



An Appraisal of Household Food Security Programmes for Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods in South Africa

Prof. Loraine Boitumelo (LB) Mzini

Public Administration, School of Government Studies, Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, South Africa

E-mail: Tumi.Mzini@nwu.ac.za / tumi.mzini@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study evaluated the level of participation among low-income households in South Africa particularly in the Sedibeng District Municipality (SDM). The study addressed the prospects of self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods in SDM, South Africa. This study is attached to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) number 1: “eradication of hunger and poverty”. Acute food shortages and hunger are currently experienced globally, caused by skills shortages and unemployment. Today more than 800 million people are hungry around the world, and that number continues to grow. In SDM unemployment and poverty are on the rise despite the economic growth experienced. It is estimated that 40% of the population in SDM is vulnerable to food insecurity. The food security challenges impact the country’s sustainable development. In South Africa, the national, provincial, and local governments launched several HFSP projects to complement the high levels of poverty. The study found that the HFSP provide food supplements to vulnerable communities. Furthermore, the HFSP project serves to incorporate the participation of the community encourages a greater role for the entire food system and is devoted to developing new jobs. It is believed that policy innovations and maintenance could contribute towards long-term programmes for alleviating poverty globally. Low-income households were more likely to be food secure, however, such households did not participate in food security programs. The study found that the non-participating household compromised the quality of the food consumption. Households lacked access to water and land infrastructure, and this compromised the quality of food consumption. Most households depend on social grants and the informal economy to improve the level of food security.

Keywords: *Food Security; Household Food Security Programmes; Sustainable Livelihoods; Public Participation*

Introduction

This article reports the findings of the thesis conducted by Mzini (2010) which concentrated on public participation and focused on household food security programmes. Public participation in local governance is recognised as an essential component of human development. Public participation has received increasing attention on the global agenda. Public participation forms part of the public policy-making process. Public participation is seen as a “hallmark of government policy” (Mzini, 2010:117) towards community development. This is witnessed by the advent of democracy in 1994 and the first democratic local government elections held in 2000 which emphasized working with local citizens for improved service delivery. The growing rate of poverty and unemployment is a concern in societies around the world. These brought immense frustrations to policy-makers. The eradication of poverty is one of the top priorities for the South African government. In this regard, the government pledged itself to rapid socio-economic development by placing the alleviation of poverty and inequality at the centre of its development agenda.

This study served as an evaluative platform for understanding public participation in poverty alleviation programmes, particularly on the HHFS projects. The aim was to analyse the level of participation among the low-income households living in the SDM. The factors contributing to the successful implementation of food security programmes were also assessed based on the municipal and provincial perspectives. The sections below describe the methodological approaches as applied in this study.

Contextual Aspects and Methodological Aspects

This research applied mainly a qualitative approach and was complemented by empirical surveys and participant observations. Data collection for this study comprised secondary data, primary data, and interviews using semi-structured questionnaires. The study of literature on the framework of public participation, poverty alleviation and food security allowed the researcher to gain knowledge on this research area. The primary data for this study are drawn from the three local municipalities of the SDM, namely: Emfuleni, Lesedi and Midvaal local municipalities; starting in September 2008 and ending in September 2009. A total of 112 households were interviewed. A semi-structured questionnaire was developed to allow the application of face-to-face interviews. Stratified random sampling was applied to ascertain the level of participation among the low-income households of the SDM. The participants comprised the households from the three local municipalities of the SDM. With these approaches, the researcher aimed to record the information obtained to produce a narrative analyzing the selected households. The research ethics were considered. The respondents participated voluntarily, and the responses were reported collectively. For example, phrases such as “the respondents” or “participants” were used to demonstrate the collective responses from the participants.

Conceptual Framework for Public Participation and Food Security Programmes

The basis for public participation in South Africa is outlined in key legislation and government policy documents. Section 152 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)* clearly defines the role of local government in encouraging the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government. This influenced the role of local government to encourage corporative governance and active citizenship among local communities. The philosophy of active citizenship supports the involvement of community members to be responsible and to oversee matters affecting their development.

