

IMPACT OF HUMANITARIAN AID ON FOOD SECURITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN ZIMBABWE : THE CASE OF WARD 14 AND 15 OF BUHERA DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The study was assessing the impact of humanitarian aid on food security in the rural communities in Zimbabwe. The Case of ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District. The study was conducted to assess how humanitarian aid contribute or address food access, availability and stability in Zimbabwe. Humanitarian aid is being used as a panacea to alleviate hunger to the food insecure communities. It examined whether the humanitarian aid given to the communities is being used for food security purposes or not. The research used a qualitative approach to explore the topic under study. Questionnaires, focus group discussion and interviews were used to gather data from the respondents. On sampling, purposive sampling method was used to obtain data from participants who were humanitarian aid beneficiaries, humanitarian aid workers and key informants from council. The major findings of the study revealed that the use of humanitarian aid in form of food alone to address food insecurity is just a pipedream. No humanitarian aid beneficiary confirms that he/she was food secure. Humanitarian aid is contributing to food access in the short term but in the long or medium term it is not. Though the use of humanitarian aid accompanied with developmental programs and resilient programs, the community and humanitarian aid workers admitted that it has potential in addressing food insecurity. The study also noted that there are challenges associated with using humanitarian aid to address food insecurity in rural communities. The challenges are emanating from the community's perceptions and some from the perceptions of the donors. To mention some of the challenges are dependency syndrome, corruption, social problems like conflicts, and no initiatives in the communities. Major recommendations are that humanitarian organizations should fund irrigation schemes to enhance food availability, they should be involved in capacity building, they should invest in research, monitoring and evaluating their projects so that they will bring the aid which is relevant to the place and time. They should come up with programs which are sustainable so that the humanitarian aid addresses food insecurity in rural communities.

Keywords: humanitarian aid, food security, rural communities

INTRODUCTION

This study discusses the impact of humanitarian aid to food security in rural communities of Zimbabwe. This study used ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District to assess the positive and negative effects of humanitarian aid on food security in rural communities. Humanitarian aid is being viewed as an important way of solving food insecurity in many countries including Zimbabwe. Many people who are food insecure are in rural areas and there is the highest number of humanitarian aid beneficiaries. The considerable attention has been given to the study of food security in developing countries, yet there are fewer empirical studies, in the literature, on the vulnerability of rural households benefiting from humanitarian aid to future food insecurity. Yet, according to Lovendal and Knowles, 2005 reducing vulnerability is a requirement for achieving global and national food security targets. Though food insecurity is a general problem among people in rural areas, few studies have

shown that in trying to solve the problem of food insecurity by giving humanitarian aid it is creating the other problem. This problem will also lead to food insecurity therefore this study looks at the impact of humanitarian aid to food security in Zimbabwe. This study analyzed the effects of humanitarian aid to food security, whether there is food security or no food security in Zimbabwe because of humanitarian aid. It also assessed the extent to which humanitarian aid is addressing food insecurity in rural communities of Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe's greatest developmental challenges for more than twenty years have been high levels of poverty, recurring food insecurity and widespread malnutrition. According to World Food Program, an estimated population of 1.5 million, that is the sixteen percent of the population – are projected to be food insecure at the peak of the 2015 to 2016 lean season, the period before the next harvest when domestic food stocks get scarce. This represents a 164 percent increase in food insecurity as compared to the previous season.

Households that are poor, cannot afford to buy enough food, they cannot generate or get enough financial resources to buy food or to buy inputs for their agricultural production in Zimbabwean rural communities. The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee estimated that 4.1 million (42 percent of the rural population in Zimbabwe) will suffer from food insecurity during the period from January to March 2017. According to World Food Program (2015) “the prevalence of food insecurity and absolute poverty are closely correlated. Poverty is most prevalent in rural areas, with seventy-six percent of rural households living on less than dollar twenty-five a day, compared to thirty-eight percent in urban areas”. This leads to highest levels of food insecurity. In response to the crisis, levels of humanitarian aid to Zimbabwe have increased and the aid has become a keyway to address food insecurity and malnutrition in the country. This study assessed the impact of these humanitarian aid in promoting food security in Zimbabwe, focusing on ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District.

