

THE CONTRIBUTION OF NGOS TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES PROTECTING VULNERABLE LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMME IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

So many attempts have been made to try and alleviate poverty especially in developing countries. However despite all these attempts poverty is deepening especially in rural areas. The study sought to evaluate the impact of the main interventions implemented by

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) through the Protecting Vulnerable Livelihoods Programme (PVL) on beneficiaries. The research was undertaken in Murehwa district ward 28. According to CRS the total beneficiaries were 900 a sample of 90 representing 10% was randomly selected. In collecting the required information both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were adopted. The programmes main interventions included Nutritional Gardens, Conservation Farming, Small Livestock Support, Input Farming and Water and Sanitation. The major livelihood activity in ward 28 Murewa District is agriculture, low and erratic rainfall is the biggest challenge faced by the community. The researcher recommends that irrigation needs to be introduced in order to unlock development. Another facilitating factor is the existence of community-based structures to monitor and manage interventions as well as the availability of technical support from Department of Veterinary Services, AREX and Ministry of Health. The major challenge faced by most beneficiaries is hunger and disease. This situation is aggravated by input shortages, shortage of professionals, depleting water tables, transport shortages and threats from pests and diseases.

Keywords: Sustainable Livelihoods. Rural Development, Vulnerability, Non Governmental Organisations

INTRODUCTION

According to World Food Programme (WFP) (2008) about 80 000 people out of 162 167 in Murewa District are currently facing food insecurity. This figure represents about 50 percent of the population. Recent studies by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) indicate that 55 percent of the rural population has no livestock to sale in times of need. Most people rely on casual labour, which is agriculturally based where people are paid in cash or kind. Thus during drought periods it becomes difficult to find piece works and hence incomes are low (OXFAM, 2006). Thus, their purchasing power is limited making most of the people unable to afford cereals such as maize, sorghum and millet.

However, the degree of vulnerability among people varies according to wealth, power relations and access to the market. The socio-economic and political environment in Zimbabwe has implications for food access by the disadvantaged members of society who lack financial resources and social capital to survive (Chambers, 1993).

The food security issue is being highly controlled by the government yet the government does not have adequate resources. Therefore the government needs to work in partnership with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or monitor their work in order to ensure that food security is restored

NGOs have a reputation for facilitating development in rural areas. In developing countries, where there is a general belief that the rural populations will benefit if resources are channelled through projects (Alix, 1998).

One of the greatest challenges to aid agencies and governments in developing countries is food insecurity particularly in those areas which are agriculturally marginalized. NGOs of various types and sizes emerging throughout Zimbabwe with a concern of food security now constitute a promising third sector. Over the last decade the NGO movement has matured and gained momentum however with mixed support from government. NGOs have quickly moved to centre stage in food security circles. The study investigated the role of NGOs in poverty alleviation in Murewa with reference to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in an agriculturally marginal Ward 28 (Mabika) Murewa District.

Agriculture is the dominant sector in Zimbabwe contributing 40% of exports, 50% of manufacturing and 70% of employment (Matiza, 1999). This sector therefore carries a heavy burden for food security for the whole nation. The performance of the Zimbabwean economy is directly related to the performance of the agricultural sector.

However, most problems of social and economic development in Zimbabwe occur in the subsistence communal farming areas. These areas directly support the majority of the national population, yet they are characterized by low levels of agricultural productivity. Moreso, agriculture's contribution is compromised by the country's variability and unpredictable nature of climate. Natural calamities like El Nino induced droughts affecting most of Southern Africa have led to low agricultural productivity thus increasing food insecurity in Zimbabwe (Mkandawire, 1993). The eventual elimination of food insecurity is a crucial objective of development (Riddell, 1995). Food insecurity remains a pervasive problem in agriculturally marginal areas of Zimbabwe (Mkandawire, 1993). Levels of food insecurity continue to worsen for urban and rural people in Zimbabwe due to reduced availability of staple cereals and the ever rising cost of living.

CRS was founded in 1943 by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to assist the poor and disadvantaged overseas. CRS mission statement calls for the agency to alleviate human suffering, advance full human development, and foster charity and justice in the world. While CRS seeks to capitalize on its strategic advantage as a faith-based organisation, all of its programmes assist people on the basis of need, regardless of creed, ethnicity or nationality.

Background to the Protecting Vulnerable Livelihoods Programme (PVLV)

PVLV interventions focused on provision of basic agricultural inputs, promotion of innovative agricultural strategies and appropriate post harvest technology, strengthening of household and community level safety nets, and mitigation of the impact of HIV & AIDS on rural and urban livelihoods. The goal of the programme was to reduce hunger and extreme poverty in Zimbabwe. The expected outputs of the projects were:

- I. Food production and yield of vulnerable households increased by 25%.
- II. Economic strengthening opportunities created for 250 groups across participating districts.
- III. Improved and sustainable access to safe water supply and sanitation.

- IV. Improved care and support for 2000 People Living with HIV & AIDS (PLHIV) through quality community Home Based Care (CHBC) and
- V. Community groups empowered to plan, implement and monitor their own development programmes and sustain the gains made through PVLP interventions.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To assess the role played by CRS Protecting Vulnerable Livelihoods Programme, towards improving livelihoods of people in Ward 28 (Mabika) Murewa District.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify CRS Interventions under PVLP in ward 28 of Murewa district.
2. To assess people's access to livelihood assets due to interventions through the programme.
3. To examine the extent to which the programme has reduced vulnerability and improved livelihood outcomes.
4. To provide recommendations on the improvement of livelihood outcomes.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Murewa District has been involved in rural development projects implemented by NGOs for a long time. These NGOs have won a reputation for being able to promote development. Sustainable rural development has proved to be an elusive goal throughout the world. Rural development has been viewed as a strategy to improve both the economic and social life of the rural poor. According to the World Bank (1986, 3) "rural development involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas".

