

## **Gender Differences in Household Coping Strategies for COVID-19 in Kenya**

Yuanwei Xu (Ruhr University Bochum), Antonia Delius (The World Bank), Utz Pape (The World Bank)

Understanding how different households cope with COVID-19 among a vulnerable population is important for the policy design aiming at relieving hunger and poverty in a low income setting. We use original household data from five waves of a phone survey conducted between May 2020 and June 2021 in Kenya ( $N = 31,715$ ) and investigate the gender differences in household coping strategies during the COVID-19 shock. We find that female-headed households are less likely to cope by selling assets or taking loans, compared to the male-headed households. Instead, female-headed households rely more on social networks to cope. No difference in coping by reducing meals is observed across these two types of households. We document that the reasons behind the gender difference include that female-headed households are poorer, and that they are more likely to rely on friends and family to cope with shocks even prior to the COVID-19 shock. The findings in this paper suggest that widowed and divorced women are in high needs of relief programs, and governments need to provide easily accessible loans to avoid negative impacts in the long term from selling out assets.