

Food aid for internally displaced persons in Manicaland, Zimbabwe



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ABSTRACT

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are among the most neglected and vulnerable populations in the world. There are few laws that protect them as the government is the instigator of the displacement and no government can be both perpetrator and protector. Food aid has become one of the major protective interventions aimed to enhance stability in settings of displacement. However, a major question is how food aid affects IDPs. The study on which this article is based, was designed to investigate and evaluate how food aid affects the lives of displaced persons. The focus is on understanding the effects of food aid on households' food security, migration trends and asset loss during periods of displacement. The study employs the sustainable livelihood framework in analyzing the role of food aid on IDPs. It focuses on the relationship between food aid and livelihoods assets, and indicates how the transforming structures can be linked to food aid interventions. The findings show that food aid plays a significant role in cushioning displaced households provided that it is integrated with other sustainable livelihood interventions (such as those that promote the value of household assets and land holding). Due to denied access to land, IDPs are dependent on food aid for their household food security. Increased school attendance is noted because of food aid to IDPs but the absence of security of tenure hinders community driven effective alternatives to a food aid programme. If security of tenure is not addressed IDPs in Manicaland will find it difficult to deal with their food insecurity.

Keywords: food security, land reform, food, beneficiary, capital (including social, physical, human, financial and natural capital), impact of food aid

1. INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity in southern Africa can be attributed to several causes, among them weather variability and climate change, poverty, economic failure, poor governance and even the pandemic of HIV/AIDS (Lambrechts & Barry 2003:2). Zimbabwe is no exception in as far as exposure to these risk factors is concerned. The country has been experiencing severe food shortages that started with a major drought in 2002. As in many other countries in similar situations of distress, the most common response to the food crisis in Zimbabwe has been the

provision of food aid implemented by the international donor community through the food arm of the United Nations, namely the World Food Programme (WFP), targeting vulnerable people mainly in rural areas.

Moyo, Rutherford and Amanor-Wilks (2000:181) argue that in Zimbabwe ‘the implementation of the land reform programme, from year 2000, and the subsequent challenging political environment created a new category of vulnerable people in displaced persons and communities’. These authors further note that ‘farm workers have failed to benefit from social infrastructure and the rural development programme mainly because of their historic and current lack of access to independent land’. The initial food aid programmes of 2000 left out former Zimbabwean farm workers and politically displaced communities. Information in unpublished situational reports in Manicaland Province shows that the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) assisted 4 857 IDP households in the year 2010. According to an unpublished IOM situational report (2010:1), this figure was made up as follows: ‘183 households were displaced as a result of political violence, 3 648 households were displaced as a result of the land reform programme, 693 households as a result of natural disasters and 333 households as a result of land disputes in Manicaland Province’.

Not much research is available on the impact of food aid programmes on IDPs’ household food security (Barret 2002:1). A review of the existing literature mainly has as its focus the impact of food aid programmes in countries such as Ethiopia and Somalia. Little research has been undertaken in southern Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. For this reason this study provides important information in its analysis of the impact of food aid on displaced communities in Zimbabwe.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This article relies on the sustainable livelihoods framework to understand the impact of food aid programmes on households in displaced communities. This framework is shown in Figure 1 below.

Households follow livelihood strategies grounded in the opportunities afforded by their livelihood assets, their vulnerability context and the transforming structures and processes. The basic concept surrounding the livelihood framework is that the quality and sustainability of livelihoods depend on the strategies households develop in managing their assets. Livelihood outcomes could be additional income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and more sustainable use of their natural resource base (DFID 1999:1). The article uses this framework to identify the impact of food aid programmes as transforming processes amid the shocks, trends and seasonal factors of prevailing economic conditions and the broader political environment that accompanies displacement.