Invariably there is still some homework to be done in the area of NGOs and food security. Knowledge gaps, for example, the unavailability of a research that specifically looks at Murewa whether at district, ward or village level, provide the impetus and rationale for undertaking this study. Inevitably the study shared similarities with other studies that have been done in the past but what differentiates it from the rest is its issue and area specificity. Murewa District is very big. There is no way, even with the best of intentions that one could work in the whole district at once given the time and resource constraints. Apparently, this is one strong reason why the study has been limited to a ward level.

THE STUDY AREA

The Study was carried out in Murewa District ward 28 which is in Mashonaland East. Murewa District is situated 90km from Harare. It is bordered by the following districts Mutoko to the North and Goromonzi to the West. Murewa District like the rest of the province lies within the tropics which experiences tropical continental climate which varies considerably from place to place due to latitudinal variations. Rainfall lies between 720mm to 750mm. There are two distinct seasons which are a cold and dry winter and a hot and wet summer. The most recent population census in Zimbabwe which was carried out in 2002 reflects that Murewa has a total population of 162 167, which constitutes 78 037 males and 84 130 females (C.S.O., 2002). The population of Murewa represent 15% of Mashonaland East population and about 1.4% of the national population. The ward has 1 health facility, 2 primary schools, 1 secondary ordinary level to give a total of 3 schools. The District has 30 wards and approximately 30 villages in each ward. Ward 28 was selected for purposes of this study.

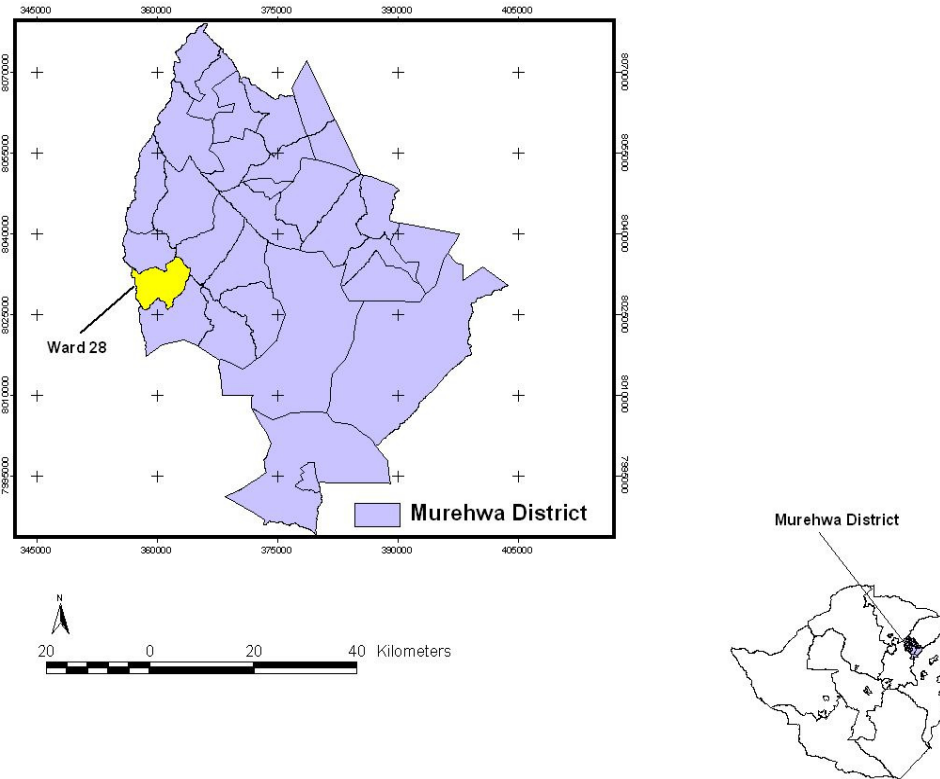


Figure 1. Ward 28 (Mabika) in Murehwa district Zimbabwe

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in the rural district of Murehwa. It covered ward 28. Data was obtained from people through open ended and face to face interviews with the respondents. In order to investigate how they view their plight and what they think can be the best solution to their vulnerability. Structured and semi-structured interviews were used for obtaining information. Household interviews were done using questionnaires.

In all these methods of collecting data, relevant sampling methods were used to qualify different persons for giving data in question. Purposive sampling was used to target, focal point people such as traditional leaders. Member of Parliament and CRS officials. Data was also obtained from the official records of several departments of government. Previous research works, published books as well as reports were used to provide secondary data.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Livelihood Explained

Livelihood according to Ellis (2000) is a means of living i.e. the way in which a living is obtained. Livelihood comprises capabilities assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities that are required for a means of living (Chambers and Cornway, 1992). Sherpard (1998) extended the definition to include as part of livelihood the quality of life and dignity. The livelihood definition directs attention to links between assets and options people have in practice to pursue alternative activities required for survival. Livelihood comprises the following aspects, capabilities, asserts and the context in which these assets are working.

The concept of livelihoods has been under discussion for a considerable time now, but has been a central developmental topic only in the last decade. Chambers and others spearheaded

this sharpening of interests in their seminar papers. The concept of sustainable livelihoods as a systematic set of ideas has only been together only a few years ago (Brand, 2002).

Capabilities refer to the ability of an individual to realize their potential as human beings both in being (i.e. adequate nourishment and free from illness) and doing (i.e. exercise choice, develop skills and experience and participate in social activities) in brief capabilities refer to set alternative being and doing that person can achieve with his or her economic, social and personal characteristics.

Assets are the starting point of the livelihood framework. They are building blocks upon which households are able to undertake production, engage in labour markets and participate in exchanges between households. These assets can be owned, controlled or claimed. There are five different categories of capital which contribute to assets (Chambers and Conway, 1993). These are natural capital refers to natural resources (land, water and forest). Financial capital these are cash stocks that can be accessed (cash saved and credit that can be accessed). Social capital these are social networks and association in which people participate and from which they can derive support to their livelihoods and physical capital refers to assets brought into existence by economic production systems e.g. tools, machines, terracing and irrigation. Human capital refers to labour available to households. It also refers to the education skills and health that people have. Human capital is increased by investing in education and training as well as by skills acquired through pursuing one or more occupations.

