

Lack of institutional services: the impact on household food Insecurity in Ntambanana, KwaZulu-Natal.

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore how food security at household level is affected by lack of institutional services. This study particularly looks at how these constraints affect access to food and assess the availability of institutional services such as the availability of extension services in Ntambanana. The availability of institutional support in rural areas is regarded as means of rural development which eliminate problems of access to food and other services. The general findings of the study reveal that assessment and evaluation of policies that are based on rural development and food security is very important. These include improving communication amongst various stakeholders, creating an enabling environment for local businesses, ensuring the availability of facilities such as storage, communication and transport facilities. The results reflect that socio – economic conditions play an important role in accessing food by looking at the level of purchasing power in the community. This study concludes that the cost effective ways to improve access to food is to assist local small scale businesses to earn cash through creating market for them and invest in institutional services that lead to improving food security. The study recommends that improved rural institutional services sustains food security as well as contributes to the improvement in the living conditions of rural households.

Key words: food security/insecurity, institutional support, infrastructural support, smallholder farmers, access to food.

Introduction

Food security is achieved when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food for a healthy and active life (Department of Agriculture, 2002). Rural people are affected by factors such as poverty, poor access to markets and inadequate of institutional support and these factors have exposed them to food insecurity. The Department of Agriculture (2006) stated that in South Africa, the rural population is vulnerable to food insecurity and the quality of life of them has as a result deteriorated very much. It is further stated that the cause of food insecurity or hunger in South Africa, is not due to shortage of food, but rather an inadequate access to food by certain categories of individuals and households in the population.

One of the challenges of rural areas is the weakness of rural local administration and insufficient social mobilisation to take on effective development as many of the people migrate and the rural economy stagnates. Furthermore, poor governance systems also make rural areas poor investments. Related to this are weak structures of community participation and contribution and

development plans that never address ward needs leading to communities not being involved in their own development and being deprived of local opportunities (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2011). The institutional infrastructure available to serve households' needs for credit for agricultural production in the traditional black rural areas' varies according to whether that production is mainly for the market or for self-consumption. Formal agricultural credit inherently a private sector function in most instances it is only the public sector that plays this role in the old black rural areas. Parastatal banks have made substantial efforts to satisfy the demand for credit in the old black rural areas (Human Science Research Council, HSRC, 2004).

Barrios (2008) stated that there is still a strong belief among rural households and the community at large that credit should be provided by the government and many rural credit facilities in rural communities fail because of a very low repayment of debts. In rural areas food-insecure households are normally too cash strapped to buy inputs in the market. Access to adequate credit is required, but they do not often qualify to get credit. The research indicated that no more than a quarter of smallholders credit needs are satisfied through institutional lending while the rest is siphoned off by large and medium farmers producing cash crops primarily for the market (Alamgir and Arorai 1991).

Access to financial support is often more important for smallholder farmers, as the majority of them do not have formal employment, and therefore, may not have sufficient income to finance their projects (Mthembu, 2005). Since the majority of smallholder farmers do not have formal employment and live in communal areas, farmers do not have collateral that could be used when borrowing money from financial institutions such as banks (Coffey, 1998). In some areas, an emphasis on rural finance, rather than exclusively agricultural finance, is justified. In rural Ethiopia credit schemes were operated by advancing loans to groups of women farmers to undertake various commercial activities (Peacock and Jowett, 2006). South Africa does not have such credit schemes and they are both developing countries, so South Africa could learn from this.

The largest volume of lending for agricultural purposes, since the late 1990s has come from the Land Bank, though others such as Ithala Bank in KwaZulu-Natal, Uvimba Bank and its predecessors in Eastern Cape formally known as Transkei-Ciskei and Agribank Northwest have had a significant local presence (HSRC, 2004). Giving credit to small businesses is the most successful way to promote food production and food security. As pointed out earlier, smallholders or households in rural areas cannot access credit due to illiteracy and lack of information and lending processes. The rural poor have been forced to resort to exploitative, informal sources of credit. Financial institutions extending credit to rural households have not necessary support from governments and central banks such as seed capital and periodic enlargement of their capital base. Lack of capital is a feature of poverty and the poor generally lack both savings and borrowing opportunities (Peacock and Jowett, 2006).

