



Cooperative Gardens and Rural Development the Case of Help German in Gutu Ward 25 Zimbabwe

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Abstract. The study assesses the contributions of cooperative gardens brought by Help German in the process of reducing vulnerability and enhancing rural development through putting the poor as their first target in the community. The research was conducted in ward 25 of Gutu District which is situated in Masvingo Province. Rushwaya community has experienced severe droughts due to erratic rainfalls being received in the area as a result of climate change. In a bid to reduce vulnerability of such communities to further disasters, NGOs like Help German came in to help the people. The research pinpoints how the beneficiaries benefited from participating in the program and indicates how Help German helped the local people in improving their livelihoods. The researcher used both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to solicit information related to the study. Questionnaires and interviews were administered to the respondents by the researcher. Focus group discussions and observation were also used to collect data from the respondents. Stratified random sampling and simple random sampling were used as sampling procedures to select respondent a sample of 30 respondents was obtained representing a population of 15 villages participating in the project. The researcher concluded that Cooperative Gardens have greatly improved the standards of living of Rushwaya community. The community's capitals have been improved through the livelihoods brought by Help German which are cooperative gardens, livestock production and rehabilitation projects. The researcher recommends that for the programme to be sustainable a lot has to be done on water harvesting because the community is still receiving inadequate rainfall for gardening.

Keywords: Cooperative Gardens, Non-Governmental Organisations, Sustainable Livelihoods, Rural Development

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Food insecurity is becoming the order of the day in most rural areas of the world. According to World Bank (2000) 80% of the rural people are currently facing food insecurity and are failing to cope with harsh climatic changes to secure their livelihoods. Recent studies by the Zimbabwe Vulnerable Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) indicate that, 55% of the rural population has no livestock to sale in times of vulnerability, hence vulnerable to food insecurity. Climate change is becoming the main cause of food insecurity leading to poverty especially in most rural areas of the world. Otto (1993) noted that, the problems of poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation are interlinked and being caused mainly by climate change. WFP (2008) noted that, increased temperatures are adding to water problems causing additional loss of moisture from soil. It estimates that, by 2020 between 75 and 250 million people are likely to be exposed to increased water stress and that, rain fed agriculture yields could be reduced up to 50%; hence, food insecurity is becoming unbearable in most rural areas of the world. FAO (2002) noted that, most common and serious results of climate change are chronic food insecurity and 27% of the total population in Africa is undernourished. In a bid to reduce the effects of climate change, coping strategies are being embarked on in most rural areas of the world so as to reduce food insecurity one of them are cooperative gardens. Cooperative gardens are nothing new, although it often feels as if the concept just fell off the turnip truck; they existed even before civilization as shared gardens.

Cooperative gardens according to Dunn (1979) have existed since the beginning of cities as evidenced during the archeological digs showing that there were some form of shared gardens in most cities and rural areas from 1700 century until the present time. Cooperative gardens have been used in American cities since the 1890s, with the first gardens appearing in Detroit (Community gardening toolkit 2003). According to Eade (2000) they started in United Kingdom based much in urban areas. World Bank (2000) noted that, gardening can enhance food security in several ways most importantly through direct access to a diversity of nutritionally-rich foods, increased purchasing power from savings of food bills and income from sales of garden products and fall-back food provision during

seasonal lean periods. Not only rural communities are benefiting from these cooperative gardens, there are also becoming an increasingly important source of food and income for poor households in peri-urban and urban areas (Becker 2002). According to WFP (2008) successful field projects have been implemented in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Niger and Africa just to mention but a few. These gardens have an established tradition and offer great potential for improving household food security and alleviating micronutrient deficiencies.

After realizing that shared gardens were contributing much to the economy and social lives of the past, NGOs adopted the idea of these cooperative gardens in 1945 so as to reduce vulnerability of the rural people to poverty. The idea was adopted to reduce the effects of climate change and poverty as poverty eradication has proven to be an extremely complex task for both governments and nongovernmental organizations (World Bank 2004). According to Eade (2000) it became better understood later that, the causes of poverty and vulnerability were structural and not natural hence, alternatives by NGOs were adopted to reduce the results of food insecurity at a household level. Uganda through the establishment of new partnership with Ugandan NGOs and community based organizations and the creation of numerous income generating activities at the grassroots, helped poor communities to improve their livelihoods (WFP 2008). In Russia 277 000 gardens were implemented and operating under the responsibility of NGOs so as to improve income levels of the rural dwellers, specifically participants of economy (Marsh 1998).

To reduce the effects of poverty, most development assistance organizations are emerging to address the interlinked problems of poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation caused by climate change (Otto 1993). In particular; NGOs are a dynamic, diverse group of organizations operating at a local, national and international levels fighting against poverty. According to IFAD (2001) since the mid 1970s, the NGO sector in both developed and developing countries has experienced exponential growth with estimates of over 15% of overseas development aid channeling funds to NGOs. There are an estimated 6000 to 30 000 national NGOs in developing countries alone, while the number of community based organizations in the developing world number in hundreds of

thousands (United Nations 1994) .According to Bebbington and Riddell (1993) NGOs are said to be key players in international development and they became more influential advocates for democracy and social justice, important part of civil society coalitions and play an essential role in humanitarian responses. Otto (1993) noted that NGOs activities encompass relief and humanitarian aid for refugees, displaced persons, economic and rural development programs, natural resources and conservation projects, public health interventions and many others. NGOs of various types and sizes emerged throughout Zimbabwe with a concern of food security.