Public participation allows community members to engage with the state during the policy formulation process. Community engagement allows informed decisions for enhancing “development” and “service delivery” (Buccus, Hemson, *et al.*, 2007:3). Cloete (2011:67) views development as an outcome of governmental interventions in society. The South African government has placed the need to address poverty and inequality firmly at the centre of its development strategy. The government’s intervention in society focuses on reducing the high rates of poverty and unemployment levels. Poverty is seen as a strong determinant factor in citizen ill-being (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2006:7) and often permits individuals access to sufficient resources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum standard of living. Food security challenges impact the country’s sustainable development. Public participation in the activities of local governance is recognised as an essential component of human development (Houston, 2001:218).

Food security is recognized as a priority public policy objective. The Department of Agriculture, Forest, and Fisheries (DAFF, 2012) defines food security as the access to physical, social, and economic resources by all households at all times. Access to physical resources refers to a decent housing infrastructure complemented by social resources such as the basic services offered by the municipality. Economic resources relate to the creation of decent employment opportunities and access to local economic development programmes. Adequate access to the abovementioned resources is aimed at enabling an individual to be self-sufficient in food production gain access to markets and ability to purchase food items (Chivenge, 2012) of their own choice.

Sustainable Livelihood System in the Sdm

The sections below outline the design of the sustainable livelihood system as implemented in the SDM for promoting public participation. The government struggled to make progress in fighting poverty and several alternative measures have been proposed to determine the poverty threshold. Sustainable livelihood systems serve as a safety net especially when unemployment continues to rise (Cassidy and Okos, 2009:4). Safety nets are three-fold and include basic services, cash transfers, and labour-intensive programmes. The respective redistributed resources are discussed and focus on livelihoods promotion, livelihoods protection and livelihoods provisioning (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS), 2007:3). The three types are discussed below as it refers to the SDM.

Livelihood Protection

Livelihood protection refers to the activities aimed to prevent the decline in household livelihood security (IFRCRCS, 2007:3). Livelihood protection is a short-term mechanism for relieving low-income households with job opportunities. Short-term job opportunities are mainly offered through the expanded public works programme (EPWP). In the SDM, the following short-term opportunities were created:

- Construction of the Gautrain Boipatong Memorial Centre and the Youth Training Centre;
- The Boipatong leg of the Twenty Prioritized Townships Road infrastructure programme;
- Road construction and maintenance for regional Sewer Works in Ext 23 in Heidelberg;
- Household renewable energy project to improve energy efficiency in Sebokeng; and
- Building of the Evaton Fire Station (Mzini, 2010:91).

Livelihood Provisioning

Livelihood provisioning is designed to match project activities to poor people’s priorities (IFRCRCS, 2007:3). Livelihood provisioning includes food and non-food food allocations and focuses on assets, capabilities and activities required for a means of living (Pant and Hambly-Odame, 2010:7). Food allocations include food gardens, nutrition programmes and Nutrition programs includes community

feeding scheme (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) offered to school learners, homeless individuals. Such activities are undertaken either in the church, schools, and community halls among the affected communities. The non-food assets consist of natural capital, social capital, human capital, and human-made capital. Capability refers to the ability to convert asset endowments to entitlements which enable individuals to generate income.

Livelihoods Promotion

Livelihoods promotion includes government mechanisms aimed at improving household resilience (IFRCRCS, 2007:3). Livelihoods promotion also focuses on local economic development programs. Economic opportunity and security are the most important means of achieving food security (United States Department of Agriculture., 1999:41). The SDM promotes the citizen's livelihoods using **small enterprise development and access to micro-finance**. Livelihood promotion in the SDM is realized by utilizing the seven elements. The seven elements include an effective regulatory environment for business; a sound resource base; an appropriate skills base; income circulation; good levels of investment; access to finance and markets as well as access to effective and consistent service delivery in support of a business environment (Richardson, 2005:6). For example, the SDM its 4th small, medium enterprises which provided a platform for the small business sector to interact and develop economically.