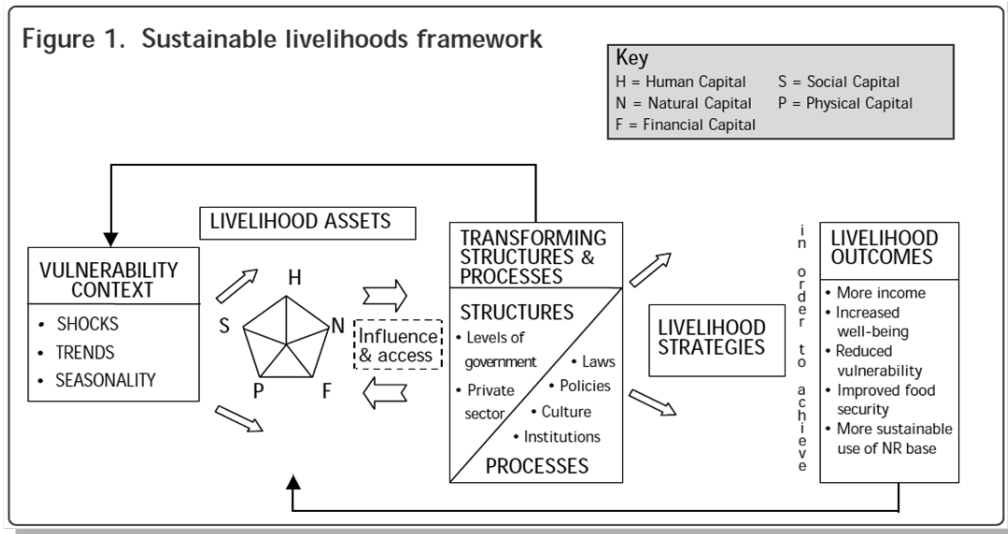


Figure 1: Sustainable livelihoods framework
(DFID, 1999:1)

The sustainable livelihoods framework focuses on the strengths and assets that people use to ensure food security and a healthy life world. These are represented by five key categories of capital (human, social, natural, physical and financial) that people can draw from to achieve positive livelihood outcomes such as increased income and well-being and improved food security. The sustainable livelihoods framework portrays food security and livelihoods as a cyclical process, as opposed to the linear processes depicted by conceptual frameworks focusing on issues such as malnutrition. It also adds the notion of vulnerability and integrates the concept of disaster risk reduction. It is a practical tool that outlines a holistic approach to the design and monitoring of food security and livelihood interventions.

Food aid neutralizes aspects of the shock of displacement by reducing expenses. In this way it helps the household to regain lost assets such as financial capital, thereby reducing vulnerability. The WFP's Emergency Food Security Assessment Handbook (2009:9) states that: 'When disaster strikes and people migrate or are displaced from their homes, many draw on social networks for support, seeking refuge or hospitality among local communities rather than in camps. Over time, the burden of providing for migrants/IDPs may be a significant strain on hosts' resources.' Food aid can be a transforming structure in that humanitarian organizations must advocate for the needs of those at risk of losing their livelihoods, in addition to those whose lives are at more immediate risk. Situations where food assistance plays an important role in preserving capital assets and supporting livelihoods may require a larger quantity of food aid than activities aimed at meeting the immediate survival needs of the destitute. Target groups may be larger, because they include people who still have assets, and there may be additional staff and other costs.

There is a relationship between food aid, displacement, and rural livelihoods. Any displacement is a shock and it removes the affected population from familiar assets and puts them in a new

area with new and unfamiliar assets. People become vulnerable, as they have been detached from their traditional set of livelihoods. Food aid can come in under these circumstances as a life supporting mechanism that helps the affected people to adjust to the effects of the shocks of displacement.