As development assistance has come under greater scrutiny by NGOs which can be traced back to the period just after world war 2 during the development era launched by President Truman in 1949, their activities are becoming of great importance in most rural areas of the world (Eade 2000) . These include Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, Care just to mention but a few. The major concern of these NGOs is to reduce food insecurity by providing people with necessities (Marsh 1998). Chambers (1997) noted that, NGOs in developing countries emerged after realizing that governments are doing little to promote rural livelihoods and reduce food insecurity. One of the NGOs activities are cooperative 'gardens being implemented especially in rural areas to improve rural livelihoods and increase income levels of the people through selling products from the gardens.

NGOs are bringing resilient strategies which go hand in glove with the major livelihood strategy such as cooperative garden which was implemented by Help German in Rushwaya village. The garden was established by Help German and inputs like seeds, fertilizers, cans, fencing wire were provided to the participants by the organization. Therefore, the main focus of this research is to assess the contribution of cooperative garden implemented by Help German in Rushwaya village to rural livelihoods and observing their incomes increased or not.

AIM OF THE STUDY

To assess the contributions of cooperative gardens brought by Help German in livelihood development ward 25 Gutu District.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To identify rural livelihoods brought by Help German in Ward 25 Gutu District.

To assess if the cooperative gardens have managed to improve livelihood outcomes and reduced vulnerability.

To examine the challenges in the implementation of the programme.

DELINIATION OF THE STUDY AREA

The study was carried out in Gutu District ward 25 which is in Masvingo province. Gutu District is situated 80km west of Masvingo. Gutu District lies within region four where average total annual rainfall ranges from 450-750mm and temperatures are normally high though they vary from place to. Rushwaya cooperative garden is located north of Cheninga primary school, north east of Gutu District from the garden and surrounded by other villages in ward 25. The research was rural focused and basically concerned with activities done by Help German, looking specifically on cooperative gardens done by Help German in Rushwaya village.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

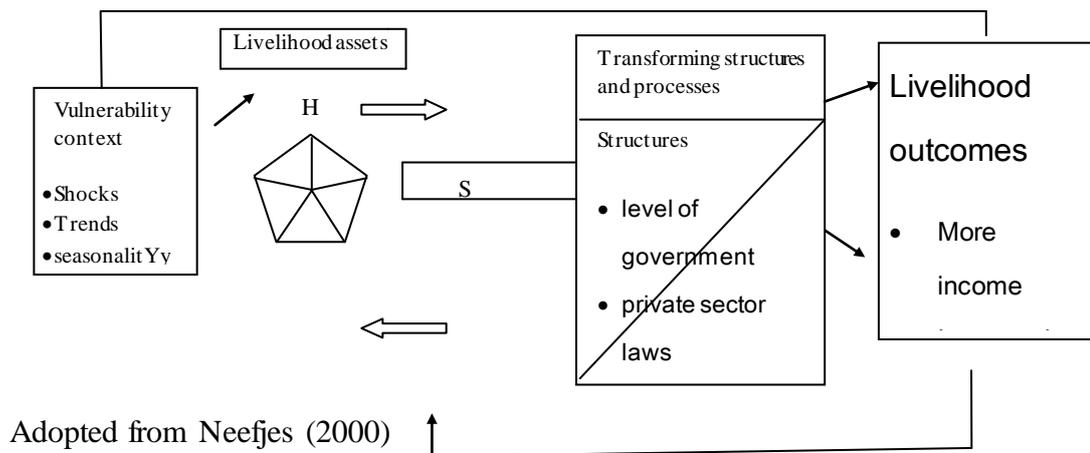
Sustainable Livelihood Framework

Satge et al (2002) conceptualized a framework as a set of ideas that are originated and organized to provide a coherent approach to analyzing and understanding an issue or problem. Livelihood framework examines different elements that contribute to people livelihoods strategies. It goes on to analyze the forces outside the household or community in the external environment affecting them.

Sustainable livelihood framework is an analytical tool that was developed in the 1990s and owes much to the earlier work of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway (Potter et al 2008). The framework aims to help in the understanding and analysis of the livelihoods of poor people and to assist in the identification of appropriate entry points and sequencing of more effective development policy and interventions (Neefjes 2000). Serrat (2008) went on adding that, the

framework identify, facilitates the practical priorities for actions that are based on the views and interests to those concerned. Inquest for solutions to development problems besetting the African continent, the donor community and NGOs are using the sustainable livelihood framework as their analytical tool to achieve their intended goals.

Figure 1 DFID Sustainable Livelihood framework



H represents human capital; the skill, knowledge, ability to labor and good health important to the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies.

P represents physical capital; the basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water, energy and, communication) and the production equipment and means that enable people to pursue livelihoods.

S represents social capital; the social resources (networks, membership of groups, relationships of trust and access to wider institutions of society) upon which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods.

F represents financial capital; the financial resources' which are available to people (whether savings, supplies of credit or regular remittances or pension) and which provide them different livelihood options.

N represents natural capital; the natural resource stocks from which resources flow useless for livelihoods are derived (e.g. land, water, wildlife, biodiversity and environmental resources).

Historical Development of Cooperative Gardens.

Cooperative efforts have occurred throughout history. Since early man cooperated with others to help kill large animals for survival, people have been cooperating to achieve objectives that they could not reach if they acted individually (Cobia 1989). Cooperation has occurred throughout the world. According to Frederick (1997) ancient records show that Babylonians practiced cooperative farming and that the Chinese development savings and loan associations similar to those in use today. According to Mather et al (1998) the largest number of agricultural cooperatives occurred during 1929-30 and at that time USDA recorded 12 000 farmer cooperatives. In North America, clearing land in preparation for the planting of crops required cooperative efforts; hence cooperatives existed since the 18th century.