It is crucial that rural credit institutions be encouraged to mobilise savings for lending purposes (Alamgir and Arorai, 1991). While micro-finance institutions have taken financial services to many people who previously did not have access to financial services, micro-finance institutions have failed to reach poorer rural areas and smallholder agricultural producers whose livelihoods are characterised by seasonal investments, risks and returns (Morduch, 1999).

Exposing the poor to access to credit is a technique that can raise farm incomes, not through higher prices for agricultural goods, which tend to transfer onto consumers and have a negative impact on food security since they reduce production costs (Muhumaza, 2002). Commercial

banks are likely to be reluctant to go on board on rural credit programmes because of the particular difficulties encountered in rural financial markets. Other problems include poorly developed legal systems and information infrastructure, high transaction costs, lack of credit and financial records of potential borrowers and collateral that is not secure (Adams and Vogel 1986). Barham *et al.* (1996) stated that in Bangladesh, commercial banks are forced to open a certain number of rural branches before they can open additional, more profitable, urban branches. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD,1985a: Ch.6) in Alamgir and Arorai (1991) stated that institutional framework is adopted to deliver credit to the smallholders food producers, a number of strategic elements should be kept in view of the following:

- Clear criteria should be laid down to ensure that smallholders and the rural poor receive the necessary credit in time. Women's needs, in particular, should be addressed, as their role in family food security is crucial. Income, landholding, ceiling on loans, type of eligible loan can restrict the benefit of credit to food-insecure households.
- Access to credit for smallholders and the rural poor should be improved by relaxing eligibility criteria; more especially restructure security requirements of property or land. The shift of attitudes of credit institutions and staff training should be done, towards greater sensitivity to the needs of smallholders and rural people in general is extremely important.
- Credit must be accompanied by appropriate research and extension support. Otherwise, credit use will be less than effective and delinquency will result. The stock of knowledge and technology has to be expanded in favour of smallholders, and institutions responsible for spreading the new know-how also have to be strengthened.

The lack of purchasing power

The majority of households in South Africa lack access to purchase food due inadequacy of cash. The main causes of this situation are due to unemployment, inflation of food prices and low wages. Black households have the lowest standards of living and are much more vulnerable to food insecurity (Department of Agriculture in Integrated Food Security Strategy, IFSS, 2002). In addition incomes earned from both on farm and off-farm activities allows household to access food through exchange either via the money economy or other governmental grants (HSRC, 2004). In South Africa, rural communities' source of economy is greatly dependent on agriculture and the poor performance of farmers is caused by climatic changes and poor market prices. The income derived from this source is very little and it fails to sustain the family in terms of food purchase and most farming families are likely to be exposed to food insecurity (Civil Society Agriculture Network, 2005).

Institutional challenges in agricultural development

Kirsten *et al.* (2009) stated that a since agriculture is a rural economic activity in most African states the adoption of new technologies is widely accepted for agricultural development that use purchased inputs to increase land and labour productivity. However, Kirsten further stated that the absence of markets in rural areas due to low purchasing power has made domestic markets poorer in access to global markets caused by distortions. Groenewald (2004) maintains that South African agriculture has been plagued with challenges such as lack to access to land resources, absolute poverty in rural areas, unproductive use of land and resources and also

social, economic and political inequality. Furthermore, small scale farmers have limited and differential access to credit. This indicates that financial institutions serving small scale farmers are inefficient and borrowers as well as non-borrowers are credit-constrained. Kirsten *et al.*, (2009) further state that there is insufficient allocation of labour for their own land during labour peaks for some farmers because of poverty, forgoing valuable increases in their harvest, as shortages of food drive them to work for others. Most of the rural areas have a relative scarcity of water, both for human basic needs and for direct production in irrigation agriculture the latter is often exacerbated by the low level of investment in irrigation infrastructure.

The study area or location of the study

The Ntambanana area is located in the northern coast part of KwaZulu Natal and is one of the six local municipalities under uThungulu District (Figure 1.1). Ntambanana covers an area of 1083 km² and has a population of 94772 people and 98% of the total people as per 2007 community survey. Eighty five percent of the land in Ntambanana area belongs to Ingonyama Trust and 15% of the land is privately owned by commercial farmers. Ntambanana municipality is rated as the poorest municipality in uThungulu District 28 it solely depends on equitable share. The implementation of property rates has set a base in revenue collection since the municipality was able to collect 2% rates from farmers in 2007/8 and 6% in 2009/10 (Ntambanana Municipality Integrated Development Plan, IDP, 2010/2011). The overlap below map depicts Ntambanana Traditional Authorities.