Mediating Processes

According to Ellis (2000) Mediating processes can be categorized into two groups, the institutions, social relations and organisation in one group and trends and shocks in the other. The first group consists of social factors that are predominantly endogenous to social norms and structure to which households are part. The second group consists of shocks, which comprise issues of drought, floods, pests, disease and civil wars. Trends refer to things such as technological changes, macro policies, and world economic changes.

Types of Livelihoods

They can basically be divided into two categories the natural resource based and the non-natural resource based. Livelihood comprise of activities such as collection of (firewood, wild fruits or grass) cultivation (flood and non-flood) and livestock rearing. Non natural resource based activities can be in different forms such as remittances, rural trade, rural manufacturing and other transfers.

Scones, (1998) argued that livelihoods strategies could be classified into three major groups, the Agricultural intensification or extensification livelihood diversification and migration.

Conceptual Issues

After many years of food security programmes the situations of food security worldwide remains an indictment of our policies and programmes. Despite the concerted efforts of government and NGOs, many countries, especially in Sub Saharan Africa, are faced with a food security crisis (Sigots, 1999)

Household Strategies for Coping with Food Insecurity in Agriculturally Marginalized Areas

Since the late 1960s the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa have been struggling against severe food shortages and the crisis appears to be worsening rather than improving. A number of factors account for the continent's growing inability to feed its rapidly expanding population. It is at the household level that most food is produced and at which the majority of African

population seeks security and protection against food shortages. When there is a food deficit it tends to begin in villages at households that are most vulnerable and it frequently spreads over a wider geographical area. National and international concern is seldom raised until widespread hunger exists, by which time the villages and households initially affected may be in dire straits (Mudimu and Bernsten, 1989)

NGOs and Food Security

The 1980s and 1990s have seen an increase in the number of NGOs active in relief and development. The rise of NGOs on the international scene is an important phenomenon which has implications for the development prospect for the poor marginalized rural households, for the future of these organisations themselves, and for the wider political economy of which they form a small but a growing part (Edwards, 1998).

NGOs have been conceptualized as something of a panacea for rural household food insecurity problems. Vivian (1994) in Edwards (1998) states that official agencies often see NGOs as a magic bullet which can be fired in any direction and though often without very much evidence, will still find its target.

The Role of NGOs

NGOs have an important role to play in supporting the efforts of poor people to tackle the causes and effects of food insecurity. Throughout the 1980s alongside global and national policies for economy growth there has been an increasing emphasis on the potential role of NGOs in rural food security at households level (Sahley, 1997). A rapidly growing population of overseas aid resources is now flowing through indigenous NGOs in Africa a thriving and mature NGO sector is an important catalyst of self reliant development activities, but can also become a permanent sector in society that influences policy, empowers grassroots organisations, forges links with public and private debates. It can become a permanent sector in society actively striving to create the conditions conducive to more equitable forms of development (Sahley, 1997)

The State's attitude to work with NGOs

An increasingly important issue for NGOs active in food security is their relationship with government. One might expect the state's attitude to NGOs to be the mirror image of the NGOs opinion to the state. It might therefore be expected that those NGOs which remain apolitical attract little adverse attention from the state. Whereas NGOs that are politically critical of the state will face greater likelihood of repression (Fowler, 1990; Lehman, 1990). Bratton (1989) Fowler (1988) conclude that the amount of space allowed to NGOs in any given country is determined first and foremost by political considerations rather than by calculations of the contribution of NGOs to economic and social development .

Justifying NGO Activity in Agriculturally Marginal Areas

Weak government presence in rural areas coupled with a broadly positive attitude towards NGOs gives considerable latitude in developing their programmes into food security in linking with government services where there is clear perceived advantage. The high incidence of rural poverty and food insecurity in Zimbabwe, together with weak government capacity to implement development initiatives undoubtedly provides fertile ground for NGOs. In rural areas it is estimated that at least 55% of households live in poverty. In many years between 25% and 60% of farming families fail to produce sufficient food for their own basic requirements. This is the context in which NGOs operate in Zimbabwe (Riddell, 1995)

NGOs in Zimbabwe

NGOs in Zimbabwe can be broadly defined by these constitutional mandates. According to Moyo and Makumbe (2000) Local and national level NGOs in Zimbabwe encompass teacher's associations, youth and women's groups, church affiliated welfare organisations, farmer's groups, village associations, burial and credit societies, advocacy and research institutions, human rights associations, rural development institutions and cultural groups.

National NGOs operate at 3 levels, those operating across the whole country such as CRS, provincial level such as ORAP and local level, mainly community organisation such as ENDA and ZERO.

Riddwell (1995) notes that little is known about the overall impact of NGOs in ensuring food security, either within government circles or within the NGO world itself. According to the umbrella organization National Association of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGO) in 1988 there were over 50 international NGOs operating in the country. The greatest concentration of the NGOs is rural areas which tend to be economically marginalized and weakly serviced by government in terms of education, health and infrastructure.

Africa's food situation as at the end of 2001

The F.A.O (2001) report states the situation of food security in Africa at the end of 2001. In Southern Africa, Zambia had a sharp reduced cereal crop production. Production of maize, the country's staple, was adversely affected by excessive rains and floods as well as dry weather in southern parts. Food difficulties were being experienced by rural communities which gathered poor crop production and also by vulnerable urban households whose access to food had been severely curtailed by the high prices. The government had appealed for international food assistance for almost 2 million affected people in the 42 districts, which were declared to be in the state of emergency (F.A.O, 2001).