Cooperative gardens have been used in American cities since the 1890s with the first gardens in Detroit (World Bank 2004). During the initial phase of these gardens, a variety of groups including social and educational reformers were responsible for promoting cooperative gardening (UN 1997). According to Becker (2002) cooperative gardens began as a way to provide land and technical assistance to unemployed workers in the country. They became a way to supplement and expand the domestic food supply and rebuilding social networks and the infrastructure of rural communities. According to Dunn (1979) cooperative gardens existed since the beginning of cities as shown by archeological findings that there was some form of shared gardens. Eade (2000) states that they started in United Kingdom based much in urban areas.

World Bank (2004) indicated that cooperative gardens have been a traditional land use in Europe and the United Kingdom since the early 19th century. Their role was to improve users' health through increased fresh vegetable consumption and providing a venue for exercise. These gardens according to Becker (2002)

offered a wide spectrum of benefits to a community and served a diverse group of people such as health, personal well being, community development and environmentally. The Public Health Agency of Canada (2008) stated that gardening provided a source of fresh fruits and vegetables to those that had no access to them for their own.

In a study conducted with cooperative gardens coordinators in the Region of Waterloo it was reported that cooperative gardens were providing the community with the sense of personal well-being through stress relief, education and creation of friendships (Dunn 1979). Low-income families were provided a sense of independence, skill development, food security and economic savings. World Bank (1986) noted that cooperative gardens in the past provided access to culturally appropriate fruits that were unavailable in the market.

Dunn (1979) determined that cooperative gardens had a significant increase for property values in New York founding out that within the vicinity of the gardens their property value increased by 9.4% over a five year period. Currently there are 39 community gardens in the region, but mainly located in the urban areas of Kitchener and Waterloo (UN 1997). They have helped in alleviating one effect of climate change which is expected to cause a global decline in Agriculture output. In Zimbabwe cooperative gardens also existed before the intervention of NGOs but they are being improved by NGOs for community development.

Cooperative Gardens and Food Security.

Cooperative gardens are found in many humid and sub-humid parts of the world (FAO 2002). There are sometimes called shared or community gardens and this project is about worldwide food sustainability (WFP 2008). Gardening can enhance food security in several ways but mostly importantly through direct access to a diversity of nutritional-rich foods, increased purchasing power from savings on food bills and income from sales of garden products and fall-back food provision during seasonal lean periods (World Bank 2004). According to United Nations (1997) the mission of these cooperative gardens is to foster civic participation and encourage self reliance of the local people. The majority of

these gardens are located in economically disadvantaged communities to create a stable force in the community and serve as anchors for other development initiatives.

Gardens are becoming an increasingly important source of food and income for poor households in rural areas of the world (International Fund for Agriculture 2001). Through participation of many NGOs in cooperative gardens, health diet that contains adequate macro and micro nutrients is produced through many different kinds of foods in these gardens (Brun, Reynaud and Chevassus 1998). There are targeting especially rural areas where people have limited income earning opportunities and training field staff, farmers, women's groups and school teachers in gardening techniques and practical nutrition so as to enhance proper utilization of resources.

Cooperative gardens were introduced to help most poor people in rural areas (World Bank 2004). Most NGOs uses livelihood approach as their primary planning framework such as CARE and Oxfam to plan for the provision of projects to the people. NGOs have introduced the people centered approach in trying to help the rural livelihoods because people's livelihoods are affected in different ways by wide range of structures and processes. These might include the local institutions or customs that control the access of people to assets (Eade 2000).

According to Satge et al (2002) NGOs and other international links between micro and macro levels link with the poor. Robison (1991) noted that, NGOs have become important sectors and actors in development assistance because of their style of work that is, people centered approach to development. They have close links with poor people therefore, they have the capability to define the problems of the poor and know their challenges in trying to earn a living

Food Security and NGOs.

Most NGOs aims at increasing food security specifically for the vulnerable groups such as orphans, refugees, displaced persons, widows just to mention but a few. According to Edwards (1998) the rise of NGOs on the international scene

is an important phenomenon which has implications for the development prospect of the poor marginalized rural households. These NGOs have an important role in supporting the efforts of poor people to attack the causes and effects of food insecurity. In Rwanda during the civil war NGOs were operating giving food handouts to the affected people. In Zimbabwe, many NGOs were giving food handouts in 2002 because of drought which struck the country that year (Chimhowu, Manjengwa and Ferrus 2010). Their activities are centered at reducing risk, vulnerability and cushion shocks and stresses (Scoones 2010).

Case study: Community life improvement program Tamale (WFP 2008).

CLIP is a local NGOs based in Tamale. It implemented a project dubbed food for life which is being initiated in 30 communities in the Yandi, Karaga and Gushiegu Districts, intended to provide food insecure farmer households with opportunities to improve their household food security situation through climate change adaptation strategies for farming and protection of agriculture assets and livelihood activities. This is to increase agricultural products in vulnerable communities. This is to increase agricultural products in vulnerable communities. The goal of the program is that 60% of farmers in the 30 communities would apply localized coping and preventive strategies in addressing climate change through the establishment of shared gardens. Therefore, to ensure food security CLIPs facilitators of the project advocated for the use of improved seeds, selected for local conditions as options that offer farmers a better chance to harvest lucrative crops.

Therefore, NGOs are playing a vital role in improving the livelihoods of rural communities. As highlighted above, NGOs are introducing projects which correspond to the prevailing climate conditions such as cooperative gardens as an adaptive strategy to improve food security and at the same time reducing vulnerability of communities.

NGOs and Cooperative Gardens.

Non-Governmental Organizations uses gardens as one strategy to regenerate the local food system and provide access to healthy affordable food. In a bid to

intergrate mobile and vulnerable people in ward 27 of Gutu District with the host community as well as improve their quality of life, Help German established community gardens and provided seeds and training in vegetable production and disease control. According to Help report (2009) 25 community garden groups with 714 members benefited from this project in Chivi District. Successful projects have been implemented in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Somalia and Ghana, just to mention a few. Although they have a challenge in finding a market, food security is much guaranteed, most households are battering the vegetables with other food stuffs and items within the community (ZCDA 2013).