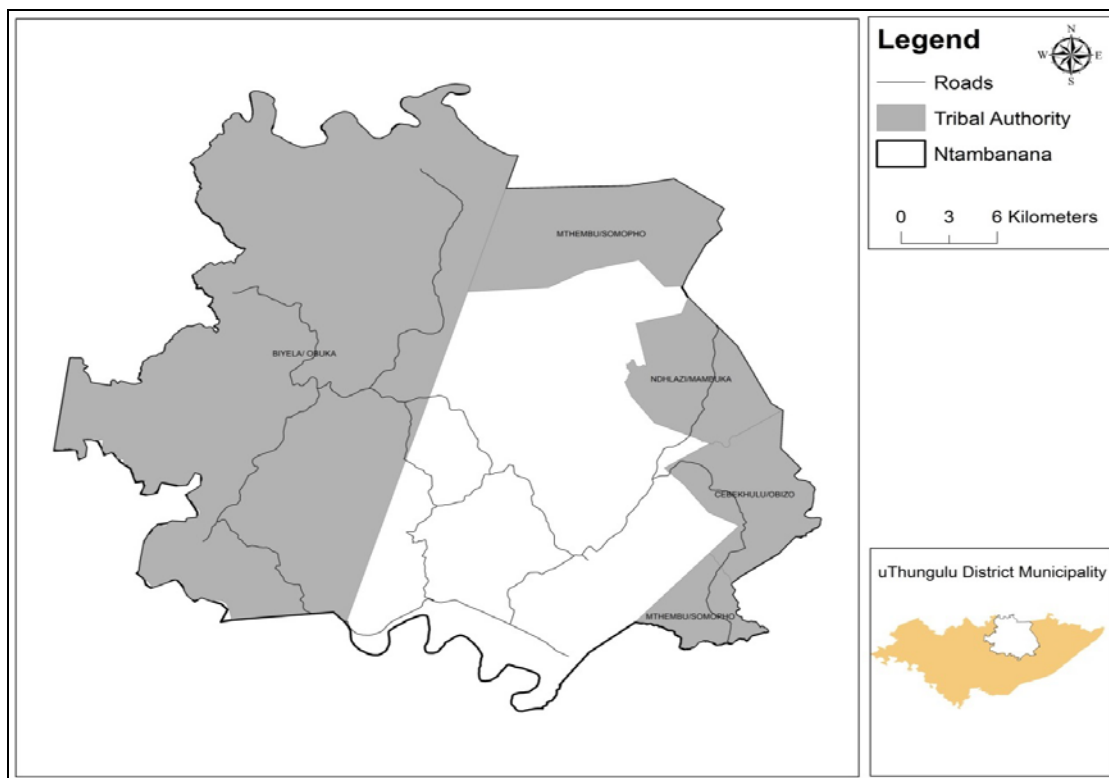


Figure 1: Ntambanana Traditional Authorities Map

Ntambanana is predominantly rural with no big or formally established towns. The settlement pattern is largely what is defined as rurally scattered, which is an extremely sparsely populated settlement pattern and this makes infrastructure provision somewhat difficult. The Ntambanana State Farms are owned by the Department of Land Affairs and controlled by the Department of

Agriculture, but are in the process of being transferred to the community through a land redistribution programme. The largest proportion of the total population in the Ntambanana municipal area is based in the Traditional Authority Areas.

Ntambanana has been characterised as one of the municipalities with a high percentage of illiteracy. The statistics indicate that very few people have finished their matric in this area. Poverty associated with unemployment is one of the contributing factors, since many people drop out of school to seek work in bigger cities like Durban and Johannesburg. Economic activity in the traditional areas such as production of food for own use, arts and crafts and informal sales are generally disregarded and create the impression that traditional communities are without a source of income and survive from day to day on subsistence production. Sixty four percent of the population in the ethnic group areas receives no formal income and between 68% and 84.6% in the Obizo, Mambuka, Somopho North, Somopho South and larger proportions in the Southern area of Obuka receive no formal income (Ntambanana Municipality IDP, 2010/2011).

Research design and methodology

This article is based on a qualitative study that employed open-ended questionnaires to collect data from respondents, and was analysed by means of content analysis. The study targeted household, government officials and small scale famers at Ntambanana area, an area situated in the north of KwaZulu Natal which is one of the six local municipalities under uThungulu District. Ntambanana municipality has 36.70 pensioner headed households. It is perceived that most households in the area depend on the government pension grants for survival, since there is still a high percentage of unemployment in the area.

