presentation be shared with the City of Tshwane.

Yours faithfully,

PEARL MAPONYA (Ms.)  
DIRECTOR: KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

### **ANNEX III: STREET TRADERS INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

My name is Tshiamo Setuke. I am requesting you to be a participant in my Masters research project, which I am undertaking in Marabastad, near the city centre of Pretoria .

Please read the information below, which entails, the title of the study; the purpose of the research; the role of a research participant; what I, as the researcher , will do to protect you as the research participant; and a consent form to be signed. This information will assist you to decide whether or not to participate in this research. Please do not hesitate to ask me any questions for clarification on any issues relating to this research.

**TITLE OF THE STUDY:** “The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders selling food: a case study in the Marabastad area of Pretoria”.

**OBJECTIVES AND BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH:** The objectives of this research are to study and understand how women contribute to the informal food economy and how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted them on their food street trade. I will attempt to bring out the voices, experiences, and priorities of marginalised groups in the food system especially women in the informal sector.

**YOUR ROLE AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:** I am proposing to discuss with you your observations, experiences, and views on food street trading since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic as a woman. Your participation will assist me in completing my studies and achieving the objectives of this study. I will, with your consent, take some written notes and record our interview as you share about your experiences. Our discussion will take about one hour, and I may also return at other times to visit you and discuss how your business is progressing. Please note that besides your time, which I will appreciate, there will be no other implications or expectations on your part for taking part in this study. Since participation in the study is voluntary, there will be no financial benefits.

**WHAT I WILL DO TO PROTECT YOU AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT:** The following are the measures I will put in place in order to protect you from harm by reducing

any possible risks from being part of this research. I will ensure that your personal information is kept anonymous unless you grant permission to be named. Alternatively, I will make use of pseudo names where necessary. Your data, which will be secured by using a password protected file, will be kept at the University of Pretoria for 15 years, and will only be used for academic purposes. You have the right to access your data. Your participation in this research will be voluntary and you are free to stop your participation at any point with no consequences. To ensure informed consent, I ask you to sign below before our interview commences. Furthermore, I will take Covid precautions, which includes wearing a mask, sanitising, and maintaining an appropriate distance throughout our interview and other visits. I will also offer you a mask and sanitiser.

## **RESEARCH PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT**

1. I confirm that I have read (or have had read to me) the information for the above study; I understand what my role as a participant is and I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that the researcher has put in place the appropriate measures to reduce any possible risk of any kind as a result of my involvement in the study.
3. I understand that all the information I provide will be treated in confidence and will be cited anonymously, unless at the end of this interview I expressly give permission to be identified either in general, or for certain information to be attributed to me.
4. I understand that evidence will be secured, and I have the right to access my data.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that there will be no financial rewards. I also understand that I am free to withdraw at any time with no consequences.
6. I confirm that I have been offered a face mask and hand sanitiser by, for my own use, at no charge, for the duration of this interview.
7. I confirm that my participation in this research does not expose me, or anyone else, to additional Covid-19 risk.

8. I confirm that I am comfortable with the distance at which the researcher is keeping from me, and that I consider this to constitute adequate 'social distancing'.

9. I agree to participate in this research project on the terms identified above.

Participant name:

Participant signature:

Researcher name:

Researcher signature:

Date:

If you have any further questions, please contact the researcher or supervisor through the contact details below.

Researcher: Tshiamo Setuke - 0607183606. [setuketshiamo@gmail.com](mailto:setuketshiamo@gmail.com)

Supervisor: Dr. Marc C. A. Wegerif. +27 (0) 12 420 2597 | [marc.wegerif@up.ac.za](mailto:marc.wegerif@up.ac.za)

**NOTE: Only if the interview is taking place via phone or video call (e.g., Zoom or similar) I will read out the statements above in the presence of a witness, and ask the respondent to confirm verbally that consent has been granted.**

Sanna Sechele, Senior Administrative Officer  
Room 8-15, Humanities Building  
University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20  
Hatfield 0028, South Africa  
Tel +27 (0)12 420 2595



## **ANNEX IV: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STREET TRADERS**

**TOPIC :** The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders selling food: a case study in the Marabastad area of Pretoria

### **Introduction**

The researcher will introduce the topic to the trader and explain to them what the research is about. The trader will be thanked for their willingness to participate and will also be told of the role they will be playing by helping contribute to my studies, literature and to our understanding of street traders.