In Buhera District where water is scarce communities were trained and given micro dosing equipment to irrigate their gardens with the objective of improving their access to food (Help report 2009). NGOs are promoting sustainability within and outside their projects so that local people can manage the projects after donors. In Zimbabwe Help German implemented many cooperative gardens including the one under study which is Rushwaya cooperative garden.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in the rural district of Gutu. Data was obtained from people through qualitative and quantitative methods. The researcher used 2 focus group discussion, interviews, observation, 30 questionnaires and 4 key informant interviews to solicit information on the contributions of NGOs to rural livelihoods. Open and closed ended questionnaires were administered by the researcher targeting the participants in the garden. Key informant interviews were used by the researcher to target the headmen, councillor a RDC and Help Germany officer.

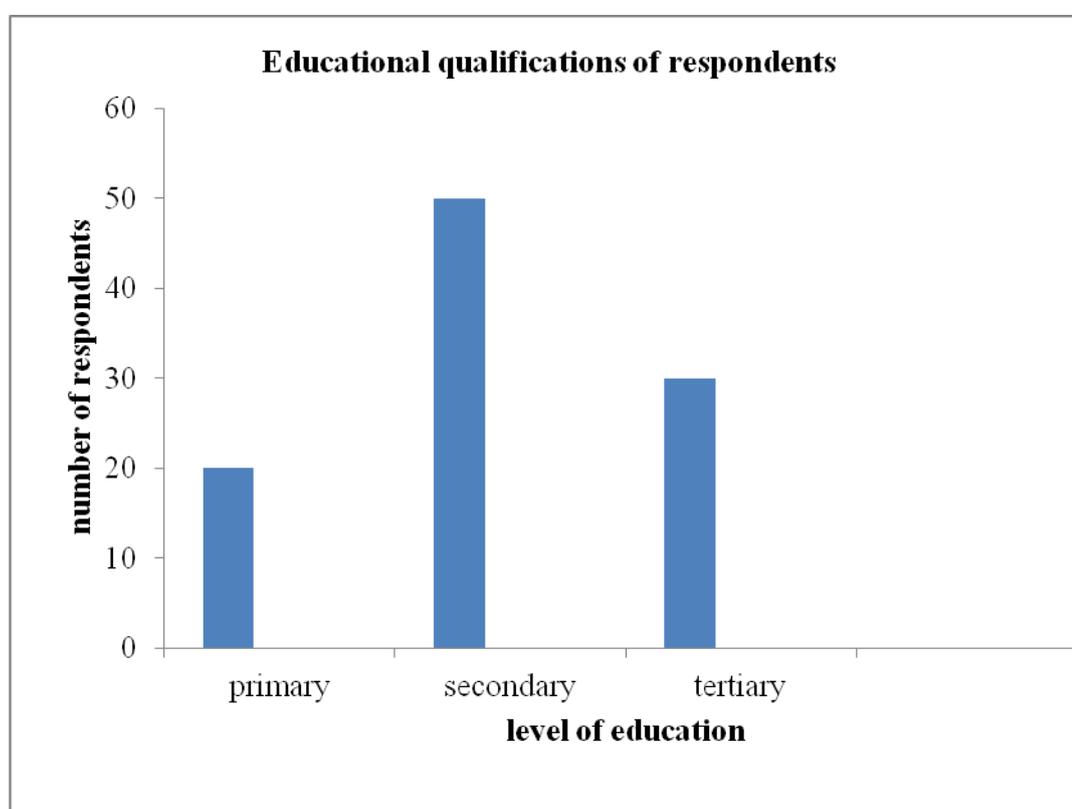
In all these methods of collecting data relevant sampling techniques were used to represent the total population due to limited resources such as time and money. Random and stratified random samplings were used so as to reduce bias in targeting the actual respondents from the selected villages which were of

importance to the researcher. Out a population of 714 households in the programme a sample of 30 was chosen by the researcher.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics of respondents

The majority of the respondents 67% were females. Chenje (1998) noted that, 80% of rural households are female headed, therefore, they take a greater part in rural development programmes. The majority of the respondents were between 21 and 51 years. The age group is economically active and able bodied to work in the garden. Figure 2 below shows education qualifications of respondents