3. RELIEF PROGRAMMES AND THEIR IMPACT

Food aid given to vulnerable people has many implications for rural livelihoods. Often the aid programmes are not designed in a way that assists the affected population to benefit from the five capital assets (mentioned above) and the transforming structures. Most of the time this results in failure to create income sources among beneficiaries. Linking food aid and livelihood is one way of achieving a temporary solution for vulnerable communities – including IDPs. The WFP report (2002:7) adds to this argument that despite these challenges in internally displaced communities and refugee camps, the existence of a UNHCR-led coordination structure can bring food and non-food assistance together under a common strategy that will lead to close linkages among sectors, which are essential for livelihood interventions.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in collaboration with the World Food Program drew up a Memorandum of Understanding (1997), which highlights the importance of efforts to support food aid, asset-building activities and the encouragement of self-reliance of beneficiaries. It is increasingly recognized that humanitarian assistance must be used, to the maximum extent, to support livelihoods as a part of life-saving strategies. It is clear that food aid linked with livelihood assistance is not without its challenges, particularly in the context of complex emergencies. Any form of humanitarian assistance, when introduced into a complex emergency typically characterised by a resource-strained environment, can become part of the dynamics of the conflict. Food aid is a noticeable type of aid, and may be subject to manipulation. The aid can influence the balance of power and may in the end aggravate or lengthen a crisis even when it is effective in saving lives and alleviating suffering.

The WFP (2003:8) backs the argument of critics who dispute the linking of food aid to livelihoods activities in that it is difficult to ensure maximum impact assistance on the intended beneficiaries. This is because among people who require aid it is difficult to determine who needs it, as well as when, and where they need it. The WFP is of the view that these challenges are bigger when seeking to offer livelihoods support in complex emergencies, making the provision of such help a difficult and dangerous undertaking. Complex emergencies could go on for years with continued violence and insecurity, asset depletion and chronic displacement separating people from their traditional means of livelihoods.

In conclusion, food aid is not always the most suitable resource when seeking to maintain assets or maintain livelihoods. Cautious analysis of the current availability and accessibility of food for IDPs must be the basis for livelihood interventions. This includes the impact that the displacement has had on men's and women's assets and livelihood strategies, and the role that food aid can play in both preserving assets and meeting household consumption needs. It is also important to take into account the impact that food aid will have on the policies, institutions, and processes that influence livelihood strategies, particularly markets. Where food is available

on the market and people do not have the means to gain access to it without depleting essential assets, cash interventions may be a mode of response (WFP 2002:4).

4. FOOD AID TO IDPs

A good protection environment depends on safeguarding against violence and exploitation. But human dignity also requires safeguarding against the violation of other fundamental rights, including access to adequate shelter, clean water and sanitation, sufficient food, primary health care and education (WFP:2007). Despite serious security problems and logistical constraints, humanitarian agencies in Zimbabwe made every effort to deliver food assistance and protection to displaced populations between 2000 and 2008.

In 2007, the WFP assisted 1.53 million refugees, some 900 000 returnees and 6.3 million IDPs in Africa, mainly through general food rations, school feeding and supplementary feeding programmes (WFP 2008). In an effort to ensure the efficient use of food aid, United Nations agencies, NGOs, and local authorities undertook at least 11 joint assessment missions and nutrition surveys in 2007. Of concern is the impact of the current global food crisis on displaced people, whose livelihood opportunities are too often limited or non-existent. In such situations, food aid becomes essential for people's survival. Mano and Matshe (2006:19) concur on the positive impact of food aid on vulnerable groups when they say: 'In disasters, supplementary feeding is often the primary strategy for prevention and treatment of moderate acute malnutrition and prevention of severe acute malnutrition.'

There can be little doubt that food aid is beneficial to the receiving IDP communities as it saves lives. However, it generates problems in the longer run as it is short term in nature and no continuity of the aid can be expected. Further, it creates dependency among recipient communities. Browne (1999:3) argues that in practice aid has long-term repercussions on receiving communities. Iliffe (1987:15) is of the opinion that food aid has created conditions for another form of famine, caused by reduction in food production. In some parts of Tanzania people stopped farming and were living on food aid. Food aid dependency results in depressed domestic food prices and inhibited efforts to stimulate domestic food production in some countries (Browne 1999:12). These destructive effects have led to the labelling of food aid as an important contributor to poverty as it diminishes farmers' prospects of earning a livelihood.