A sample was drawn from the population of Ntambanana area at Obizo, Obuka, Somopho and Mambuka Traditional Authorities and respondents were selected as key elements in qualitative data gathering. The study used stratified random sampling whereby the targeted population was divided into homogeneous subgroups, with a simple random sample then being taken from each. There were three categories, the first comprises of households, the second comprises of government officials and the last one comprises of small scale famers. The study used the following formula to determine sample size:

$$S = \frac{N \times n}{100}$$

S = Sample size

N= Number of units in the population 1 to N

n = Decide on the sample size that you need

100 = given percentage

Household in Ntambanana = 215	Government officials = 5	Small Scale farmers = 90
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$$\text{Therefore: } S = \frac{215 \times 20}{100} = 43$$

$$S = \frac{5 \times 40}{100} = 2$$

$$S = \frac{90 \times 20}{100} = 18$$

$$43+2+18 = 63$$

Total Sample size = 63

The researchers administered questionnaires to the participants in English and isiZulu so they could choose the language they preferred to use. The questionnaires consisted of open ended

questions giving the respondents the opportunity to express their opinions, attitudes and suggestions pertaining to the effect of infrastructural services on food insecurity and Institutional support. The questionnaire was designed to capture data on factors that influence food security. The researchers also interviewed 18 small scale famers in the form of focus groups. The groups were inclusive of both males and females; they were targeted because of their involvement in gardening projects. The researcher was mainly interested in obtaining information on the extent to which the garden projects contributed to food security. Primary and secondary data collected was textually analysed and was carefully and scientifically presented in percentages.

Data analysis

This section presents the findings from the data collected in detail, in terms of using frequencies and themes relative to the objectives of the study. It also discusses these findings in relation to the broad research objectives and questions.

Themes relative to the objectives of the study

Since the study used a semi-structured questionnaire, the qualitative responses were analysed by means of extracting themes from the responses of the respondents. The results presented and discussed below are arranged in terms of main themes extrapolated from the objectives of the study and sub-themes identified from the responses of the respondents. The first section of the results presents information on the extension services, communication facilities and systems, financial support and purchasing power. The last part looks at the challenges on the basis of the above mentioned factors.

Extension Services

In general the majority of Ntambanana people and farmers are illiterate and agricultural extension would play an important role in assisting them by identifying problems and improving their situation. The study revealed that service provision needs to be prioritised because more services are needed such as water, a physical market, better communication facilities such as postal services, telephones and other infrastructural facilities. The findings are based on the role of an agricultural extension services due to the dominance of agricultural activities which are known to be the major sources of income.

Government officials stated that high level of poverty in Ntambanana is seen in those households which depend on government grants, some of the unemployed and those involved in small scale farming and subsistence farming. The researchers further indicate that there is lack of water supplies and many households depend on communal taps which are also limited in number. It was indicated that if there is often no water from communal taps and the municipality supplies communities with safe and clean water through transport it by water tankers.

Government officials reported that the municipality includes the unit which is responsible for local development and assisting people to register as cooperatives. It was also pointed out that the most important service provision was to provide local people with skills based on how to establish business and other means of income generation. The respondents indicated that their main functions are to organise training, workshops and summits for SMME's because these assist people to acquire skills on how to make local resources their source of income.

It was reported that most projects were sponsored by the office of the premier of KwaZulu Natal as part of rendering service delivery and 300 people benefited from this funding. The participants indicated that these projects are mitigating the problem of food insecurity and they are promoting the slogan "ONE HOME, ONE GARDEN". It was also reported that the District municipality introduced the concept "fresh market produce" which means people will be assisted by improving physical infrastructure such as roads and physical market. This concept is in-line with the findings of Anaeto *et al.* (2012) that agricultural extension services encompass all aspects of agriculture which includes the provision of timely information, the linking of farmers with sources of farming inputs and credit facilities and most importantly the provision of education services to farmers.

The study revealed that 83% of respondents indicated that extension officers from the local Department of Agriculture are always available if they need them for agricultural purposes while 17% stated that extension officers are not available for them. During the focus group discussions the majority of participants reported that they are contented with the visibility of extension officers and 78% of participants stated clearly that the information that is provided by extension officers is helpful enough to utilise it for food security. Twenty two percent (22%) indicated that the services from extension officers are unavailable for them and not helpful.