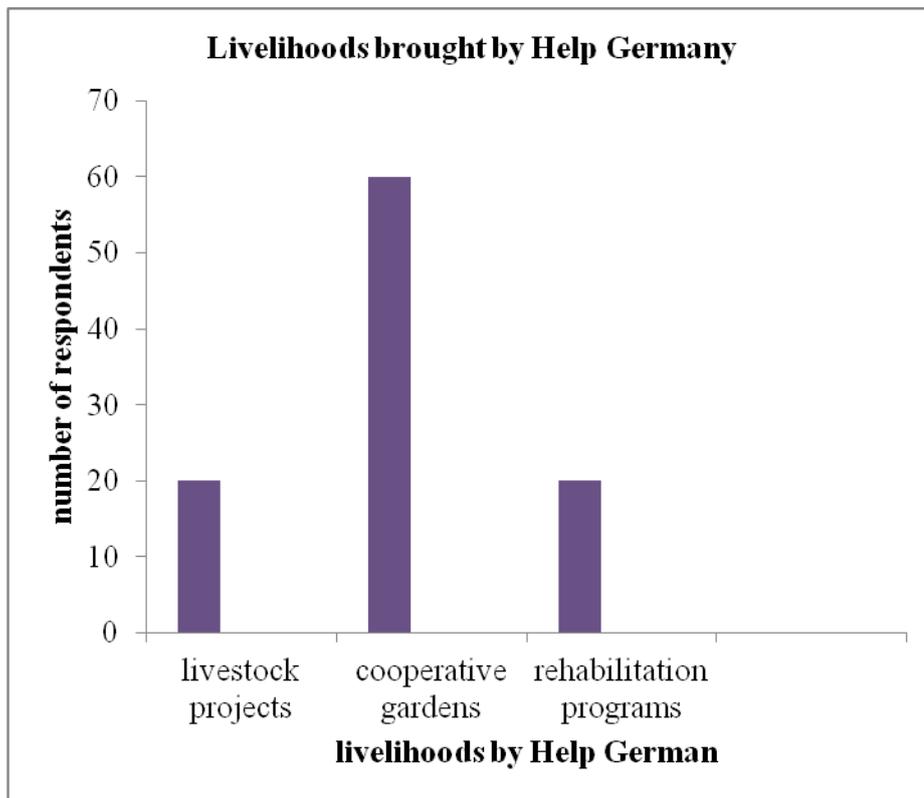
Source: fieldwork 2012

Fig 2 Educational qualifications of respondents

The majority of respondents attained secondary education. Such respondents are better able to actively take part in programmes that are undertaken in the area.

LIVELIHOODS BROUGHT BY HELP GERMANY

Fig 3 below shows the livelihoods brought by Help German



Source: field work 2012

Figure 3 Livelihoods by Help German

Cooperative gardens

Cooperative gardens was the most popular intervention constituting 60%. In a bid to improve food security of the community which was decreasing in the past years, Help German is providing seeds and equipment to improve the outcomes. Through these cooperative gardens, most respondents highlighted that, there are earning a living which is the main objective of most NGOs to ensure that communities do not suffer whilst they do have resources like water that can help them to earn a living.

Through cooperative gardens beneficiaries indicated that, their financial, social and natural capital has improved. People are now selling products from the garden such as cabbages, beetroots, tomatoes and potatoes just to mention but a few improving their financial capital. A beneficiary from the garden indicated

that, she is selling around 450 heads of cabbages; 100kgs of potatoes from the Help German started the project. She also highlighted that, before Help German intervened her life was difficult than after the project in that, she can now send her offspring to school.

Beneficiaries indicated that, a greater improvement has been noted because of the technical advice they are receiving from Help German officers and Arex officers on how to grow different types of crops. The inclusion of training as part of the package has further enhanced the knowledge and skill base of beneficiaries. This is why the harvests of the community especially for those in the garden changed drastically for the better.

Most respondents indicated that, in the past information was inadequate because Help German was not participating in the community and this reduced the harvest of most farmers. 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 and allowing effective use of water. Thus cooperative gardens have resulted in improving social cohesion as households planned as a group and worked towards a common purpose.

Rehabilitation programmes

Beneficiaries indicated that, not only cooperative gardens are helping them but rehabilitation programs and livestock projects are working hand in glove with the gardens to help them. Food for work programs are being used as a strategy to rehabilitate roads and at the same time helping the needy to reduce dependency syndrome and creating access to resources for their own development.

Livestock projects

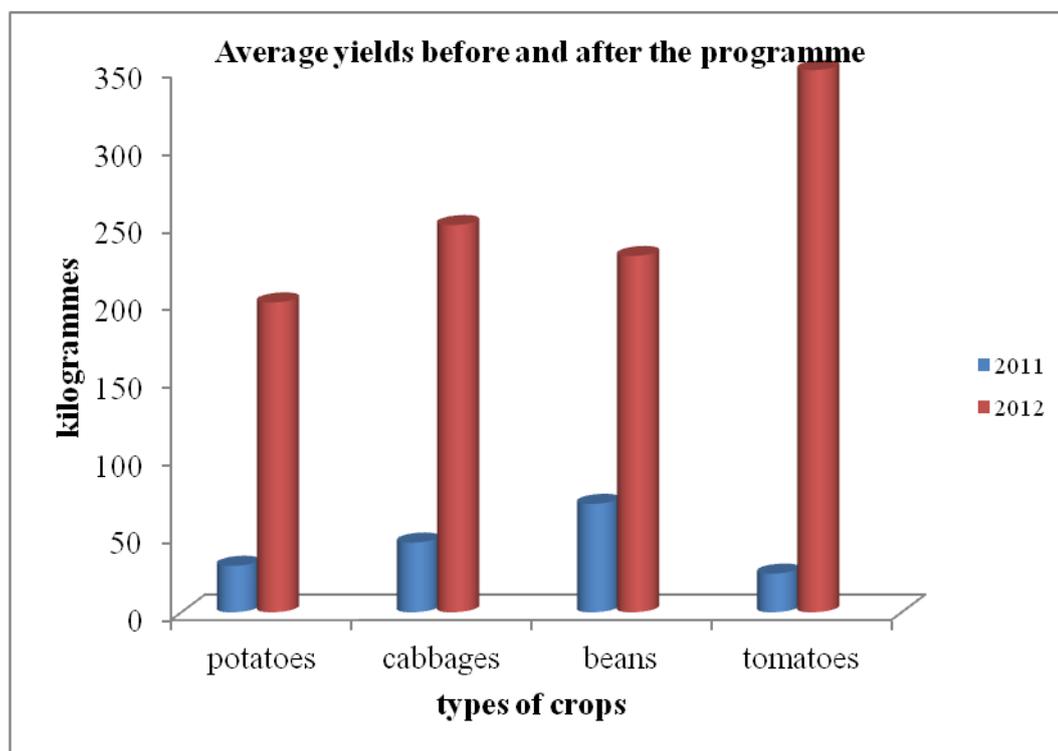
Beneficiaries indicated that there are also benefiting from livestock projects brought by Help Germany in their community. The beneficiaries of this project indicated that they were given inputs such as feeds and fencing wire to protect their livestock. Most of them were given cattle and others goats. . 40% of the respondents are in the livestock project. The programmes targets orphans and

vulnerable groups. The respondents explained that, the projects empowered the local and reduced vulnerability context through sustainable rural livelihoods brought by Help German.