Food aid has the potential to improve the economic conditions of a nation as it provides temporary alleviation of the suffering experienced. This alleviation comes from savings in foreign spending and the possibility it creates for payments towards imports, that provides for food to cover shortages not covered by the donor aid. This is especially the case where food aid directly replaces commercial imports and where it reaches those who are too poor to buy food, thus freeing domestic resources for other purposes. However, it is in the long run detrimental to the recipients as it increases their dependency on other countries. Stiglitz (1999:5) is also of the opinion that food aid develops a culture of dependency and may discourage the receiving countries from helping themselves. Gitu (2004:48) further elaborates on this by arguing that food aid adversely affects domestic production in that farmers soon reduce their production because

of the availability of cheap food imports on the market, which results in a decrease of agricultural prices. This view is shared by Starita (2007:1) who claims that this demotivates indigenous farmers from producing optimally and Browne (1999:27) confirms this when he says ‘food aid tends to have deleterious “macro” consequences’.

It is argued that food aid dependency depresses domestic food prices and inhibits efforts to stimulate domestic food production in some communities. This makes food assistance a less attractive option in that it affects other livelihood sources and perpetuates poverty. Gitu (2004:53) states that food aid organizations promote their own activities and perspectives and in the process neglect the needs of the people. Maren (1993:1) is of the opinion that just like in the colonial period, food aid organizations employ an elite cadre of locals whom they reward handsomely to carry out their work. The elites act as a link to the rest of the population. Societies regard these elites as the voice of the people and they work to speak on their behalf, but in reality these elites do not expose the flaws of the system due to their stake in it. The aid establishments therefore move forward, ignoring the widening rift between them and the supposed recipients of their aid.

Gitu (2004:54) states that the consumers in recipient countries often view food aid commodities as being inferior to those domestically produced. He further stresses that the rural folk considered the provision of relief food in the form of yellow maize as inferior to white maize and believe that it is livestock feed in the countries from where it was imported (Gitu 2004:57). In other cases, consumers might doubt the nutritional and health status of the food aid. This was experienced in Zimbabwe in 2001 when the Zimbabwean government rejected genetically modified maize food aid owing to some concerns about its safety for usage (Gitu 2004:59). Gitu (2004:58) further notes that food aid will not be beneficial to vulnerable groups over time since it introduces a dependency syndrome for beneficiary groups who know that even if they do not produce, relief food will be provided. Food aid is a political tool in some countries such as Kenya and during election years had been associated with high levels of inefficiency in distribution. Food aid and food-for-work initiatives are also related with high levels of wastage and pilferage by both pests and humans because people did not pay for the food and is therefore less meticulous in its preservation.

From the above it seems as if food aid often tends to stifle development. The dependency syndrome that results from constant use of relief food enables the political elite to easily suppress development in such areas, and as a result further marginalize residents of these areas. Relief dependent people tend to reorganize their everyday life while they are awaiting disbursement of relief food. Their life had previously largely been structured around practices aimed at their own production or towards income-earning activities. Over time, people receiving food aid often end up not introducing their children to agricultural production. In this way they perpetuate a cycle of dependency on food aid as well as poverty. Given the undesirable effects of food aid on human capital development and the negative impact it has on development, food aid should be minimized and rather be replaced by efforts to improve the food security status of rural people. It is widely accepted that food entitlement that is derived from human and physical capital, access to common property resources and a variety of social contracts at household, community and state levels, provides a firm basis for continued availability of food. Food aid often disturbs this correlation (Sen 1981:7).

This does not imply that food aid does not form an important part of development assistance. Ho and Hanrahan (2010:12) emphasize that food aid had been essential for saving lives around the world, especially during a crisis or natural disaster. Its value in long-term development has, however, been open to controversy. Many development experts believe that sourcing food aid for vulnerable populations is essential in the fight against global hunger and malnutrition. Sachs (2005:8) supports this argument: 'Regions such as sub-Saharan Africa continue to require foreign assistance to help break the cycle of poverty, which they believe is a prerequisite for enabling more agricultural productivity and economic development.'