Traders will be made aware that the information they provide will only be used for academic and research purposes also kept safe at the university in a password protected file. In addition, they will be assured that their identity will be protected, not be used, or shared without their permission. They will also be given a choice to use their real names or pseudonyms in the research. Lastly be given a safe space to decline a question in case they feel uncomfortable in answering any of the question.

### **Interview information**

Date:

Location:

Interviewer:

#### **A. Personal information**

- 1) Name/pseudonym
- 2) Age
- 3) Sex
- 4) Highest education level obtained

- 5) What is your main job, is this your main job or occupation? Do you have other occupations? If so, what?
- 6) How long have you been involved in this activity/business/job?
- 7) Where do you live and who do you live with?
- 8) How do you get to work (mode of transport) and what are your daily operating hours?

## **B. The Business**

- 1) What do you sell (Researcher will also observe what is sold)?
- 2) Is this the only place you sell? If not, where else?
- 3) How long have you sold here?
- 4) How did you get the use of this place?
- 5) Have you sold elsewhere before? If so where
- 6) Have you always sold the same things? If not explain changes.
- 7) How did you start? How did you hear and learn about this business?
- 8) Where do you source the produce?
- 9) How often do you source the different produce (make trip, or receive delivery)
- 10) Why source in these places? How did you start sourcing there or hear about this supplier?
- 11) Do you employ any people and if so, how many? And are they temporary, casual full-time and permanent?
- 12) Who do you sell to (probe wholesale/retail ratios)? What kinds of arrangements do you have with them (e.g., selling for cash or for credit, any set regular sales)?
- 13) Are you part of any associations or organisations?
- 14) Do you have any other collaborations with others (e.g., family, friends, church or work-based associations, colleagues), such as sharing transport, buying jointly, assisting with looking after stalls or shops, childcare?
- 15) Since Covid-19 affected South Africa (with people getting sick and the lockdown – March 2020), have there been any changes in your business, and if so what changes and when and if there were any changes what caused those changes? (Nb: I will ask openly about changes,

using the list below to prompt if needed and to ensure these have been covered and ask about when the changes took place) Has there been change in any of the following:

- a. What you sell? (when and why, it changed as follow up to each one where there was a change)
- b. The prices you sell for?
- c. The prices you buy for?
- d. In your costs of doing business, such as rents or transport costs, or processing?
- e. The quantity sold?
- f. customers?
- g. Suppliers?
- h. Frequency of restocking?
- i. People you collaborate with?
- j. The number of people you work with here?
- k. The organisation of the market?
- l. The government regulations or taxes or other government interventions?
- m. The space where you sell?
- n. How you travel to get stock to sell, and the transport used?
- o. What has been the biggest impact of Covid-19 for your business? Do you think this is a short-term impact or long-term?
- p. With the regular amendment of lockdown levels(rules) how has that affected your business's daily operation and what are some of your fears and concerns(profits and relationship with customers) ?

16) Have you recovered from all of these impacts?

17) What does a regular day in your workspace look like?

18) Have there been any other impacts of Covid pandemic on you as a woman in this trading setting (safety, opportunities, gender discrimination or inclusion and etc) ?

### **C. COVID-19 and COVID measures**

19) What do you know about government responses to Covid?

20) What was your source of information?

21) What efforts have you made to get assistance?

22) Did you get any assistance?

23) Have you benefitted from any Covid related government or non-government support?

24) What do you think of Covid-19 vaccinations? Have you been vaccinated?

25) Do you have any questions for us?

**Closing**

**Thank you for your assistance.**

## **ANNEX V: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TSHWANE MUNICIPALITY REPRESENTATIVE**

**TOPIC :** The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women street traders selling food: a case study in the Marabastad area of Pretoria

### **Introduction**

The researcher will introduce the topic to the policy maker and explain to them what the research is about. The trader will be thanked for their willingness to participate and will also be told of the role they will be playing by helping contribute to my studies, literature and to our understanding of street traders.

Policy makers will be made aware that the information they provide will only be used for academic and research purposes also kept safe at the university in a password protected file. In addition, they will be assured that their identity will be protected, not be used or shared without their permission. They will also be given a choice to use their real names or pseudonyms in the research. Lastly be given a safe space to decline a question in case they feel uncomfortable in answering any of the question.

### **Interview information**

Date:

Location:

Interviewer:

Participants name:

1. During the Covid-19 pandemic (especially during lockdown) was there any form of support given to street traders by the Department of Economic Development?
2. How does your department ensure that these support services reach the intended recipients or parties?

3. How do you ensure that street traders adhere to street trading By-Laws ?
4. Are there any plans to include street traders in the spatial development of the city, if so how?