The focus group discussions also revealed that the causes of unavailability of services provided by extension officers were poor communication between stakeholders. Interestingly the findings of the University of Greenwich (2011) assert that extension services provide rural people with the access to knowledge and information they need so as to increase their productivity and improve their quality of life and livelihoods. Furthermore, it has helped rural communities move towards meeting food security and aims at promoting and implementing poverty alleviation programmes.

The study revealed that 34% of participants were provided with marketing advice by extension officers. This comprised items such as how to market their produce and to find relevant markets as well to assist them to have a physical market. It was reported that 33% of respondents indicated that they were assisted by extension officers on how to keep records for a farm and also 33% indicated that they were educated about suitable farming methods that can sustain their farming activities and increasing their production. The study findings are in-line with the University of Greenwich (2011) finding, that extension officers provide advice to farmers on problems or opportunities in agricultural production, marketing and addressing public interest issues in rural areas food security monitoring and youth development.

Communication strategies

It was clearly stated that one of the hindrances which makes households food non-secure in rural areas is the weakness of rural local government and lack of participation of community members in development matters. The weak communication of various institutions leads to failure to address needs (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2011). Ntambanana Municipality formulated communication principles to address the ineffectiveness of projects and programmes which lead to food insecurity. These principles aim at maximising public information and minimising confusion and communication with the community in both written and oral forms with their home language which is isiZulu.

According to key informants it has been noticed that there was lack of communication between communities and organisations such as municipality and other government institutions that led to the formulation of communication strategy which was approved by the municipal council. It

was stated that most of projects failed because of poverty and lack of communications among the stakeholders that led to an increase in food insecurity and unemployment. It was reported that the tools were since developed to improve communication amongst stakeholders to enable them implement programmes effectively. These tools are the following:

- Public meetings: it was reported that public meetings are called by ward counsellor in their wards and explain about new projects and Amakhosi (headmen) are informed about any meetings and are also playing a leading role.
- IDP Road shows and Sukuma Sakhe: it was indicated that campaigns were conducted to hear from the community about their problems and key informants stated that this tool was the element of a bottom -up approach.
- Website and media: key informants and focus group discussion pointed out that not all of them have access to technology such as the internet due to illiteracy and poverty. It further stated that the lack of access to the market was created by lack of access to technology that would ease the process of marketing their produce and other products.

Schneider (2002) indicated that most rural areas have a poor and limited access to electricity and no access to telecommunications lines which has negative impact in improving communication among stakeholders. Furthermore, rural areas have major challenges which are the weakness of rural local government and inadequate social mobilisation to take forward development; these challenges are caused by poor and inadequate communication.

Availability of financial support

Barrios (2008) clearly states that rural households have a belief that financial support should be provided by the state and many rural communities cannot access funds easily due to their low income and failure to repay loans. But the availability of agricultural financial support to the small scale farmers who have no capital and little to invest in farming is a crucial component in rural farming so as to overcome low production that results in food insecurity. According to the focus groups, the majority of respondents indicated that they were never assisted by any organisation financially.

Others were assisted by extension officers by referring them to relevant financial institutions and clearly reported that most of the people do not meet the requirements to be granted a loan due to that the majority are unemployed, pensioners and earning very low salaries. The province noted that many communities lack access to financial support and in the state of province address of 2013 it was stated that financial support will also be provided by the provincial government to augment municipal resources while Ithala Bank has agreed to partner and offer credit facilities to small growers. Furthermore, Small Business Development Agency will work closely to support the co-operatives and small business involved in the initiative. The graph below depicts the sources of money to invest in farming.