Sam Moyo, a critic of foreign aid, especially food aid, argues that no meaningful help has been noted in communities receiving food aid – even though the sum of money used for this purpose is huge (Moyo 2009:23). Along the same lines Easterly (2006:12) claims: 'No country has meaningfully reduced poverty and spurred significant and sustainable levels of economic growth by relying on aid. Aid often results in unintended consequences that can have detrimental effects on the local economy.' Other critics believe that if food aid does not have an exit strategy, African governments will not have any reason to find other, more self-sufficient ways of supporting development. These critics claim that foreign aid can promote corruption, create dependency, fuel inflation, create debt burdens, and further reduce the relevance of Africa in relation to the rest of the world.

There are continued debates among the donor and NGO communities over the justification for using food aid as a long-term tool to promote general development objectives. The WFP and some NGOs have used food commodities directly in programmes that focus on building human assets such as nutrition, health and education. Some argue that the motivation incentive established to promote the involvement of the community may be as important as the direct impact of food itself, and can have pros and cons on sustainability and effectiveness of the development project over the long term (Ho & Hanrahan 2010:12).

5. COPING MECHANISMS

Coping mechanisms resulting from displacement refer to the strategies applied by individuals, families, communities, institutions, societies or governments to cope with the negative effects of displacement. Maxwell (1995:8) observes that short-term coping strategies can include eating foods that are less preferred and limiting the quantity of food served to an individual per meal. Another common practice is borrowing either food or money to increase household food security. Borrowing money for food can lead to a state of permanent indebtedness, and is an example of how a short-term coping strategy can put a household in a more vulnerable position to long-term livelihood options. Maternal buffering is the practice of a mother deliberately limiting her own intake to ensure that children get more to eat. Lower-income groups commonly practice skipping meals by eating only one or two meals per day.

Maxwell (1995:15) concludes that these various strategies are often used together, but taken individually they have been presented in order of increased severity. The first two (less preferred food and limiting portion size) are roughly equivalent in terms of severity; the next three (borrowing, buffering and skipping meals) are roughly the same in terms of severity; and the last

one (skipping a whole day) is the most severe. Other coping strategies alluded to include drastic measures such as stealing food or abandonment. It should be noted that the adaptive capacity of displaced people is determined by dimensions such as (i) education or human capital, (ii) wealth, (iii) material resources, (iv) societal entitlements, (v) information, (vi) technology, (vii) infrastructure, and (viii) resources (Easterling et al., 2007; Adgar et al. 2009) and the strategies employed to deal with displacement coincide with the presence of any combination of the above dimensions.

Davies et al (2002) and Haile (2005) agree that chronic poverty follows irrespective of many coping strategies because of the unsustainability of coping strategies. A clear example of this is the selling of productive assets during displacement. According to Watts (1983), Corbett (1988), Hutchinson (1992), and USAID FEWS (1999), coping strategies have a social, geographic and gender profile, hence they differ among communities and households, depending in most cases on what is available in the environment, the market, and survival options.

Earlier attempts to explain household vulnerability can be found in the work of Watts (1983), Corbett (1988), and Hutchinson (1992), who developed a model for household responses (coping mechanisms) during and after shocks, later used by USAID as a basis for vulnerability assessments in its handbook (USAID FEWS 1999). When all other resources are exhausted, people migrate out of the region in search of survival. At this stage international support is needed, as people are not in a situation to recover using own resources. As mentioned previously, the resilience or the ability of a household to cope with displacement shocks is a function of several factors (Watts 1983; Richards 1986; Corbett 1988; Hutchinson 1992; Rocheleau et al. 1995; USAID FEWS 1999; De Waal 2004; Smucker & Wisner 2008; Erikson & Silva 2009). The available options such as distance from labour and produce markets (roads, large urban centre), nearby forests, water sources and tourism all have an influence on the vulnerability and coping strategies of communities. The level of own resources on which a household can draw for survival is also critical (Little et al., 2006; De la Fuente 2007; Dercon & Porter 2007; De la Fuente 2008).