Results: The Level of Public Participation for Household Food Security Programmes

The section below provides a report of the surveys conducted in the SDM to ascertain the level of household participation in the food security programmes.

Demographic Characteristics of the Selected Households in the SDM

This section presents the narrative results, findings and a discussion of the study conducted by Mzini (2010, 160-172) in the SDM. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of the respondents for the interviews conducted by the author.

Findings and Discussion

The author looks at the following elements for analyzing as to whether the household food security programmes promote sustainable livelihoods among low-income households. The discussion below looks at the context, assets and capabilities, policies, institutions and processes, livelihood strategies and outcomes of the food security programmes.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the low-income households (N=112)

Value Lable	Frequency (V)	Percentage (%)	Value Lable	Frequency (V)	Percentage (%)
Gender			Type of residence		
Male	57	51%	House	24	21%
Female	55	49%	Flat	7	6%
Category			Hostel		
Youth	24	21%	Low-Cost House (RDP)	39	36%
Elderly	20	18%	Informal (shack)	27	24%
Disabled	21	19%	Education: Highest level of qualification		
Unemployed	22	20%	Never attended	14	13%

Employed	25	22%
Age groups		
18-24	5	4%
25-31	16	14%
32-37	18	16%
38-44	13	12%
45-52	15	13%
53-65	35	32%
66 and over	10	9%
Identity document		
Yes	110	98%
No	2	2%
Marital status		
Single	48	44%
Married	43	38%
Divorced	5	4%
Widow	16	14%

Primary	32	29%
JC/Std 8/Grade 10/11	44	38%
Matric/ Grade 12	18	16%
Certificate	1	1%
FET	0	0%
Diploma	2	2%
University degree	1	1%
Employment		
Employed	30	27%
Self-employed	13	11%
Unemployed	69	62%
Income generation		
Disability	20	19%
Pension	31	28%
Child Support	30	26%
Foster	1	1%
Salary/ wages/ stipends	30	26%

Source Mzini, 2010:161

The sections below discuss the findings of this study.

Context

The milieu of food security is associated with a goal as it encompasses the broader environment focusing on the internal and external environments. The environment is seen as a legitimate policy issue in South African politics for achieving developmental mandates. The promotion of sustainable livelihoods is based on the external environment in which poor people live their lives (IFRCRC, 2007:2). With this food security can therefore be seen as an outcome of the performance of the food system at the national level and the relevant international framework conditions. The external environment also looks at the socio-economic hardships of the targeted group. The context of the SDM is characterized by urban and rural areas. The design of the food security programme looks at the population and household breakdown of the area. Socio-economic reviews are also considered to plan the programme for policy distribution. Municipalities comprise of large population that is unemployed, with low literacy and skill levels, and poor health. The study found that the design of the food security in the SDM is inclusive and all deserving community members are receiving government programmes.

The context of the food security programme is designed in such a way that the prioritization of objectives is also considered during the policy-making process. The following priority measures as suggested by Hogwood and Gunn (in Roux and Cloete, 2011:103) to guide the food security programmes, namely:

- Selection of criteria for determining priorities;
- Dimension of choice in which the priorities are expressed;
- Type of resources in which allocations are denominated; and
- Mechanism by which priorities are implemented.

In the SDM the priority areas for designing food security programmes considered the households living under the poverty line. Such households are the homeless communities; female-headed households; older people and their dependents; orphaned, displaced, neglected children; people living with disabilities; and people living in areas prone to natural calamities. These priorities also considered the living patterns

and the assets available for promoting the livelihoods of the vulnerable communities in the SDM. The section below provides the asset description for implementing the food security programme as it pertains to the SDM.