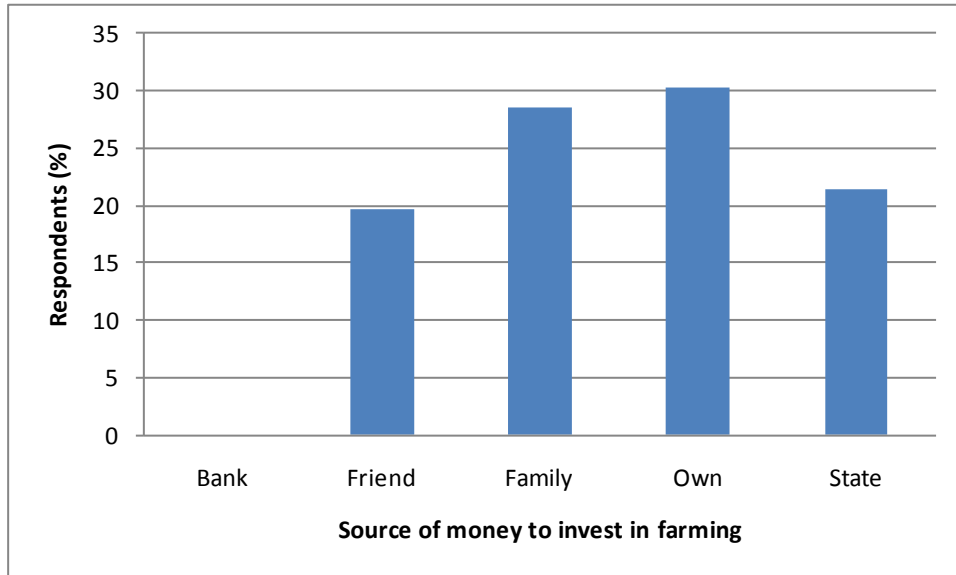


Figure 2: Source of money to invest in farming

The study revealed that 30% of respondents indicated that their source of income to invest in farming comes from their pockets while 20% of respondents got assisted by their families and 20% participants by their friends. Interestingly 21% of respondents were assisted by the state which is an indication that rural people have limited access for financial assistance. The study discovered that 0% of participants succeeded and has no access to financial assistances and it clearly indicate that rural people and smallholders are marginalised in terms of having smooth access to credits institutions. Furthermore, it was clear that no farmers or other local business benefited from the banks for financial assistance. It was suggested by the HSRC (2004) that extending credit to rural farmers and smallholders can be the most progressive strategy to promote food production and household's food security. It was reported that the rural population of Ntambanana are experiencing hardship in terms of gaining access to financial support and it is clearly indicated by the key informants that the municipality does not fund people but they assist them through channelling them to relevant structures and institutions. Global Donor Platform (GDP) (2006) specifically noted that microfinance institutions do not play a prominent role to uplift the standard of small scale farming and the number of small farmers faced serious repayment problems due to poor provision of services. The deduction that can be made out of this is that small scale farming projects continue to encounter a financial hurdle which in turn hampers their day-to-day operations.

In addition, it was vividly indicated that their duty is to provide them with skills of how to write proposals for funding. Extension officers indicated that the Department of Agriculture does not provide people with funding but they are assisted with seeds distribution and a free tractor to assist with farming activities. Alamgir and Arorai (1991) suggested that easy access to financial institutions must be created for rural people and smallholders and the attitudes of financial institutions need to be revised through training of their staff and creating a friendly environment to cater for the needs of rural people. Clear criteria need to be laid down to guarantee that smallholders and the rural poor receive the essential credit in time.

Purchasing power

In general, the majority of people in South Africa lack cash to purchase food and this are caused by limited income opportunities and mostly it occurred in rural areas. The study discovered that

the majority of people rely on governmental grants such as pension as indicated in Figure 1.3 and it was clearly indicated that even their income is very limited the majority range at R500-R1000 that led to lack of purchasing power. Ninety five percent of respondents indicated that since they lack purchasing power they have never benefited from food aid from any organisation while five percent have benefited from it.

The HSRC (2004) noted with concern that South African households increasingly have to rely on pensions or other state social grants. Furthermore, incomes earned from both farm and non-farm activities allows households to access food through exchange via the money economy. All participants of this study indicated that they purchase their food and non-food items in town and it was reported that transport is a major challenge since that it is expensive due to poor roads. The study revealed that the problem is not with the shortage of food but it is clear that many people lack the purchasing power to buy available food. The issue of food price inflation and petrol prices are regarded as the major contributing factors to the lack of purchasing power as it was alluded by participants that transport is expensive for them.

General problems distracting crop farming activities

Figure 3 shows the problems that affect farming activities in general which were alluded by the respondents and focus groups during the discussions.