The vulnerability assessment handbook used by USAID FEWS (1999) highlights the fact that households form part of different economies. The same coping strategies affect households differently, for example the sale of small animals might substantially increase the vulnerability of poor households whereas it might not affect richer households at all. Some families may have good linkages with politicians or influential people, which permit them to tap into resources at a higher level of political or economic organization. The same accounts for families with extended families or tribes that provide support to members during times of stress. It can be concluded that the rich households among displaced people tend to increase their resources, while the average households tend to sell their liquid assets after some time, and if they fail to cope they migrate out from the present area of displacement. The poor households tend to lose all their assets and become vulnerable during the early days of displacement. Hence, wealth at times can influence how displaced people respond to shocks.

6. COMMUNITY LEVEL COPING

When disaster at community level strikes, there are ways to cope with the situation. The most valuable asset that any community possesses is its human resource. A community with human resources empowered through human development is likely to suffer the effects of disasters less than communities where human empowerment is lacking. Human resource development represents forms of training and development specifically geared to developing skills aimed at ensuring the survival and growth of individual work. An individual who possesses relevant human capital can better manage resources at her/his disposal. This is the case because such an individual will normally display an ability to adapt when confronted by external changes or stresses. People affected by crises are not passive victims, nor are they passive recipients of aid. To survive and recover they rely primarily on their capabilities, coping mechanisms, resources, and networks – they move in with family members or send their children to other relatives, draw on savings or take loans, move their herd to an area where there is adequate grazing land, switch to drought-resistant crops or send a breadwinner to find work elsewhere. Even in areas experiencing protracted conflict and involuntary displacement, many people continue to pursue livelihoods and economic activities. However, many of the strategies that people employ to meet their immediate food needs undermine their well-being, along with their ability to meet future food needs and cope with further crises (WFP 2003).

The difference between productive and non-productive items relates to the future value of an asset and not necessarily to its current value. Small livestock is regarded as a non-productive asset since displaced people can sell it routinely to get cash. Household utensil sales on the other hand coincide with a much higher degree of stress since such utensils are central in creating a livelihood among IDPs (Roncoli & Magistro 2001). The worse that can happen in as far as the livelihood of IDPs is concerned, is when households are forced to reduce consumption and to deplete their assets in the wake of their displacement, as well as that they also lose their ability to rebuild productive assets and to recover to the same state as before (Carter et al. 2004; Little et al. 2006; Baez & Santos 2007; De la Fuente 2007).

People affected by displacement often eat fewer, smaller, and less nutritious meals in order to make what they have last longer without depleting their assets. When forced to sell their livestock IDPs not only lose their access to milk and meat, but they often also receive a low price for their livestock because of the condition of the livestock. In most cases it is impossible to re-establish their herds in a seller's market after their displacement or when the drought has subsided. Sometimes families are forced to mortgage their land or otherwise enter into prohibitive debt in order to meet the short-term needs of their families.

Women and female-headed households face particular risk from destructive coping strategies. Women are most likely to withstand the worst of food shortages, but it inevitably affects their health as well as the health and long-term productive potential of their children. Women often assume new responsibilities for their families' safety, economic well-being, and security, as men seek employment elsewhere. Girls pull out of school first to advantage the boys or face early marriage when household livelihoods are at risk, and women may even risk sexual abuse or enter into prostitution to protect their families' lives and livelihoods.

7. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research on which this article is based (Sithole 2012) consisted of focus group discussions and individual interviews conducted in Betty (Mutare District), St Stephens (Makoni District), Mutanda (Mutare District) and Tsvingwe (Makoni District). The focus groups were made up of small groups of IDPs. The data obtained from the focus groups indicated that displacement removed the affected households from familiar forms of social, natural, physical and financial capital to a new set of capital. The adjustment to this new set of capital, if not cushioned by food aid, would have resulted in asset loss as well as failure to cope with the new area's income sources. It would therefore have increased their vulnerability. There were definite differences noted between those who were displaced in a hurry and who did not have time to choose their destination, and those who were given more time to move. The latter were moved to an area where they maintained a link between their human capital and the other four forms of capital at their disposal (social, natural, physical and financial capital). The Mutanda community of the Mutare District, who was given time to move, adjusted well in their new settlement. Though climatic conditions affected their food security, they managed to adjust as food aid mitigated their food shortages.

In the displaced settlements of Betty in the Mutare District and St Stephens in the Makoni District, the families had been detached from the source of income that used to guarantee their food security, namely their employer. New land policy led to denial of access to basic services by former farm workers and their status changed from farm labourers to squatters (IDPs). This new status denied the former farm workers access to land for cultivation and access to shelter. The introduction of food aid facilitated some dialogue between authorities and the displaced people, although the dialogue did result in formalisation of their stay in St Stephens – a consequence not originally entertained by the IDPs.

The research data indicate that food aid had both direct and indirect impact on IDPs in Manicaland Province. It is noted households that experienced double displacement (having been moved first to one area and subsequently to another) struggle to cope even in those cases where they were provided with food aid. They indicate that their confidence to find a lasting solution could have been guaranteed by being given access to permanent land. During focus group discussions, the displaced households expressed dissatisfaction with some of the items in the 'food basket' (like bulgur wheat, lintels and sorghum that were distributed) that had little uptake during the first days of food distributions.

For the people of Manicaland food aid brought about little financial leeway in that no substantive amount of money became available as a result of savings on what would have been essential expenditure on food. The social protection (as a result of the food aid) seemed to have been positively experienced. Those interviewed reported no significant loss of liquid and productive assets during the food aid period. They did report an increase in labour, a reduction in their household cost as well as a change in diet. This concurs with the models of Watts (1983), Corbett (1988), and Hutchinson (1992) for household response. It appears that food aid facilitates adaptation to new circumstances and can prevent losses in liquid and productive assets among

IDPs. Food aid tends to increase resilience and the ability of households to cope with the impact of displacement shock. During the interview discussions with members of the affected households, they indicated that they had no intention to move from the current location. They even went so far as to say they would prefer that their stay in the resettlement areas be formalized.

During the research an improvement in the socio-economic welfare of IDPs was observed. Almost 9 out of 10 of the households were reunited during the food aid period and more than half of the interviewees indicated that it was as a result of food aid. School attendance during the food aid period was at 90%, which is above the national attendance figure of 80% (ZIMVAC 2011:17). More than a third of the interviewed households indicated that they used money that was usually spent on food towards paying school fees for their children.

There was no integration of the host community (those residing in the areas in which IDPs were relocated) into the food aid programme in the sense of the local people also joining in receiving food aid. This issue clearly created unhappiness and even hostility between the IDPs and the host community. At a later stage humanitarian agencies implemented a target ratio whereby they would include 20% of the vulnerable host residential community as beneficiaries of food aid. This to a large extent neutralised the negative perception and attitude towards the food aid programme aimed only at IDPs in all four communities. This view supports the observation by the WFP (2003) that the identification of food aid needs of the host communities plays a significant role in uniting feuding parties in conflict related displacement. Food aid therefore played a role in facilitating local integration of the displaced persons into the host community. The decision made by the local government to formalise IDPs and to declare them permanent residents in St Stephen and Tsvingwe is an indicator that the positive co-existence that was prevailing during the food aid period facilitated local integration.