In Mozambique the food supply situation was satisfactorily as at 2001, however serious food difficulties were being experienced in Southern provinces affected by prolonged dry weather during the growing season. Severe floods affected the provinces, and coping mechanisms of households had been virtually exhausted. A vulnerability assessment carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP) indicated that about 1 million people were in need of emergency food aid.

In East Africa, the food situation was more or less the same as in Southern Africa. Somalia's food situation was also rapidly reduced due to drought. The heavy rains in Ethiopia also caused an overflow of rivers in Southern Somalia displacing large numbers of people, aggravating the already serious food supplies situation. West Africa, the crop assessments missions in the Sahel regions indicated relatively good harvests. However, parts of West Africa like Guinea and Liberia also faced some food shortages.

Zimbabwe's Food Situation

Zimbabwe has experienced a tight food supply situation as a result of reduced cereal production and general economic decline. The level of food insecurity continues to worsen for both urban and rural population due to reduced availability of staple cereals and the ever rising cost of living. Household food stocks normally run low as the hunger season (September to February begins).

The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) estimated a total of 3.3 million food insecure rural people from July to September 2005 (FEWS NET,2005). A shortage, of agricultural inputs and poor rainfall dampens production prospects for

agriculture. At the end of 2004 – 2005 agriculture season, the late onset of rains and shortages of seeds on the part of the 2004–2005 agriculture seasons meant that major crops were planted very late. Planting of major crops and grain predominantly took place from late November to Mid December 2004. The reproductive stages of this crop coincided with a devastating prolonged dry spell that stressed the crop from the end of January to about mid February 2005, as a result the significant proportion of the crop did not produce much.

High maize seed prices made it extremely difficult for farmers to procure the seed they needed. The deaths of drought animals in the country during a prolonged 2005 dry season have further reduced the tillage capacity in these areas. Considerable progress has been made in procuring maize from outside the country by the government, the private sector and the humanitarian community so as to feed the hungry community.

The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) continues to be the major source of maize purchased in most rural districts followed by the open market. However, the GMB supplies remain inadequate and the availability of other foods is generally poor because rural markets are poorly developed and their function has been greatly weakened by the general economic decline in the country. The poor 2004–2005 rainfall season could also not support good vegetation in most parts of the country and because of the rather late onset of the 2005–2006 rainfall season, dry conditions persisted for a larger period than normal. This has however, resulted in critical grazing shortages, which have led to the death of cattle. Not only have the cattle losses deprived a significant number of rural household of their drought power at the time when cattle are needed for preparing the land, they also increased the vulnerability of the affected households to poverty and food insecurity.

The Old Paradigm

There have been developments in development circles. New development paradigms are emerging and are taking prominence. Old development paradigms are proving misfits in the new era especially in developing countries. In the old paradigm, rural development is viewed in a modernization fashion. According to Shepard, (1998) development was a result of three basic processes which are:

- a. Capital investment which results in productivity increase
- b. Application of science to production and services
- c. The emergence of national states and large political and economic organizations.

Development was equated to material prosperity of the Western society (Shepard; 1998). It focused on growth in production and expansion of market economy. In recent years there is now a paradigm shift to sustainable development.

The Livelihood Framework Approach

The livelihood framework approach emerged as a result of criticism of approaches by policy makers that provide a blue print or preconceived plan for improving the conditions of living for poor people (Herbinck and Bourdillion, 2001). The approach recognizes that livelihoods are essentially contextual and can only be captured in particular contexts. The approach thus helps in understanding how households derive their livelihoods by drawing on their capabilities and assets to develop livelihood strategies composed of a range of activities.

Livelihood strategies are pursued to meet desirable livelihood outcomes. Desired livelihood outcomes include more incomes, increased well being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security, improved social equity and improved sustainability of natural resources (Neefjes, 2000).

Livelihood strategies are closely linked to livelihood resources. Livelihood resources are defined as the vital capitals that one needs to achieve a sustainable livelihood (Herbinck and Bourdillion, 2001). These include human capital, natural capital, physical capital, financial and social capital. Therefore, livelihoods can only be understood by mapping out the various actors and the networks and social relationships between them. These actors pursue a variety of identities, interests and needs, shaping in turn the particular strategies they devise to improve their conditions of living and their well being. These strategies are invariably multiple, implying both that there are a variety of ways to sustain a livelihood and that people undertake manifold activities to obtain food, shelter money and identity.

Sustainable Livelihoods

This refers to continuity in long term of the capacity of a system to reproduce itself. In the context of ecosystem it refers to biomass and species diversity. With reference to human needs it is sustaining output available and to keep it up or increase its contribution to human welfare and well-being. In development sustainability should result among other things in equity, democracy and social justice along side economic development. It also incorporates a moral obligation on the part of the existing generation where their way of living should not compromise standard of future through environmental depletion. The most important and fundamental element of sustainable livelihood is seeing the weaker members of the society improving their situation through accessing improved social services and enabling them to acquire assets (Clark, 1991; International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, 1996). In agriculture, sustainability is principally achieving a steady rise in farm productivity overtime. It also involves non use of chemicals.

Sustainable livelihood also refers to the maintenance and enhancement of secure ownership of and access to assets resources and income as well as ensuring adequate stocks of food and cash to meet basic needs. With regard to the poor and vulnerable groups, a sustainable livelihood is regarded as a double edged sword in that it both addresses development and sustainable resources management. It is a broad goal for poverty eradication strategy where efforts are focused directly on the poor and the marginalized. The essence of sustainable livelihoods is that it is people centred. It works effectively by starting with the people, analysing their livelihoods and see how these can be changed. People who are the beneficiaries of the development initiative should be involved and their views respected (Stern, 2002). There is great need to promote the agenda of the poor. External support should work to support people in a way that is congruent with their current livelihood strategy (DFID, 1999)

A holistic approach taken by the sustainable livelihood approach recognizes participation policy tools and highlights the linkages between livelihoods systems at micro level and macro level policy that affect these livelihoods. People's livelihoods are dynamic. They vary with gender age, ethnicity and geographical location. This then calls for shaping institutions according to the needs and circumstances of the beneficiaries.