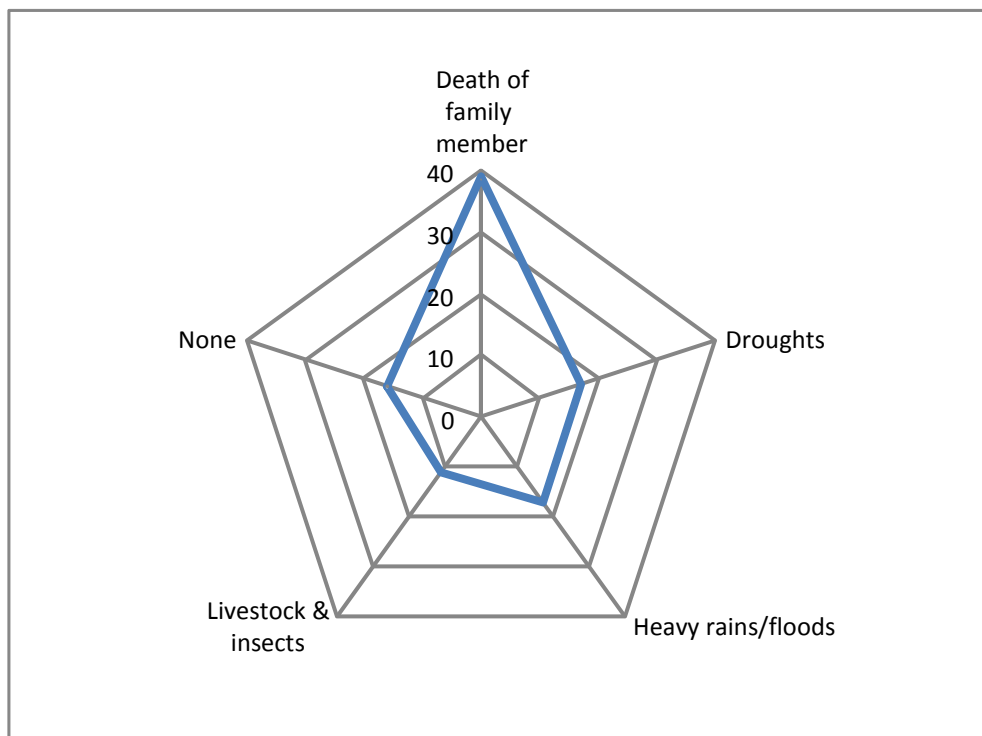


Figure 3: Events distracting crop farming activities

The graph shown in Figure 3 presents that 39% of respondents indicated that the death of family member and community members are distracting the farming activities because in their areas people are prohibited from practicing farming until the person is buried. It was reported that it is their culture to mourn as instructed by their traditional leaders. This concurs with what was happening concerning the Cocopa nation (Kelly, 1949). They did not carry out any activities except crying when there was death within the community. All the people were expected to

mourn at the house of the deceased until the cremation which usually occur within 24 hours after death and during that time they are singing and dancing especially did things that the deceased used and liked to do. The issue of drought was reported to be a thorny problem by 17% of respondents who indicated that there is no other alternative to overcome this. It was also clearly indicated that the study area has no irrigation facilities in place and dams are also inadequate. The dams in the area are owned by white farmers and thus limit black farmers to have access to water for them to practise agricultural activities.

Seventeen percent of respondents indicated that heavy rains have a negative impact on crop and livestock farming that result in floods. It was reported that there are no facilities which can assist farmers to protect their crops and livestock from the heavy rains and they stated that if the Department of Agriculture and Local Municipality would assist them with the provision of dams that can turn heavy rains into a main source of water. Ntambanana is known as a place of severe drought conditions. For example, in order to overcome heavy rains or flooding, the people of Bangladesh developed the amazing varieties of *bona aman*¹, which can grow 20 feet or higher to withstand deep flooding. These miraculous paddy stalks just float in water and can grow up to a foot in 24 hours just to keep pace with the fast rising level of floodwater. These capabilities of *bona aman* are yet to be matched by anything produced by modern plant breeding. Bangladeshi farmers also developed *ropa aman*² to adjust to the brief time period that is usually available between *aus*³ harvest and arrival of floodwater. Similarly, Bangladeshi farmers developed many varieties of *boro*⁴ rice and other *rab*⁵ crops to suit the deltaic conditions of the country (Islam, 2001).