This study is very important because it helps the government to have a food security analysis of determinants of vulnerability of rural communities to food insecurity that could be useful for designing policies and intervention programs that would specifically target rural communities. More generally, knowledge of the characteristics of those most likely to be food insecure in the future, what factors determine their vulnerability and what methods exist for influencing this probability, could be of great value to government, humanitarian aid organizations and development agencies in the design of effective food security strategies, both now and in the future. The study proceeds as follows. Chapter one discusses an overview on the impact of humanitarian aid on food security within rural communities in Zimbabwe. Chapter two discusses on the effect of humanitarian aid in addressing food insecurity in ward 14 and 15 in Buhera. Chapter three gives suggestions on how humanitarian aid can help to reduce food insecurity in Buhera ward 14 and 15. The final section presents the conclusions drawn from the research study.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To examine the extent to which humanitarian aid is addressing food insecurity in rural communities in Zimbabwe
- (2) To analyze the impact of humanitarian aid on food security in Buhera ward 14 and 15
- (3) To offer suggestions on how humanitarian aid can help to reduce food insecurity in Buhera ward 14 and 15

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative case study

methodology. Qualitative case study methodology provided tools for the researcher to study complex phenomena within the area of this research. The study was descriptive and explanatory since it was employing a qualitative research methodology. A qualitative research method is an effort to understand the situation in their uniqueness as part of the particular context and the interactions there. This method therefore, did help the research to be clearer, attend to the correct and specific detail.

According to Hiatt (1986) qualitative research methods focus on discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of participants that is, qualitative research explores meaning, purpose, or reality. In other words, qualitative research activity, which is situated, it locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of explanatories, material practices that make the world noticeable. These practices change the world. They turn the world into a chain of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. Denzin & Lincoln, (2005) highlighted that, at this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, portents in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Lincoln & Guba, (1985), highlighted that central to this inquiry is the presence of multiple “truths” that are socially constructed. Qualitative research is usually described as allowing a detailed assessment of a topic of interest in which information is collected by a researcher through case studies, ethnographic work, interviews, and so on. Therefore, in this approach it is the description of the interactions among participants and researchers in naturalistic settings with few boundaries, resulting in a flexible and open research process.

The qualitative approach was used to understand the perceptions of people towards humanitarian aid and the extent to which humanitarian aid is addressing food insecurity. Humanitarian aid beneficiaries in the communities have their take, feelings and perceptions towards the humanitarian aid and food security therefore, qualitative research methodology was the best to probe such things. Thus, qualitative methodology enabled the researcher to capture information beyond just answers as the researcher was making analysis of the attitudes, behavior and emotional attachments to responses. In this study the researcher used qualitative approach to get more detail, probe and search data from humanitarian aid beneficiaries, aid workers and other stakeholders. The total of twenty selected random villages, 6 to 12 sons of practicing dairy farmers between the ages of 18 to 35 years from each village were selected

proportionally. Finally, a random sample of a total of 200 sons of practicing dairy farmers was selected for the study. The data was collected personally using an interview schedule. The coefficient of correlation was computed to find out the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Problems/challenges associated with using humanitarian aid in ward 14 and 15 of buhera district

This section is going to discuss how and why humanitarian aid is failing to address food insecurity in ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District and general challenges that are being faced. During the study there were lot of challenges or problems which were highlighted associated with using humanitarian aid as a way of mitigating food insecurity in ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District. These problems emanated from beneficiaries themselves, community leaders, politicians to mention a few. Some of the problems are coming because these communities have been receiving the aid for a long time, year after a year. They are as a result of perceptions by the communities for example some believe food aid is their right, they must get it every time without fail. However, some of the problems are being caused by humanitarian aid organizations.

How and why the humanitarian aid failing to address food accessibility.

There are factors that are contributing to the failure of humanitarian aid to address food accessibility problems. A common challenge that the organizations faced on identifying beneficiaries was that there seemed to be a lot of rehearsal as the communities were now aware of what questions the humanitarian organizations ask. This led to some of the households which do not deserve to benefit get a chance at the expense of the deserving ones. In other words, the needy people can be left out (inclusion/exclusion errors). This has been giving the wrong picture of aid in these communities because those who do not deserve probably the access to food already are causing and/or are blocking others to access food. However, there was an agreement that vulnerability is not just about food security; it is much broader than that. Taking that into consideration, some households can be food insecure, but not apt to the vulnerability frames constructed in the assessments, or they can be food secure at that moment but vulnerable in its broader sense.

Corruption breeds fast, some of the humanitarian aid beneficiaries often did not get the food meant for them, as it was diverted to other destinations. This is what was supported with the article, which was on the Daily news, 17

April 2018 (see attached appendix 3). The procedures used by humanitarian aid organization to identify beneficiaries is that they give powers to nominate potential beneficiaries to the traditional leaders who sometimes put people who paid them something on the list. This means that the non-deserving has a chance of getting the aid because they somehow bribe the leader who is nominating. On the same note, the issue of nepotism was also mentioned. Usually those who were given authority to come up with the list had to make sure their relatives got something. Corruption and nepotism were blamed for blocking most deserving households to access food. However, other community members highlighted that despite corruption and nepotism, almost everyone in their communities must get the aid because everyone is food insecure.