Programme achievements.

Most households in rural areas were suffering from poverty because there were sidelined from many programs especially by government due to lack of social capital. Respondents factored in that, through Help German and other NGOs most poor people are standing a chance to secure their livelihoods which in turn improved the outcomes of the fields. Beneficiaries indicated that, their yields have improved since the intervention of Help German and this even extended their income levels because there are managing to increase equipment and to sent even their children to school.

Average yields before and after the programme.



Source: field work 2012

Fig 4 Outputs of 2011 and 2012 harvest

The study indicates that before the respondents joined cooperative gardening their yields were lower than the present situation when there are beneficiaries of the programme. The changes of yields of most crops grown in the garden are explained below.

Tomatoes

From the figure above, yields changed drastically especially tomatoes which improved with 340kilograms. The respondents explained that, it was as a result of improvement in equipment, seeds, pesticides and technical advice brought by Help German. A sharp increase in the tomatoes outputs was that in the past there were affected by diseases like red spider and people had no money to buy chemicals to treat but with the intervention of Help German chemicals were distributed to the beneficiaries for free which improved the harvest.

Potatoes

Potatoes improved with 180kilograms because respondents explained that, in the past they lacked knowledge on how to grow potatoes hence with the help of Help German they can now grow and have a good harvest which improved their outcomes. This helped many households in Rushwaya community and reduced their vulnerability to shocks and trends of climatic changes.

Cabbages

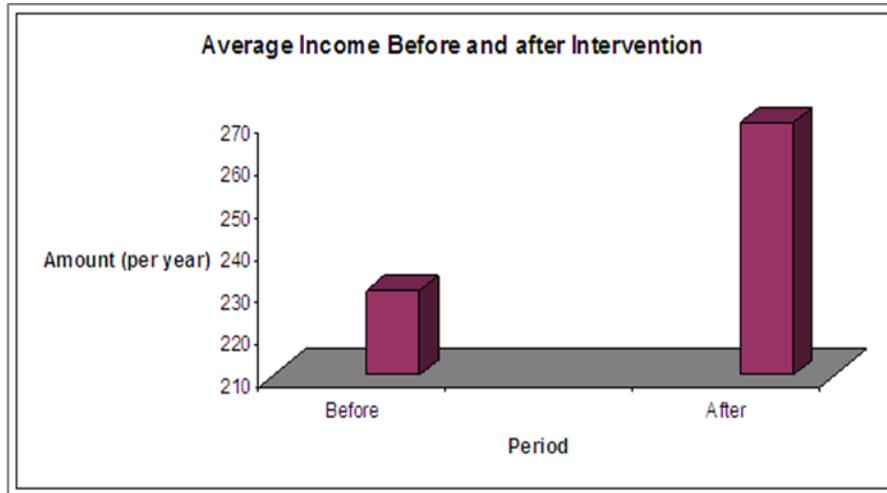
Cabbages increased significantly from 50kg to around 270kg. The majority of women in the garden indicated that their income status has been increased. Thus food security at a household level was improved by the intervention of Help Germany in the community.

Beans

Beneficiaries indicated that there was a drastic increase in their yields especially beans that have an increase from 75kg to around 270kg. This clearly shows that before the intervention of Help Germany the community had no adequate resources to produce much. Their income levels were greatly improved.

Average income before and after the programme

Fig 5 below shows the average income of respondents before and after the programme



Source: field work 2012

Fig 5 average income of beneficiaries before and after the programme

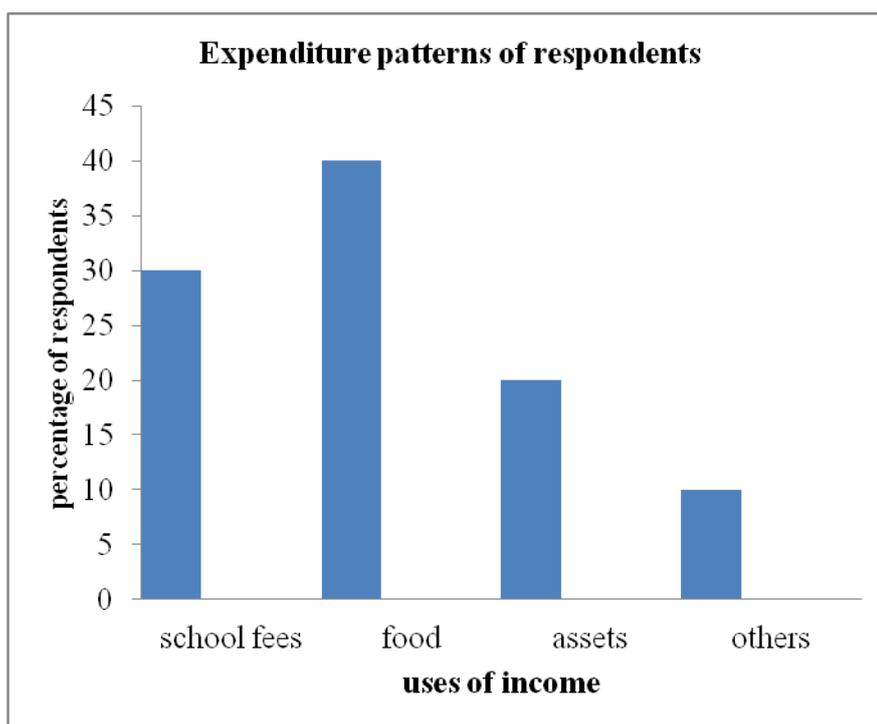
The study indicates that income patterns of beneficiaries have changed since the intervention of Help Germany in their community as shown on the figure above. Though the respondents indicated that they have other sources of income from remittances and selling of wild fruits just to mention a few, most of them highlighted that, the drastic change in the average income per household was as a result of the intervention of Help Germany. This implies that the majority of beneficiaries are earning a living through selling of products from the garden. Sales made came from beetroots, vegetables, tomatoes and cabbages just to mention but a few. The interesting part of the programme as respondents highlighted is that Help German is marketing the products of the garden to nearest shopping centers such as Maungwa business center such that their products are bought at a reasonable price.