The Conceptual Framework of Sustainable Livelihoods

The concept emerged at an international conference, (Brundtland Commission in 1987). The concept focused on how man and woman can utilize assets portfolios to improve their livelihoods. It came as a growing realization that the past decades had yielded limited success in elimination of poverty. The main premise of this new development paradigm is poverty elimination. The emphasis is on the reduction of poverty, understanding the lives of the poor and the importance of their institution to their lives. Its overriding priority should be addressing human needs, particularly those of the world's poor (Moyo et.al, 1991)

Community based institutions and processes are a paramount feature of the sustainable livelihoods approach and are strongly emphasized.

One conspicuous feature of sustainable livelihoods is its enormous variability can be noticed over time, locality and region as well as population and families (Brand, 2002) a good example is shown in Mazvihwa in Zvishavane. The community is different from other communal areas such as Hurungwe, Honde Valley and Mangwende that are in regions III, II, I respectively. There is also considerable variability within the Mazvihwa villages themselves. The Murowa ward has villages located in areas of somewhat better agricultural potential than other villages because it receives generally higher precipitation and soils are more fertile (Brand, 2002). Rural poor are not uniform nor are their strategies that even in the same locality (Chambers, 1983) differences can also be seen in the ownership of land.

Their main concern is about the effectiveness of development activities. All the people especially the rural poor should enjoy the benefits of development. This is a departure from the traditional focus of government and donor agencies of growth led development policies especially those championed by the trickle down economic theories. These approaches failed to check and change the conditions of poverty even though government and donor organizations invested huge sums of money and energy. Poverty remained pervasive and even increased and basic material need remained out of reach of the majority of people (GTZ, 1987) This led to heavy criticisms on the effectiveness and utility of these conventional development modes particularly their failure to address the needs of the poor especially the rural poor.

The major thrust and the benchmark success of a project is measured by its share of contribution to the improvement in people's livelihoods. This is a major shift from the traditional focus on provision of infrastructure and facilities such as roads and clinics to a more people focused development orientation. The new thrust realized that many activities are not sustainable and isolated sectoral initiatives have limited success in elimination of poverty. Success can only be achieved if there is good understanding of the household economy and link it to the policy context (Chambers, 1993).

This gave birth to a new development approach of sustainable livelihoods where a sustainable livelihood has the following features.

- a. Ability to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses.
- b. Economic effectiveness or use of minimal inputs to generate a given output.
- c. Ecological integrity, ensuring that livelihood activities do not irreversibly degrade natural resource within a given ecosystem.
- d. Social equity, which suggests that promotion of livelihood opportunity for one group does not effectively foreclose option. For other groups or undermine livelihoods of option open to others.
- e. Maintain the long term productivity of natural resources.

The starting point in the sustainable livelihoods approach is the identification and analysis of factors causing poverty in a particular group i.e. is it lack of resources, inputs, drought power, market facilities etc this is followed by formulation of proposals to attack poverty. It is very vital that the poor should be involved and be major players in the process of poverty alleviation and possibly its final elimination.

Another important feature of sustainable livelihoods is the issue of agenda setting. The poor should be at the centre of this process. They should be given chance to identify projects that are of importance to the poverty alleviation process as defined by the poor this will ensure

commitment in terms of implementation. The community should be afforded a chance to choose projects or activities that directly address their needs even though these needs vary from community to community. If the community is allowed to choose projects of their priority and they really feel that it addresses their day to day lives they are willing to contribute financially and in some cases their contribution is bigger than the projects fixed contribution per type of project. It is generally perceived that rural people's knowledge is a grossly under-utilized national resource. Their expertise represents the largest body of knowledge that has not yet been mobilized for national development. This body of knowledge can be used to accelerate and even amplify development initiatives.

Strongly associated with this approach is the issue of community participation, the poor are given the sole responsibility of solving their own problems. Improving their access to resources especially land, skills, services with necessary inputs they can achieve this. It is also important that the poor are found heavily participating in the political and decision making processes. Emphasis is also on the utilization and creation of socio-economic relationships within the mass of the poor population and between this mass and the national socio-economic systems. This can be achieved by building confidence improving access to resources and meaningful participation in decision making process. Meaningful participation can be achieved by organizing community level workshops. These are appropriate platform for discussion of issues concerning the poor. It affords them a greater opportunity to share knowledge among community members as well as between community members and supportive institutional staff

This can also allow gender specific issues to be discussed without bias (Moyo, 1996).

Practical Experience in Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

The new development approach of sustainable livelihoods has been applied all over the world and has resulted in varied results. In Zimbabwe the approach has been heavily over shadowed by the convectional development approaches. It has not been given the prominence that it deserves. It has been applied more on experimental basis than as a major development strategy aimed at alleviating the conditions of the poor. In the small pockets that it has been applied it has registered some success, for example the rehabilitation of Shakashe-Pokoteke catchment area, the area was suffering from overgrazing and the rivers were fast being siltated. An LUCN project to rehabilitate the catchment area was introduced after fruitful discussion with the local people. The local leadership which included the chiefs and the councillors were heavily involved in the formulation and implementation of the project. The rehabilitation of the catchment area was done with success. However, the project died soon after the withdrawal of the IUCN because of friction generated between AZTREC the local non-governmental organisation and the traditional leadership.

In Malawi there are some shining examples of sustainable livelihoods programmes. The approach managed to integrate sectoral focal points within one framework for policy analysis and change. Formerly policies were focused on national agricultural production but none of the present food security is linked to natural resource management and entrepreneurship, with a conscious shift to local realities. There was a realization that smallholding do not produce sufficient maize quantities. A growth strategy was therefore crafted with particular emphasis on household food security and great success was recorded (UNDP 1999).

In Zambia an ODA supported programme of integrated rural development evolved through the process of sustainable livelihoods the process of sustainable livelihoods by decentralizing institutions an approach and procedure around at empowering local authorities (UNDP, 1999).