Traditional leaders were given the opportunity to nominate the prospective beneficiaries because humanitarian aid organizations have got faith in them that they know the situation of each and everyone in the community. The lack of experience of traditional leaders and lack of training means that they cannot take corrective decisive roles on humanitarian aid selection procedures. Therefore, there were discrepancies in the communities because of the selection procedures used. Other community members felt that traditional leaders were then abusing the powers they were given to select prospective beneficiaries and because of lack of trainings. Community or traditional leaders were doing what they think is right, yet they were hindering other community members to access food. One of the key informants highlighted that as an organization their resources are limited that they cannot go and participate or do home visits to prospective beneficiaries before distribution of aid. This entails that there might be issues of bias in everything and it might defeat the purpose of the aid because some community members won't access food.

The researcher also observed that they were complex social dynamics in these communities. The assessment also revealed that failure by other community members to accept that the humanitarian aid is just a relief to them, they should not bank on it yearly attributed to lack of transparency, communication and rapport between traditional leaders and the community. The study also confirmed that they were not coming up with their own sustainable food security coping strategies because they believe it is their right to get the aid therefore, they end up killing or hating each other because some feel the headman for example is the one who denied him access to food. During a focus group discussion one of the respondents said,

“Mumwe anototemba kuroya kwake saka akasiwa kana kuti ukamutaura kuti haafaniri kuwana chikafu kana

mari dzinopiwa idzi zizi rinorara rochema kumba kwako. Pana mai vatakaviga vekuvataurisa. Unofa zvikarova.”

The respondent was just highlighting that there are well known of witchcraft and those people might double deep but no one will have guts to stand against them because the community will be afraid that they will die. Because of double dipping others will not have access to food hence, they will remain food insecure.

The other problem which was highlighted was that, in the communities the humanitarian aid was politicized. Some politicians wanted to be associated with those aids so that they portray as if they are the ones who looked for donors and they gain mileage. In addition, as they had influence in the communities, if one is considered as not politically correct, he could not get access to the aid. This was taken as a lesson to those who support the opposition party so that next time, they know where to put their vote. And those politicians would want to campaign using the aid so that they will remain in power. Therefore, the researcher found out that the humanitarian aid was at some point being personalized by political leaders hindering others to access it. This entails that politician need to be trained so that they know that humanitarian aid should be apolitical it's there to reduce food insecurity despite one's party.

The study highlighted that, households with their family members engaged in wage employment outside the community or ward are automatically disqualified from receiving humanitarian aid. However, not all such households receive sufficient food transfers from relatives in wage employment and some do not receive at all. Furthermore, households generally believe that they are eligible to food transfers, irrespective of having access to other means of support. Thus, there is no water-tight mechanism for targeting aid to only the truly needy households therefore not everyone will have access to humanitarian aid.

How and why the humanitarian aid failing to address food availability.

In the past the less deserving people who benefited from humanitarian aid sold barley or exchanged the commodity for agricultural inputs and small livestock. Some of them were using the aid for payment of labor sourced from vulnerable households in addition to using it as livestock feed, these realized wealth creation and would want aid to continue. This made other humanitarian aid organizations withdraw their aid and food was not available to other deserving people in the community. Humanitarian aid did not improve incomes of the vulnerable households. Some people in these communities produced vegetables on a small scale

due to water challenges and exchanged these for maize meal. Therefore, the aim of the humanitarian aid was defeated because the non-deserving were taking food they were not consuming and those who were excluded but deserving were not having access to food because it will not be available.

The study has confirmed that the economic hardships which triggered high rate of unemployment, poverty, inflation and the AIDS pandemic have made humanitarian aid assistance insignificant. Thus, the humanitarian aid available is insufficient to accommodate large number of vulnerable people or people who are food insecure. The budget deficit versus beneficiaries that are in needy. As a result, the humanitarian aid organizations are limiting the amount of food given to a household and in other cases, those in needy are left out because the organizations will have a limiting number needed.

How and why humanitarian aid is failing to address food instability

Humanitarian aid did not reduce vulnerability, household remained susceptible and exposed if they had to borrow food for many days before the next distribution cycle. People were worse off than they were before the introduction of humanitarian aid. People no longer have food reserves than what they used to be before. Some continue to visit humanitarian aid organization offices and continuously inquire when aid distribution would start on a yearly basis. Some knew their crops would fail before they even started planting and so the attitude was why bother, hence little or no activity in their plots or fields. No other sources of income and therefore failed to buy food from shops when it was available so they end up fighting for the aid and some were reported to be threatening others because of the aid. Therefore, humanitarian aid did not bring food security in ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District.