Assets and Capabilities

The Assets and capabilities refer to the resources poor people possess and use to gain a livelihood (IFRCRCS, 2007:2). Based on this research, it was found that the communities of the SDM have access to the housing infrastructure. The residents of the SDM have access to the following dwelling structures, namely: houses; flats; hostels; low-cost houses (RDP) and the informal settlements (shacks). The SDM also provide basic services to the housing structures mentioned above to complement the lifestyle of the occupants. It was found that the analysed households (houses (21%); flats (6%); hostels (%); and low-cost houses (RDP) (36%) had adequate access to water supply to participate in the food security objectives. However, the households living in the informal settlements (24%) situated in Sonderwater (Emfuleni Local Municipality) and Sicelo-Silahliwe (Midvaal Local Municipality) do not have access to adequate water supply, electricity, and proper road infrastructure.

Some of the informal settlements in South Africa were declared to be private land as they were owned by local business patrons. However, in 2009 SDM purchased the respective land and declared them as residential areas and were allocated to the targeted groups. In 2009, the author found that the SDM had installed the water supply and sewer pipes inside the residential areas (informal settlements). The 1996 Constitution of South Africa sets out the government's responsibility to provide the public with the opportunity to be involved in government decisions that affect their lives. Food security is linked to income, the built environment, education, employment, housing, health care and many other issues that people face daily. The observed households also had access to social services (government services: schools, health sector, post office, police stations and recreation centres). Households also indicated that they had access to the chain stores for purchasing their daily household items. Food security relies on an effective policy framework to attain developmental objectives.

Policies, Institutions, and Processes

The implementation of food security programmes occurs at different levels influenced by different variables (Roux and Cloete, 2011:99). These variables comprise a policy, institutions, and a process. These variables are public policy instruments since they determine access to assets and choice of livelihood strategies (IFRCRCS, 2007:2). In this section the author aimed to determine the implication of government policies on food security programmes. The South African government has placed the need to address poverty and inequality firmly at the center of the nation's agenda. The national, provincial, and local governments are involved in public policy implementation that includes addressing the needs of the communities on poverty and unemployment. The following policy framework guides the implementation of the food security programmes in South Africa particularly in the SDM:

- The Constitution of the RSA, Act of 1996 (hereafter the Constitution);
- The Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS), 2002;
- Gauteng Growth and Development Strategy (GGDS);
- Gauteng Agricultural Development Strategy (GADS);
- Sedibeng District Municipality: Pro-Poor Strategy
- Sedibeng District Municipality: Integrated Economic Development Plan (IEDP), 2004
- Integrated development planning (IDP);
- Local economic development (LED).

Section 27 of the Constitution expresses the right of every citizen to access sufficient food and water. Section 152 of the Constitution further compels municipalities to promote social and economic development. The IFSS was launched in 2002 to eradicate hunger, malnutrition, and food insecurity by 2015 (DAFF, 2002). The GGDS aims to provide social and economic infrastructure and services aimed at building sustainable communities and contributing to halving poverty. The GADS was launched on 23 February 2006 at Saul Tsotetsi Community Hall, Sebokeng and it is aimed, and it is aimed to develop township agribusiness. The GADS strives to support the establishment of farmer settlements, household food security and community food gardens (Mzini, 2010:122).

The SDM developed the Sedibeng District Municipality Pro Poor Strategy to improve household participation in poverty alleviation programmes. In 2004, the Sedibeng District Municipality produced the Integrated Economic Development Plan (IEDP). The IEDP elaborates a plan of action for economic development and integrates projects identified in the IDP, namely agriculture, industry, SMMEs, tourism, skills development, and institutional development (Richardson, 2005:41). Food security objectives in South Africa are incorporated into the integrated development planning (IDP) and the local economic development (LED) programmes; and are linked to the organisational objectives and performance strategic plans.