The learning process of the sustainable livelihoods was utilized by the Oxfam supported Vatenga project in Burkina Faso. The project followed two failures of multimillion-dollar soil conservation projects and the small-scale attempt to introduce agro-forestry methods. The highly successful water harvesting approach was finally evolved mainly from indigenous technology in a way that met the priorities of people.

Constraints of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

A number of constraints have been encountered in the implementation of this new approach. There are problems in undertaking detailed analysis of livelihood across the nation or region because of the heterogeneity nature of livelihood. It is also difficult to link micro realities and macro policies. Difficulties have also been encountered in unpacking and understanding the structures and processes involved in rural communities because of the variability nature of these communities. Livelihoods take different forms and direction according to time and location.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

More than half (52%) of the respondents were males. The majority (60%) of the respondents were between 21 and 60 years. This age group is the economically active group, which forms the core of the labour force. However the level of activity is also affected by other factors such as health status, education and access to production assets

The marital status of the respondents showed that there is a large number of respondents who are married 58%. The size of households varied from household to household from the sample, ranging from 1-8 members. 3 is the average household size. Since agriculture is subsistence household size influences production because the family unit is the labour force. However a larger family size also entails more mouths to feed.

CRS Projects under PVLP in Ward 28

Target Groups

The programme targeted the most vulnerable groups in Ward 28. This was done using the Participatory Rural Appraisal Approach. This helped to minimize inclusion and exclusion errors. The process led to the identification of five categories of beneficiaries i.e. chronically ill and poor, disabled, poor and able (no resources) medium and better-off.

Intervention programmes were conservation farming, small livestock support, and community home based care, nutritional gardens, labour support systems, farmer field schools. Most of the respondents were in the conservation farming intervention (65%). whilst small livestock support mainly targeting orphans had 10% of the sample population.

Relevance, Appropriateness and Adequacy of Interventions

Seed-Vouchers and Fairs (SVF)

The intervention improved access to inputs by vulnerable groups. 90% of the respondents said the intervention was inadequate mainly because of the need to replant when the first planting fails due to erratic rains. Farmers preferred shorter season varieties than the later maturing SC513 that was distributed. This is so because of the climatic change that has now resulted in a shorter rainy season.

Conservation Farming (CF)

Is a package based on three key principles which are

- I. Reduced soil disturbance
- II. Provision of soil cover
- III. Use of crop rotation.

It is centred on the use of planting basins. Beneficiaries are required to dig three thousand basins which have to be filled with manure. It is the most popular intervention. A number of constraints are addressed which are

- a. Lack of draught power – with the use of hoes in the preparation of planting stations, those without draught power could prepare their fields in advance and plant on time.
- b. Poor soils – the use of mulch, cow manure and biomass and anthill soil on planting basins result in improved soil fertility and structure, avoided wastage of manure, and reduced erosion.
- c. Persistent droughts and low rainfall are common in Murewa hence basins allow harvesting of rainwater and therefore amplify the effect of rains.

The technology is appropriate to all wealth categories of farmers. However it is inappropriate for the very old and the chronically ill who cannot cope with the physical demands.

Nutrition Gardens (NG)

NGs have stepped up horticultural activities, which form part of the backbone for the livelihoods of many rural households in terms of household nutrition and income generation. The inclusion of training as part of the package has further enhanced the knowledge and skill base of beneficiaries. Introduced technologies such as drip kits and treadle pumps have lessened the burden of carrying water with buckets and created time for other household chores. The technologies allow efficient and effective use of water.

Small Livestock Support Programme (SLSP)

The target group for this intervention is Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). This intervention came at a time when most vulnerable households had a thin asset base and could not accumulate any more assets as their poverty deepened due to the socio-economic challenges faced in the country. The programme enabled the OVC to access young breeding stock.

Internal Savings and Lending (IS&L)

20% of the respondents were involved in the intervention. Groups were trained on how to cushion themselves against inflation. It has become a reliable local institution that offers loans, encourages entrepreneurship and increases community members' asset bases.

Community Home-Based Care (CHBC)

The contents of CHBC kits were cited as appropriate to address most hygienic and medical needs of clients. The contents of the client kit have resulted in improved hygiene for the sick and enabled the caregiver to provide services safely and to maintain a cleaner home environment. However, the client kit needs frequent and timely replenishment, especially the gloves. Medicines accessed in the clinic kit have gone a long way in caring minor ailments such as oral thrush wounds and the reduction of pain. The support provided by secondary caregivers has helped primary caregivers cope with the daily responsibility of looking after the chronically ill. Primary care givers knowledge and skills have been constantly enhanced through the provision of information and education, as well as practical demonstrations of processes.

Farmer Field Schools (FFS)

This is an effective strategy for generation and dissemination of information and knowledge. It empowers communities to identify and prioritize their own problems and find solutions to these problems through discovery learning studies, with technical backstopping from AREX and CTD. This has become a source of farmer support during a time when the public agricultural extension service providers are facing many challenges in reaching out to farmers effectively.

The beneficiaries requested for follow-up training. They also indicated that the inputs provided have been inadequate, especially for those groups that wish to expand production. Each group consists of thirty members. Ward 28 has eight groups making a total of two hundred and forty beneficiaries.

Livelihood Assessment

The assessment sought to establish the existing livelihoods situation in communities visited, the constraints encountered, and how people cope with them. The major livelihood activities in ward 28 (Mabika) are dryland cropping, horticulture, cross boarder trade, petty trading (buying goods in town for resale in rural areas). Casual labour and beer brewing and formal employment. The elderly mainly rely on remittances. Despite being in Natural Farming Region (NFR) II b over the past five years rainfall has been erratic thus affecting the quality and quantity of yields. This has greatly affected the effectiveness of the program.