Other Problems/Challenges associated with using humanitarian aid

Humanitarian aid is contributing to food insecurity in ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District because it actually creates dependency of the vulnerable communities because the researcher asked them on what they think should be done so that the aid they are getting can contribute to food security and most of them were requesting on the increase of rations meaning to say they want to continue being given. Humanitarian aid beneficiaries are having temporary relief from hunger, it saves lives and reduces suffering. Food is a right, even if it is too little and indigestible, communities insist they should have it, they want more food which is creating negative dependency. Recipients became lazy and

expectant of humanitarian aid year after year. Creation of a dependency syndrome, capacity to be productive was weakened and eroded.

Without complementary development interventions that are sustainable, humanitarian aid was not extenuating famine in ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District. Lack of water or rainfall meant food shortages worsened but the aid being given is not sustainable because respondents were eating the food and it would end there; and the next thing is they are looking to be fed against hunger and it became a cycle. They were not able to sustain themselves. Animals (livestock) like goats and cattle perish during famine, worsening the food situation because the people in these communities no longer have coping strategies which helps them and their livestock so that they survive during famine, they are looking up to humanitarian aid yearly. Therefore, the number of people who require aid increase every time and again.

In addition, the problem which was noticed by the researcher which comes as a result of using humanitarian aid as a panacea to food insecurity is that it creates negative dependency syndrome among the people in the community. Now most people wait for government to provide them with inputs for farming of which at some instances they got fertilizer which was not good to that area because Buhera is considered hot, on other hand non organizations are giving food which is not sustainable. Respondents highlighted that in the past, they were organizations like WFP which provided food through GOAL, AFRICARE and Dananai and one was heard saying, "Handirime ndakarimira kuDananai." These people were getting beans, maize, cooking oil and at some point, bulger so they thought it's useless to go farming whilst one was getting what they thought is everything. In addition, the researcher observed that humanitarian aid beneficiaries were not willing to be weaned off from the aid and were not interested in other programmes that required them to produce, e.g. seed and market linkages. They were highlighting that they want some more big rations.

While some sections claimed humanitarian aid in form of food was balanced diet, most vulnerable households insisted food given in form humanitarian aid was not balanced because they are not getting maize only and those who are getting money it's not enough to buy food stuffs which are nutritious therefore, they are ending up buying at least something to eat. Some claimed that they used to receive the food, which was originally meant for livestock for example barley, but had no choice except to consume it. Because the communities have no other food available since they had no resources to buy nutritious food, they were consuming anything that came their way despite its effects or nutrition status. Therefore, there was no food security in

these communities even in past despite humanitarian aid.

However, some respondents indicated that even though the humanitarian aid was not bringing any change the communities, at least they are using the little amount of money they were supposed to buy food to send children to school. Some reported that girls are also not dropping due to lack of fees because some of them are being paid for through the humanitarian they are getting. In addition, the food which is being given to schools under school feeding program is encouraging students in those communities to come to school, dropout rate has reduced.

In nutshell findings show that humanitarian aid is doing a little to reduce food insecurity in rural communities of Zimbabwe. The reason being that the aid provided for assistance is inadequate such that a handful of food insecure people are benefitting. As a result, in some circumstances people had to share so that at least everyone gets something. Therefore, in trying to compare 'what is' and 'what should be' or the actual and the intended, humanitarian aid is failing to realize its primary objective.

CONCLUSION

Looking at the information gathered from the research and a wide range of literature from other authors it is conceivable to say that the humanitarian aid contribution to food security is positive especially to where it has been efficiently. However, to a larger extent when comparing the impact on food security of rural communities of Zimbabwe and other countries especially in the developed world, one can deduce that humanitarian aid is not bringing food security. In addition, Zimbabwe is still far away from being food secure. It is more and more important that the government should dedicate itself to promote food security to rural communities. Along with better knowledge through research, it shall be easier for the government and humanitarian aid organizations to bring food security.

Internationally especially in African countries, humanitarian aid has grown over the years in the number and variety of donors and aid workers, as well as programs. The coming of effective and sustainable aid within the fast-changing world continues to present ongoing challenges to the development of the country which is receiving the aid. Even though the contribution of humanitarian aid to food security is appreciable, there is a need on the part of humanitarian aid organizations, governments, aid workers, and the community to develop a clearer understanding relating to who does what, when where and how.