The framework of food security programmes is a trichotomy as it comprises three actors involved in the provision of antipoverty interventions, namely: financiers, providers, and beneficiaries (Cates, Hoddinott, Adato, *et al.*, 2001:1). The implementation of food security programmes depends on adequate policy instruments, and funding of such projects is crucial. Beneficiaries encompass vulnerable communities residing in low-income households. The providers consist of the voice of local development activists who are firmly rooted in development initiatives within the local setting (Kakani and Saha, 2007:5).

Support Structures

The obligation to eradicate food insecurity requires several actions, involving various public and non-public institutions (Rivera and Qamar, 2003:ii). In the SDM the municipality has dedicated employees to facilitate food security programmes. Community development workers were also appointed to monitor the implementation of the food security programmes in the SDM. Community development workers (CDWs) are key policy innovations relevant to public participation. The 2003 State of the Nation address by the former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki recognizes the need for a new public service echelon of multi-skilled community development workers (Buccus *et al.*, 2007:12). CDWs execute their line functions through government projects and act as resources for the vulnerable communities in breaking the deprivation trap which remains an obstacle in the lives of the communities (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006:49-40).

Ward committees also play a role in public policy programmes. Ward communities are community-based advisory structures and may make recommendations on any matter affecting their wards (Van der Waldt, 2007:37). As a result, ward committees become an appropriate structure for linking and discourse for promoting participatory democracy at the grassroots. Ward committees become an appropriate structure for linking and discourse for promoting participatory democracy at the grassroots.

Household participation in food security programmes is capacitated by the appointment of agricultural extension officers. The agricultural extension office is a political and organizational instrument utilized to facilitate development (Rivera and Qamar, 2003:7). The functions provided by these extension officers are “nonformal educational”. The Extension Officer disseminates information and advice intending to promote knowledge, attitudes, and crop production skills among low-income

households (Rivera and Qamar, 2003:7). In SDM each ward has a dedicated extension officer who plays an oversight role towards the effective participation of the community members.

Livelihood Strategies

Livelihood strategies refer to how poor people deploy their assets and capabilities to improve their livelihoods (IFRCRCS, 2007:2). Efforts to enhance household participation in developmental programmes increasingly focus on reconfiguring the space between citizens and the institutions that affect their lives. The Municipal Systems Act (32 of 2000) requires municipalities to promote public participation and to build the capacity of residents. Civil society has been given rights and responsibilities to run their lives. At the same time, the Government needs to improve its capacity to deal with environmental issues and to recommit itself to its responsibilities. Assessment of livelihood strategies focuses on household food consumption, production, processing, and household's ability to generate income) (IFRCRCS, 2007:2).

South African municipalities comprise households living below the poverty line, however, such households have access to a housing structure connected to water supply and electricity. It was found that these households also practised homestead food gardens in their residential area. Sadly, the households living in the informal settlements were not practising agricultural production as they did not have adequate water supply and electrical connection. Livelihood capabilities incorporate education and access to income generation.

Education

In terms of education, the study found that the participants had access to basic and formal education, although there were participants who were deprived the access to the education sector. Due to the high rates of poverty and unemployment, the participants (16%) completed the basic education level. Those who completed the basic education level are eligible to be accepted to the higher education sector but due to insufficient funds and lack of information about government educational subsidies, they were unable to enroll for advanced studies. Three per cent (3%) of the respondents attained a higher education qualification (Educator, Nurse both retired and a Theologian and a senior citizen). Some respondents (29%) indicated that they were forced to leave school and seek employment to assist and maintain their families. One respondent informed that she lost her parents during her childhood and as a result, she had no immediate support to attend school. Some participants indicated that they never attended schooling as they lived in a patriarchal era whereby women were not allowed to attend schooling. Some replied that they lived in the farms, and they lacked access to the education sector and during that period schools were not a privilege to them as compared to the people who lived in urban areas.