Livelihood Assets

Most households owned a wide variety of agricultural assets, as agriculture is the main source of livelihood. Most households owned homes, homes and land. Land was not a constraint and its ownership per household ranged from 0,25ha to 6ha. Water is a major constraint to livelihoods particularly with the climatic change, which has resulted in shifts of seasons. Production assets are primitive because of lack of financial resources to purchase tractors and combined harvesters. This tends to limit production to subsistence farming. Most respondents own ploughs (23%), cultivators and scotch carts these help in increasing efficiency and effectiveness of agricultural interventions such as input farming For the chronically ill a labour voucher ensures that they are able to cultivate crops, with the assistance of other villagers who are paid for their services through the labour voucher. Cattle are important for draught power for the rural community of ward 28 (Mabika). Only 32% of the population under study own cattle thus indicating that they have less access to cattle as livelihood assets. In order to reduce this constraint, CRS through the small livestock support programme (SLSP) has given out livestock vouchers. However this intervention has only benefited 11% of the population since its target group is limited to orphans only.

Input Farming

Conservation farming has resulted in respondents receiving inputs in the form of maize seed. The condition is that beneficiaries have to dig 3000 basins this is a cost effective intervention since it uses manure. The basins ensure that there is the optimisation of moisture.

Programme Achievements

Efficiency and Effectiveness of Interventions

Results from the study show that 90 % of the respondents received agricultural inputs late in the season, with some saying that they did not receive the full package (e.g. only fertilizer).

The late delivery of inputs affected timeliness in planting; the area planted and, ultimately, yields. The low and erratic rainfall received in the past three seasons further negatively affected yields. On verifying with CTDT staff the researcher established that late delivery of inputs was not as widespread as reported by beneficiaries. Programme staff disbursed inputs when the season was imminent, fearing that with early delivery, farmers could sell some of the inputs and even consume some of the seeds.

Livestock Changes

Livestock ownership has increased; goats have increased slightly from 48 to 56 whilst cattle ownership increased significantly from 22 to 86. The cattle increase has been influenced by the small livestock support programme cattle increase, saw an increase in draught power which may also explain an increase in the average yield of mainly maize by the respondents. Ownership of livestock increases livelihood outcomes in that during drought periods people can sell their livestock hence reducing vulnerability

Health Status of Respondents

Amongst the population, there were 20% chronically ill, 7% disabled. The chronically ill and the disabled benefited from herbal gardens, labour support system, and community home-based care. Thus the herbal gardens improved the nutrition of the chronically ill and the disabled through increased availability of a variety of vegetables, beans, peas, carrots and tomatoes. The labour support system was provided to work in the herbal gardens and fields of the disabled and the sick which resulted in an increase of maize from an average of 250kgs to 320kgs, round nuts from 20 to 30kgs and groundnuts 15 to 20kgs. Water provision was improved as the implementing partner increased access to clean water by drilling 14 boreholes and 54 latrine toilets especially in areas with chronically ill people. Thus, reducing the vulnerability of people to diseases such as cholera, dysentery and typhoid.

Average Crop Output

Maize yields have increased significantly from an average of 300kgs to 500kgs. This could be attributed to the Farmer Field School (FFS). The FFS consists of a group of 30 farmers who are given adequate inputs. Extension services are also offered by the implementing partner in collaboration with the Agricultural Extension officers.

Average Income

Generally the interventions have led to an increase in yields this has subsequently resulted in an increase in income. This means that households are now able to send their children to school, buy food and even to take care of their medical expenses. Average incomes of the respondents rose significantly from 235 US dollars to 270 US dollars.

Sustainability

The likelihood of communities continuing with all the interventions on their own is high except for the CHBC, SLSP and SVF interventions, as they need significant periodic cash injections which communities may not be able to meet. Community members provided the labour to establish structures when the interventions started, and they continue to provide all manual labour needed for repairs and maintenance. Strong community-based structures to manage the programmes have been established including water points committees and a community-Based Approach Board has been strengthened. The sustainability of each intervention is covered in greater detail below.

Seed Vouchers and Fairs

Some stakeholders suggested that sustainability could be improved by increasing the quantities allocated to each beneficiary so that surplus grain can be produced and sold to generate income for purchasing their own inputs for the next season. However, because of the dependency on rainfall, which tends to be low and erratic, sustainability may never be realized by using this approach.

Conservation Farming

This intervention can be implemented with minimal or no external support. The training that has been provided in the past three and a half years has equipped the beneficiaries with sufficient knowledge and skills to continue practicing the technology on their own. Most of the required inputs, such as mulch, anthill soil, biomass and labour, are locally available. The lead farmer approach, with technical assistance from AREX, will ensure that the training and monitoring of new CF members would continue. Already there are large numbers of volunteer farmers who are using their own resources but are getting technical support from local lead farmers and AREX. The main motivation for farmers to carry on is that CF has brought tangible benefits of improved yield and soil fertility.

To stop the dependency syndrome from being entrenched and to help ensure sustainability, some beneficiaries from the earlier phase of the CF interventions are being weaned off. In the current season, CTDT has weaned off 25 farmers who had been receiving inputs under the CF intervention in Murewa district. (CRS 2008)

Nutritional Gardens

Beneficiaries indicated that this is a sustainable intervention given that they have always practiced gardening on their own. Threats to sustainability may come in the form of challenges in accessing the pesticides and the seeds of vegetables whose seed cannot be retained. Pesticides and vegetable seed may not be available locally or, if available, may not be affordable to the target groups.

Small Livestock Support Programme

Sales and exchanges can continue, but prices tend to be unaffordable for the vulnerable groups. Ultimately, this facility will benefit those who can afford to buy and those who have something to exchange, such as grain.

Internal Savings & Lending

This was cited as a highly sustainable intervention for the beneficiaries. Loan funds and portfolios that are shared-out amongst members at the end of the cycle are increasingly being diverted towards consumption, thereby enhancing the capacity of households to withstand livelihood shocks. The fact that groups share their products and start again has potential for sustainability in the short to medium term.