It is also essential to have an understanding and acknowledgement of the exceptional attributes attached

together by a common motivation to communicate and work together. This will help to deliver the aid that is needed to the right people at the right time and in the right place. Moreover, to avoid the future where humanitarian aid as an insolvable problem, the donor countries should also have an attitude that is good so that they will pass on knowledge and skills in order to improve the health and quality of life for rural communities.

Thus, effectiveness and sustainability in humanitarian aid are not impossible dreams, and the achievement of satisfactory and cost-effective outcomes in short and in long terms is possible, as evidenced by successes in the past and present. The key to ensuring that success continues is the need to change lies in the understanding that humanitarian aid does not have an endpoint, but it's a continuous process in which indicators mark the path paved by lessons learned.

In ward 14 and 15 of Buhera District, hunger and poverty are still major issues of people's life and it is likely to remain an issue for decades to come. A lot of humanitarian aid has been given with encouragements but insufficient results. The efforts to promote the right to food will probably be the more visible part of the actions in the future. The current massive investments in the humanitarian aid program did not change the food security situation for people in rural communities of Zimbabwe. Despite distribution of humanitarian aid, food insecurity remains a key challenge. Zimbabwe has remained one of the most food-insecure in the world with more than half of the population living in poverty.

The study shows that despite many years of receiving aid there is no food security in rural communities of Zimbabwe. Most households are food insecure despite distribution of humanitarian aid for more than ten years now. This is because of challenges or problems associated with the implementation, selection and perception by the community. What the community perceives humanitarian aid and what the humanitarian aid organizations perceived it is different therefore, what is aimed is not being achieved because of different perceptions. Many have been receiving humanitarian aid for years, but they still need more, they are not getting enough of it. In development the food security is very critical.

The study also confirms that the impact of humanitarian aid to food security is being constrained by several problems emanating from the implementation process. The households' food insecurity is being stifled by a few humanitarian aid given to a big number of vulnerable people, lack of transparency in the selection of beneficiaries, political gimmicks and lack of rapport between the community and traditional leaders in the society. Furthermore, the

humanitarian aid organization does not provide enough money or food which sustain the community, or which is good enough meaning to say the humanitarian aid is not bringing the concept of food stability in the rural communities of Zimbabwe.

However, beneficiaries appreciated that humanitarian aid seems to be a panacea to food insecurity in their community if the rations are increased to cover everyone and for those who are benefiting from it to get more and bigger rations that promote food stability. It has been noted that because of humanitarian aid being given in schools most children are coming to school and few dropouts due to lack of food have been recorded.

The study also revealed that the community leaders who are given the opportunity to select potential beneficiaries are contributing to the ineffectiveness or negative impacts of humanitarian aid to food security because they lack training. Most selection committees are expected to deal with most crucial stage of selecting beneficiaries but without the proper training. With the increase in community disagreements, it's more important if the humanitarian aid workers do the selection themselves, along with better knowledge and experience, it shall become easier for humanitarian aid workers to select beneficiaries who deserve to avoid inclusion and exclusion errors because these were the concerns raised by many respondents and it affects food security to some households.

Therefore, this brings to the fore the issues of concerning responsibility, timing for training and the target groups. The researcher also made a serious observation that since the provision of humanitarian aid in the rural communities, the community leaders have never been trained, supervised and there is lack of coordinated social mobilization programs conducted at community level. This was a result of lack of resources, there are no budgets being set aside to make follow ups of verify the beneficiaries proposed by the community leaders.

The data analysis revealed that most of the beneficiaries are food insecure despite their participation in humanitarian aid programs. Through the use of coping strategies, a largest number of the beneficiaries are food insecure this might be a result of negative dependence. Most households have changed their diet, changed number of meals and rations of their meals so that they may increase their short-term availability of food. Humanitarian aid is not a major cause of food insecurity in the communities of Buhera district, thus other factors like climate change, lack of inputs and economic instability are responsible. Most people do not like negative coping mechanisms for example selling assets

to avoid cycle of poverty.

The researcher also observed that next year there is likely to be food insecurity in Buhera because the communities depends on subsistence farming yet what is in their fields shows that they will not get anything.

In conclusion, the researcher observed that poverty contributes to food insecurity. Humanitarian aid alone is not a panacea to food insecurity in the communities of Zimbabwe. The humanitarian aid is not addressing real factors that are causing food unavailability, inaccessibility and instability so that there will be sustainability in terms of food security. There is need for capacity building, sustainable livelihood development and more development projects that are sustainable so that people will not look up to the aid year after year. Thus, if the government is fully committed to give reliable support to the communities, the communities will not depend on humanitarian aid.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of the paper declare no conflict of interest

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