Employment

In terms of employment opportunities at the time of the study, 62% of the participants were unemployed, some (27%) were employed and 11% were self-employed. The self-employed category comprised individuals who sold vegetables, beverages, food and clothes and entertainers (Dee-jays for parties and weddings). Further, there was a female category (53-65), who declared she never worked in her life, she grew up in the homelands, where the surrounding community relied on their abilities to provide for the family. She reported that she produces brooms made from grass, and she is happy with her lifestyle. As indicated in Table 1 the main source of income for low-income households is the government protection scheme (grants) used to relieve their economic hardships. Most households depend on the pension grant received by the elders (age 60 and above) and the child support grants. However, some households depend on the salary or wages earned from either the formal or informal sector. Some participants also indicated that they receive stipends from the government community development programmes in which they participate.

Skills Development

The study also assessed the skills competency of the participants. The respondents seemed to be competent in agriculture (37%), trade (25%) and computer and business skills (13%). Those who fall in the trade category obtained skills offered by their employers during their employment period. The skills range from carpentry, painting, motor mechanic, bricklaying, plastering, shoe making and hairdressing. The remaining percentages still need to be upgraded. The skills competency of the respondents is focused on self-knowledge, for example, cooking, baking, and dressmaking. More training is required to capacitate the communities in SDM. In this case, places like Thusong Centres and vocational centres will serve the purpose of developing self-reliant communities in SDM.

Outcomes

Public policymaking intends to develop the country and ensure stability within communities. The purpose of public policies is to change, regulate, improve, or preserve the conditions of society and the lifestyle of individuals (De Coning, Cloete and Wissink, 2011:47). Successful livelihood strategy is intended to lead households to increase the individual income generations and be more economically sustainable. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCRCS, 2007:2) identified the following indicators to assess the food security programmes, namely: goals achieved; well-being promotion; vulnerability reduction; and sustainable use of the natural resource base. The sections below present the report of the interviews conducted in the SDM by the author in 2010.

Goals Achieved

Food security programme outcomes focus on identifying whether the programme achieved its intended goals. The study conducted by Richardson (2005:39) assessed the “Sedibeng District Municipality, Pro-Poor Strategy” and reported that the GDARD planned to establish 1200 food gardens in the SDM. The planned projects were distributed among the three local municipalities of the SMD, namely: Emfuleni Local Municipalities =300; and Lesedi Local Municipalities =400; and Midvaal Local Municipalities =500; (Richardson, 2005:39). The study observed the households in the SDM and found that some households were keen to grow their crops whereas other community members were not interested to participate in crop production. Some of the participants indicated that they were employed as a result it was difficult for them to grow the crops. However, some participants indicated that they were not aware of the food security programmes initiated by the SDD and the GDARD.

The respondents were asked to indicate if they grow vegetables in their household. The respondents were asked to indicate if they grow vegetables in their household. The Gauteng Provincial Government aims to see all households in Gauteng growing their crops in their backyards. Among the 112 households observed the study found that 94% of the respondents, whereas 6% were not growing crops in their backyards. It is interesting to see residents growing their vegetables without government assistance. However, non-active households did not have access to water supply, and some were tenants in their respective residences. When asked about the rationale behind this activity, they claimed that they cannot afford to purchase the produce since some are unemployed. The elders (age 45-65) reported that they enjoy cultivating organic produce, which is not infected with chemicals used by industries to preserve the plants. Non-active households are those households who reside in Silahlwe, Sonderwater and Rathanda Hostel.

In Silahlwe, the researcher observed that the residential area (erf/plot) which is equivalent to a normal residential area in urban areas comprised of four families. In Sonderwater the allocation of residential areas is following the residential property guidelines and as stated above the SDM is in the

process of installing water supply pipes. The non-participants reported that they use communal taps, which makes it difficult for them to obtain the amount of water required for daily consumption and growing crops. The respondents further indicated that they would be happy if the implementing government entities could supply adequate information, grant available land to them, and give the beneficiaries resources for the attainment of fruitful outcomes. Some of the reasons for non-participation were due to employment commitments, disability, and age effects. A female respondent in Evaton was a tenant and was audio impaired and that restricted her ability to communicate with the surrounding community as some do not understand the sign language. This participant also indicated that disabled communities are eager to participate but are challenged by those community members who reject and discriminate the disabilities.