The other 10% indicated that their main problem is that their farms or fields are not fenced in and it is very easy for livestock to destroy their crops. Hill (1997) reported that farmers in Western Uganda do indeed consider crop-raiding by wild animals to be, at least potentially, a major source of crop losses. Ninety per cent of farmers sampled reported some degree of crop losses as a result of damage by wildlife, and a total of 23 vertebrate species are reported to raid local farms. Baboons and pigs are by far the most commonly reported species, with vervet monkeys, birds and bushbuck also being cited as frequent visitors to farms. The baboons and pigs, and to a lesser extent vervet monkeys, porcupines and birds, are considered to be major perpetrators of crop-raiding ($rS = 0.966$, $N = 18$, $p < 0.001$) (Hill, 1997). The remaining 17% had nothing to report on as far as activities that distracted crop farming.

These problems and challenges are an indication of weak institutional support and inappropriate governmental policies and are the main factors responsible for food insecurity and poverty in general. It is noted that the government needs to pay more attention to improving the food security conditions of the historically disadvantaged people. These problems also indicate that government needs to improve service delivery to meet the needs of people and to enable an environment in which there is food security.

Conclusions

The study revealed that in order to obtain food security institutional issues are crucial and regarded as the way to minimise food insecurity especially in undeveloped and developing areas such as rural areas. The findings of the study clearly indicated that to sustain food security requires high participation of both public and private institutions with them offering their financial assistance and providing them with skills as well as training where necessary.

The availability of extension services within the study area: The findings of the study indicated that in Ntambanana extension services are mostly needed because of the high illiteracy rate. The institutions that provide these services will assist them by identifying problems as well provide them with problem-solving skills. The study discovered that in order to overcome food insecurity the following services are crucial to be rendered: efficient water supply, physical markets, construction of roads and communication facilities. The study found that extension officers from the local Department of Agriculture play a vital role in supporting and assisting smallholder farmers to expand their produce and assist them to find relevant markets. The findings of this research further indicate that local smallholder farmers are assisted with free seeds and fencing to mitigate the constraints on farming. The results of the research have confirmed that rural agriculture is a major source of income and needs to be viewed as the most effective strategy to alleviate food insecurity in most rural areas, coupled with the improvements of infrastructural services.

The availability of financial support from various institutions and communication strategies: The findings of the research indicate that there is no adequate support in the shape of finance for local people to start their businesses and improve them. Furthermore, the majority of people in Ntambanana do not meet the requirements for loans due to their unemployment status. The study revealed that lack of financial support in Ntambanana is caused by weak institutions which failed to communicate with local people on how to obtain assistance. The findings of this research indicate that there is indeed a communication breakdown amongst stakeholders and the majority of community members do not have access to communication strategies which are used by the municipality and other local institutions. Due to high illiteracy rates in Ntambanana, it is difficult to use some ways for communication such as the internet, pamphlet written in English and the lack of telecommunication hampers this as well.. These factors contribute negatively towards allowing rural people to have even information about the local market.

To establish information on the purchasing power of households and intra- familial distribution: The findings of this research indicate that Ntambanana area has low purchasing power because of its low socio-economic status which makes it difficult for a household to bring sufficient food to the table. The findings of this research make it clear that the majority of the Ntambanana population is earning low wages while food price inflation is still an issue. There is also very poor infrastructure and a worsening situation. Transportation is expensive due to the bad roads. The town which is regarded as the source of food is also far from rural Ntambanana and this exacerbates the high cost of living.

Recommendations

The evidence from the study confirmed that there is lack of institutional support from various organisations. It suggests that more attention should be paid to address these deficiencies that hinder food security. However, there are challenges which continue to affect the progress of rural development that also contribute negatively to sustain food security.

It is recommended that relevant stakeholders implement programmes such as training to small scale farmers, and especially mentorship in agricultural skills. Furthermore, the government needs to speed up the processes of resolving problems which are faced by rural people for example more projects and programmes need to be implemented in order to increase the purchasing power for rural people and the projects which would create job opportunities. Relevant stakeholders are encouraged to establish and improve strategies for dissemination of information for rural people and local language need to be used as the means of

communication. Financial assistance for all rural businesses should be made available by relevant institutions. The creation of financial institutions which would cater for the needs of the self- employed and small local businesses and this will contribute positively to household food security.

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¹ *Bona-aman* is the deep water broadcast paddy that is sown in early spring and harvested in late autumn. ² *Ropa-aman* is the transplanted shallow water paddy that is grown with seedlings transplanted in summer, and the crop is harvested in autumn. ³ *Aus* is the broadcast paddy that is sown in late spring and harvested in late summer. ⁴ *Boro* is the winter paddy grown with irrigated water. ⁵ *Rabi* refers to all dry, winter season crops that cannot benefit from rain.