Community Home Based Care

Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries interviewed revealed that psychosocial support, which forms the core of CHBC, would be able to continue without any donor support, as it has existed all along. Training of primary caregivers would continue to be provided by those trained. However, they lamented the fact that the provision of medicines may not be sustained in the absence of external support. The aspect of the provision of clinic and client kits may not be sustainable as communities do not have funds needed to purchase and replenish the kits.

Farmer Field School

This intervention is sustainable in the absence of external support, in as far as the exchange of information, knowledge and skills are concerned. It, however needs the support of AREX. Shortages of inputs may threaten the viability of the intervention.

Livelihood Activities

Food shortage is experienced, with low and poorly distributed rainfall being the major cause. Other factors contributing to low crop production include low soil fertility and shortages of inputs (fertilizer, seed, pesticides).

Maize is the preferred grain crop, but is frequently written-off due to droughts. In most seasons, farmers have to re-plant. Small grains (pear/millet, finger millet, sorghum) which can better withstand drought conditions and offer more stable yields in the long term. Besides being less preferred as staple diet crops, small grains have higher labour demands especially during harvesting and is pounding the grain into meal.

Over the years CRS with the assistance of World Food Programme (WFP) has provided targeted food aid in Murewa District. However due to resource constraints, such schemes have not been able to cover all deserving communities.

On the other hand livestock rearing has been hampered by frequent outbreaks of diseases. The livestock species owned by most households are cattle, chickens and goats. In cattle, the common diseases experienced are foot and mouth, heart water, quarter evil, blackleg, botulism, anthrax, lumpy skin. Amongst chickens, diseases reported include fowl pox, fowl typhoid, coccidiosis and Newcastle disease. Among goats, the major disease has been pulpy kidney.

In addition to water being inadequate for successful cropping, it is also inadequate for livestock watering and horticulture. Government through the District Development Fund (DDF) has sunk 14 boreholes. However, most of the boreholes have broken down due to inadequate maintenance and shortages of spares. Drinking water for both people and livestock is particularly short a few months before the onset of the rains.

With the deterioration of socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe, remittances by family members who have relocated to other countries have become a major source of sustenance for most household.

CONCLUSION

The study sought to evaluate the impact of the main interventions implemented by the PVLV in Murewa ward 28 Zimbabwe. The study reviewed the targeting criteria and examined programme achievements and interventions in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, sustainability and stakeholder participation. The evaluation also explored the performance of interventions against community perceptions. The major livelihood activity in ward 28 Murewa District is agriculture, low and erratic rainfall is the biggest challenge faced by the community. Therefore there is need to improve water availability as a key to unlocking development. Another facilitating factor is the existence of community-based structures to monitor and manage interventions as well as technical support from AREX and Community Development Trust which is the implementing partner.

The major challenge faced by most beneficiaries is hunger and disease. This situation is aggravated by input shortages, shortage of professionals, depleting water tables, transport shortages and threats from pests and diseases.

Some specific issues emerging from the assessment include:

1. The majority of people in Ward 28 are food insecure and have never been able to harvest enough grains to meet home consumption needs
2. In the face of food shortages, some negative livelihood coping strategies identified include prostitution, selling assets and theft from neighbours. Worryingly one way Apostolic Faith Followers cope with food shortages is to marry off daughters to raise income to meet food needs.
3. In Murewa government structures are present but they are ineffective due to resource limitations.
4. PVL has made a significant impact on the target communities' livelihoods. The programme is widely appreciated by beneficiaries of significance is that other community members who were not provided with inputs are implementing components of the programme on their own particularly CF. A lot of community capacity has been built and communities are now able to manage most interventions on their own. PVL has established and in some cases improved people's lives through CF and NGs.
5. This study has provided a platform for learning by different stakeholders at different levels and has identified challenges for consideration in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the interventions implemented have been relevant and made a positive impact amongst beneficiary households, their community impact has been modest as few people benefited in relation to the number of people who actually meet the targeting criteria. It is recommended that the programme consolidates by extending interventions to cover other deserving beneficiaries. Specific Recommendations are outlined below

It is suggested that cash crops such as sunflower and soya beans be considered instead of food crops, as maize and other cereals have been frequently written off due to droughts. Households could achieve better food security through using the proceeds from the sale of cash crops to procure food. Labour vouchers should be considered with this proposal, as there is a general tendency amongst vulnerable households to shun labour-intensive cash crops (Sibanda et al, 2007). Over the last few seasons, Zimbabwe has experienced crippling input shortages that have contributed to depressed yields. Each year, a significant proportion of farmers are forced to replant due to erratic rains experienced in early stages of the season. A number of them fail to do so, as seed may either not be available or is too costly.

The restocking of small livestock (goats, poultry) needs to be intensified to cover more of those who despite meeting the criteria, have not yet been covered. The quantities provided per beneficiaries needs to be increased for increased impact. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation for the livestock pass on scheme is also important. There is need to promote small dam rehabilitation and nutrition gardens which are fenced and have an efficient water pumping system in order to address the problem of water nutrition gardens and to reduce environmental degradation from cutting poles and grass.

The assessment noted that many boreholes constructed through government efforts have broken down due to inadequate maintenance or shortage of spares. Borehole rehabilitation should be considered as an additional activity under the WATSAN intervention, in collaboration with the District Development Fund and other stakeholders.

Linkages between CTDT and CRS need to be developed or strengthened. Mobility of Implementing Partner (IP) staff has been a major challenge. It will be more favourable if CRS considers vehicle requests from CTDT. Monitoring and evaluation is lacking at IP level. CRS should take the lead in developing a framework for the periodic capture of specific programme parameters and possibly develop a database for easy retrieval of data.

The majority of the interventions are of a long-term nature and beneficiaries cannot easily meet the repair and maintenance costs associated with them. It is suggested that a lobbying and advocacy unit be set up to build capacity among communities to request other development partners including government to provide more funding for infrastructure.

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