The government’s role in improving food security is on the rise and such issues are tabled on the country's development priorities. In Gauteng province, food security programmes are implemented in three regions, namely: Pretoria; Germiston (including Ekurhuleni and Sedibeng); and Randfontein regions. The table below presents the achievements of promoting food security programmes established in Gauteng province, particularly in the SDM.

Table 2 Community and Homestead food projects established in the Gauteng Province: SDM Financial year 2010/2011

Region	Number of food garden projects established		
	Community-based	Homestead/ household-based	School-based
Community and Homestead Food Projects Financial year 2010/2011:			
a). Pretoria	17	2769	123
b). Germiston			
Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality	13	1673	13
Sedibeng District Municipality	13	1331	15
c). Randfontein	11	3103	118
Total	54	8876	269

Source: GDARD, 2012

In the SDM 54 community food gardens were established during the financial year 200/2011. The GDARD provides training and farming implements (starter packs) to the participating households.

Well-Being Promotion

Well-being promotion focuses on the effect of the food security programmes on an individual level. This study aimed to enquire whether the community food garden projects could progressively increase their contribution to economic growth by creating jobs and accessing external markets. In brief, it was found that the agribusiness enterprises in SDM were effective in alleviating poverty. The study revealed that these industries could also improve the economic position of families in SDM and create jobs for vulnerable groups there. The findings also indicated that agribusiness encourages the poor to invest and to increase their participation in the labour market. The study found that the food security programme established has promoted the well-being promotion of the households in the SDM and throughout Gauteng Province. In terms of well-being promotion, the food security programmes have the following positive effects for improving the lifestyles of the households in the SDM and in some parts of the country:

- Legislative framework for public participation;
- Health and safety;

- Access to infrastructure;
- From family farm to agribusiness;
- Sustainable living/self-provisioning;
- Employment creation through promotion of entrepreneurship-agribusiness in the township; and
- Entrepreneurship and small business awards (Mzini, 2012:92).

All the above achievements are achieved to reduce vulnerability among low-income households.

Vulnerability Reduction

The Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information and Mapping System (FIVIMS, 2013) defines vulnerability as the presence of factors (internal and external) that place people at risk of becoming insecure. External risk factors on a household level may include trends such as environmental degradation caused by heavy metals discharge from the mining sector, for example in the Randfontein region or newly established business development industries. Some households reside along the railway trail, and such households may also suffer from gases released from trains. Food price inflation by the private sector also affects food-insecure households, therefore the state provides subsidies for such households and imposes monetary measures to balance their lifestyle.

Internal factors are the characteristics of people and their ability to avoid becoming food insecure (FIVIMS, 2013). The United States Department of Agriculture (1999:ii) identifies the following as internal risk factors that can all increase the risks of food insecurity and hunger for individuals. Internal factors are the characteristics include low incomes, low literacy, certain disabilities, and poor health. Access to chain stores and transport may also affect the ability of the households to improve their lives. The improvement of food security is also influenced by poor governance and lack of institutional support (Rivera and Qamar, 2003:32) caused by fragmented policy framework and scarce resources-agricultural scientists. The South African government embarked cooperative governance system to enhance service delivery among the three spheres of government. Furthermore, the state allocates funding for scarce resource skills development in the higher education sector to enable interested communities to enrol for agricultural and environmental accredited qualifications. Short courses are also offered to support the food security programmes.