Most respondents indicated that the average increase of their income was from \$230 US per month before the programme to around \$270 US per month after the implementation of the programme showing that the strategies that are being

used by benefactors are corresponding to the prevailing conditions of the area leading to community development. With the income available, respondents indicated that they can now use it for different purposes such as sending their children to school. This will be clearly discussed below.

Expenditure patterns of beneficiaries

Fig 6 below shows the expenditure patterns of beneficiaries



Source: field work 2013

Fig 6 income distribution

Generally the intervention of Help German has led to an increase in yields and this has subsequently resulted in an increase in income. 50% of the respondents explained that, there are using their income to buy food, paying their children's school fees, buying assets and other things. They indicated that, the sources of income became reliable since Help German intervened in the community. There is a greater improvement in the standards of life of people in the community especially beneficiaries of the garden.

School fees

Respondents explained that, their children were not going to school due to lack of funds but due to the help of Help German there are now able to pay school fees and living a decent life of three meals a day. Development in the area has been significantly noticed since Help German started to operate in the area.

Food stuffs

Some respondents highlighted that, harvest increased significantly with the intervention of Help German to an extent that, they reach the new season with the outputs of the last season. When there is hunger there is poverty, but if food is surplus there is development. Therefore it does not need a scholar to appreciate the works of Help German in Rushwaya community as observed by the researcher. Development is now trickling down from the beneficiaries in the garden to other community members through programs like fushayi introduced by the same NGO. This to a larger extent resulted in an increase of assets ownership by beneficiaries.

Assets

Respondents indicated that their purchasing power was improved by the intervention of cooperative gardens done by Help Germany. This implies that most beneficiaries are now capable of buying assets to boost their production. One of the respondents indicated that with the income there are getting from the garden she managed to buy a scotch cart for easy transportation of her products to the market.

Production assets owned by the garden

Fig 7 below shows the production assets owned by the garden



Source: field work 2012

Fig 7 Production assets owned by beneficiaries

From the field analysis above, respondents indicated that, tools in the past were few which affected the produce and in 2011 the projects were few resulting in difficulties for people to acquire equipment such as wheelbarrows and watering cans because there are expensive. Preparation of land was difficult to such an extent that, they would hire someone for credit to plough the land for them and pay after the harvest. In 2012 equipment improved and this is when the NGOs had started operating in the communities.

Watering cans

In Rushwaya watering cans improved drastically because there were donated by Help German from 4 cans to 40. Due to improvement in the harvest of the community people are now able to purchase some for themselves improving the outputs in the garden too. Robinson (1991) noted that, NGOs have become important actors in development assistance because of their large scale development operation in rural areas. Through Help German, poor people have been reached and now owning equipment they failed to access in the past.

Wheel barrows

Respondents indicated that wheel barrows were expensive to purchase for their own hence they relied much with those brought by Help German. This greatly increased their yields because they were now capable of carrying manure for feeding their beds in large quantities. Food security was to a larger extent improved through the ownership of equipment as it improved preparation of land. Through the work of Help German, respondents indicated that, there are now owning assets which they were not owning in the past like cattle, goats just to mention but a few.

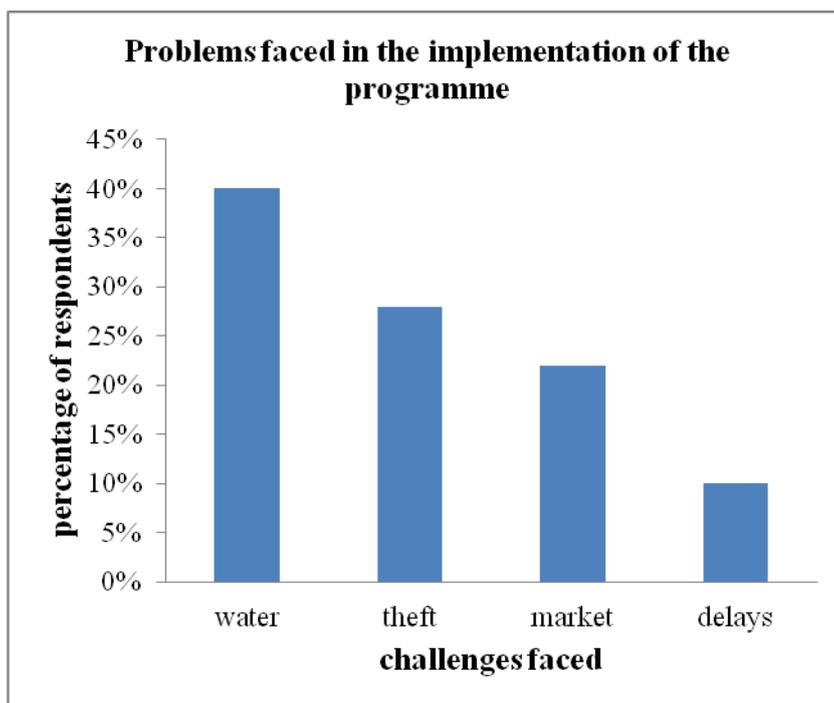
Some respondents indicated that, there are now owning 6 cattle since the intervention of Help German and some indicated that, they had no goats or even a scotch cart bit now they have one and others two of them. Therefore, most respondents highlighted that there are benefiting to a larger extent from Help German projects especially cooperative gardens.

Infrastructural developments

From the field analysis, development of the Rushwaya community became notable with the intervention of Help German in the area. Through food for work programmes done by the NGO roads are being rehabilitated and earth dams are being constructed to help the community from water shortages. The community is now accessible for easy transportation of products from the garden accelerating development of the community as a whole. Community business center is expanding due to the savings of the garden which is resulting in development.

CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME

Fig 8 below shows challenges faced in the implementation of the programme



Source: fieldwork 2012

Fig 8 Challenges encountered in the implementation of the programme

Water

40% of the respondents explained that, water shortage is their major obstacle to development due to erratic rainfalls received by the community. The problem is becoming extensive due to lack of boreholes in the area. Though it is trying to reduce the effects of climatic changes, nature is taking its part as a drawback for development in rural areas.

Inputs

10% of respondents explained that, late distribution of inputs by Help German is one of major drawback delaying the farming season and leading to failure as the growing calendar will be disturbed. Respondents indicated that even though Help German is giving them inputs there are not adequate for them. Fertilizers are very insufficient to boost their crops hence affecting their produce.

Market

Market accessibility is becoming one of the major challenges encountered by beneficiaries. Though Help German is trying to find market for its farmers not all products bought and this affects farmers negatively as one respondent explained that they reach a stage where they exchange their products locally at a cheaper price.

The community

Respondents indicated that the beneficiary selection criterion done by Help German was not transparent and people who were in need of help were not included. Most vulnerable orphans of the community were left out. Misunderstandings of community members became the order of the day because of the selection criterion done by Help.

Help German

The officials of Help German indicated that there are facing challenges of delivering knowledge to the members of the garden because of lack of knowledge. The area is difficult to access because of dilapidated roads affecting their service delivery to the garden. The delay of inputs is not the problem of Help German as the managers indicated but they said their donors are delaying with funds hence the delay of inputs to the beneficiaries.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Cooperative gardens as a strategy by Help German to improve livelihoods has greatly improved the standards of living of Rushwaya community. The community's capitals have been improved through the livelihoods brought by Help German such as cooperative gardens, livestock production and rehabilitation projects just to mention but a few. Financial status which was in doldrums was boosted through selling products from the garden. One can note that, food insecurity was reduced since the intervention of Help German in the community leading to rural development. NGOs are playing an unbeatable role in rural areas through their activities that reach the poor at their door steps.

Livelihoods of the community have positively improved from the year 2011-2012 due to equipment and seeds donated by Help German especially on the project of cooperative gardens. The intervention helped to reduce vulnerability and increased access to small livelihood assets like goats and chicken, thus the community's livelihoods became more secure than before the intervention of the programme.

As the aim of most if not all NGOs to alleviate rural poverty and promote rural development, Rushwaya garden can be regarded as one of their achievements in developing local communities financially, socially and economically. Beneficiaries are now able to pay school fees for their children; they can now access the market and starting other livelihood strategies besides gardening only. Hence cooperative gardens are playing an important role in improving the livelihoods and promoting food security of ward 25 Gutu District.

Although cooperative gardens are playing an important role in improving livelihoods in ward 25, findings reveal that there are confining rural people to one livelihood activity hence disturbing other chores to be performed. Some indicated that the garden is wasting much of their time with endless meetings they attend every Tuesday and Friday held by Help German and Arrex officers hence limiting them time to work on their fields.

Finding reveal that the magnitude of the programme is too small to an extend that, it can be called a sample instead of helping a lot of people who are in need in the District.

Some respondents indicated that the work in the garden is labor intensive such that elderly people, those who are chronically ill and child headed households are disadvantaged. Though significant changes in the output of the garden, challenges of transporting products to the market is the major one due to dilapidated roads which are inaccessible. Though Help German is trying to rehabilitate these roads the extent is very low.

Some challenges that are being faced by people in the community are climate change and delays in the provision of inputs for the beneficiaries hence affecting their cropping season. The major weakness is that the programme coverage is very limited hence the majority of people in ward 25 are left behind but whilst

there are food insecure to an extent that they cannot harvest to meet home consumption. Beneficiary selection criteria used by service providers was not transparent and the researcher was not given clarity about this issue from key informant conducted, hence there was an element of bias in their selection criteria.

Recommendations

Though Help German brought livelihoods in the communities, a lot has to be done on water harvesting because the community is still receiving inadequate rainfall for gardening because water is one of the major natural capital to their program. Earth dams and drilling of boreholes can be an alternative to problems being faced in the community.

It may be useful to introduce other seeds in the garden such as beetroots and strawberries just to mention but a few so as to reduce competition on the market because crops like tomatoes are being cropped by other people who are out of the garden and other communities at large. This may improve outcomes of the beneficiaries if they grow crops with market. Help German should be time conscious when it comes to season so that inputs are distributed in time so as to improve harvests. This will help beneficiaries to improve their outcomes from the garden.

Proper planning for the distribution of seeds needs to be in time to reduce inconveniences' with beneficiaries who will be in need of resources to grow their crops. There is also need to add inputs for a better output because the inputs which are being distributed by Help German are inadequate for the people to produce a good harvest.

There is need to introduce equipment which is less labor intensive to accommodate as much people as possible including child headed households and the elderly groups.

Rehabilitation of roads should be done by both government and NGOs so as to promote business in the rural areas as they will be accessible.

Government should reduce rigidity of acts that govern works of NGOs to promote external investment for the development of these rural areas.

Problems encountered should not be ignored but to be dealt with for the betterment of future projects as highlighted above. It should not escape mention that, Help German should improve its monitoring of projects to ensure efficient use of resources and to evaluate for future programmes.

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