Based on the abovementioned factors, the GDRAD developed community participation mechanisms to improve the lifestyle of the food-secured households. In the SDM, through community partnership, the 8876 homestead food gardens were established. These projects were aimed to serve as a relief mechanism for food-secured and in-secured households. These interventions are complemented by the availability of chain stores developed within the locations. Community members now have access to local shopping complexes, whereas in the past they used to commute to the city centre to purchase their household requirements.

The study observed that the lack of income and access to adequate incomes is paramount as is closely related to asset poverty (Rivera and Qamar, 2003:33). With these problems the GDARD established 54 community food gardens in the SDM. Community food garden projects are aimed at promoting township entrepreneurship, small business, and agribusiness (Mzini, 2012:92). Furthermore, 269 school-based food gardens were established in the SDM.

Sustainable Use of the Natural Resource Base

Participating households need secure and stable access to productive resources, access to inputs and appropriate financial services to invest in and improve their production systems (Tripathi, Youjin, Chung, *et al.*, 2012:5). Productive resources relate to residential land and the supply of basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. This study discovered that the participants (100%) had access to land

for growing their crops, although in some instances few households could not utilize their available land. Access to inputs includes the provision of farming implements (starter packs) and agricultural skills to enhance the production and processing of crops produced at the household and community level. Financial services relate to the funding allocated to the agri-business developed at the community level. The farming implements issued to the households comprise garden tools, irrigation equipment and vegetable seeds (GDARD, 2012).

All these support services are allocated to increase the level of household participation in South Africa. The author came across the value of food security as it enabled the participants to process primary products to produce secondary ones to make a living and profit. For example, these households also planted fruit trees like peaches, apricots, grapes, and figs and in turn, they earned income from the crops cultivated in their residential areas. Households made juice from the grapes tended. They also made fruit and vegetable jam from the crops produced. This study was conducted during the spring-summer season to verify whether these households cultivated their crops. Interestingly, some of the participants were selling peaches grown in their backyards as a form of earning income to support their families.

Recommendations

The government has invested a lot of capital to address the issues of poverty and unemployment, which come in the form of top-down. A focus on a bottom-up approach is proposed to enable community members to be more self-reliant. However, in some cases, there are cases whereby community members have initiated projects on their own towards poverty relief.

Advocacy on community participation for community development project mechanisms is still in its infant stage. The author suggests the strengthening of human capital capacity to enable efficient management of food security programmes. Capacity building on this function will enable effective management of community projects and reduce fragmentation of administrative processes. Food security is on the global agenda, and some of the activities are discontinued due to inadequate skills and resource base. This could also assist in the early warning signs, monitoring and evaluation of the food security projects.

In 2012, the author attended two small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMME) conferences in Soweto hosted by the University of Johannesburg (15-16 May 2012) and in Vanderbijlpark hosted by the Emerald Foundation (16-17 August 2012). These conferences served as a network mechanism for the SMMEs; however, the scope of the conference is broad and does not accommodate the beneficiaries to make inputs and decisions. The author assumes that the food security dialogue could serve the purpose of information sharing for the affected households to broaden their knowledge based on the views of their peers.

Conclusion

The above results and discussion demonstrate the ability of the food security programmes to improve the lives of vulnerable communities in the SDM and South Africa. Household participation in food security programmes contributes towards addressing socio-economic challenges faced by the South African government. Food security programmes are aimed at assisting low-income households in confronting problems of food availability, access, and utilization. Sustainable use of available resources has been confirmed to have a positive effect on the lives of the local communities. Such resources may protect the families on a long-term basis. In terms of the available information and skills imparted to these communities' community members can make informed decisions.

The household structures can utilize the food available and adhere to recommended dietary requirements which also contribute to their quality of life through improved diet and nutrition. The longevity of these projects relies on reliable policymaking and the participation of community members for sustainable livelihoods. These projects have expanded from household food providers to small agricultural enterprises. The HFSP also increases the country's food security, promotes community self-reliance and social justice; and leads a way to healthier diets. An increase in agricultural productivity is the key to improving food security.

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