Community development initiatives (such as extending the school buildings at St Stephens' Primary School and Marpo Primary School in Betty and community gardens) were achieved through integrating a food aid component into these initiatives. The IDPs and the host community agreed that all food beneficiaries should work in development activities without any payment in a bid to increase the community's physical capital. Their hosts and the IDPs worked together in the refurbishing of the schools after agreeing on the distribution of duties. This facilitated access to education for the children of IDPs and the host community was no longer barring their children from attending school. Previously the host community argued that the parents were new arrivals and they did not play a role in the school's construction – therefore their children could not attend the school. Displacement situations thus provided both constraints and opportunities for supporting livelihoods related to food aid. IDPs might have limited access to land, livestock, jobs or other sources of livelihood during their stay at a place of safety, which limited their ability to pursue livelihood strategies and the provision of food aid led to reduced vulnerability.

The skills and abilities of IDPs did have an influence on where exactly they ended up. It is clear that displaced people's educational level and work experience hindered them from moving into any of the resettlement areas, especially those areas which required some form of education to survive or to apply specialised skills. Most households ended up moving onto farms in rural areas as their level of education fitted with the livelihood options available in those areas. As indicated above, food aid did assist in giving some IDPs opportunities to pursue the development

of their human capital in the form of skills and educational development due to food security at household level. This was particularly true in the case of those who used money that was saved because they did not have to buy food and could use a part of this saving in order to send children to school. Some displaced persons managed to pursue at least a form of vocational education during the food aid period.

In as far as long-term stability is concerned, IDPs did acknowledge that security of tenure affected their confidence in utilizing all available forms of livelihood assets during the food aid period. Once their stay had been formalized, particularly at St Stephens, IDPs started to use the physical capital at their disposal, such as utilizing land for gardening in order to enhance food security.

8. CONCLUSION

The provision of food aid to IDPs is linked to internationally accepted human rights obligations. On the one hand there is a direct need that is experienced. This is often referred to as the 'right bearer enjoyment of right' (Fukuda-Parr et al 2009:195). On the other hand there is also 'duty bearer conduct' that refers to the accountability that goes together with human rights obligations to provide humanitarian assistance. The provision of food aid needs to be assessed against the potential trends that might develop over time. This is particularly relevant in as far as the capacity to overcome the disruptions caused by disasters such as drought, war and famine by means of food aid, is concerned.

The provision of food aid has both positive and negative impacts on IDPs. The provision of food aid contributes positively towards the displaced communities in that it offers food relief, which is of utmost importance especially in times of displacement and to people settled in areas with unfavourable conditions for farming. It gives IDPs a sense of food security and enables them to engage in other areas of life which are important such as sending their children to schools. The provision of food aid increases a sense of belonging to the once uprooted and marginalised IDP communities as they feel worthy by being cared for. The IDPs are able to retain their few possessions instead of selling them in order to acquire food. Generally the provision of food aid means that the diet of the people is enhanced. There is improved communication among the communities. The various meetings held by the food aid providers brought unity and integration among the people as they would be having one goal, that of receiving food aid and they could put whatever differences they had aside. The research shows that there can be improved relations between the host communities and the IDPs as a result of food aid programmes if proper targeting is done.

The chief weakness of food aid programmes is that they offer short-term relief and yet it has long-term negative effects such as crippling the IDPs as they can no longer be self-sustained, but instead become increasingly dependent on the food aid providers. This dependency syndrome is dangerous as it means that in the long run such communities cannot live without assistance, thus adding to their vulnerability and worse still, there is room for exploitation and manipulation. It may also increase conflicts and malice in the society if it appears that certain groups of people are benefiting more than others.

It was clear from the interviews with IDPs that displacement caused by the land reform programme had a negative impact on the food security situation, as agriculture is an economic base for Zimbabwe. The introduction of food aid did improve the food stock at household level. During the interviews IDPs declared that most of the food stock at their disposal was from food aid and not their own production. This food stock assisted their adaptation to a new set of livelihood conditions. Food aid assisted in building resilience among IDPs and facilitated adaptation by preventing the disposal of liquid and productive assets. There was a noted increase in household labour and reduction in household costs. Food aid supported the sustainability of livelihood interventions in displaced communities with the Betty farm gardening activities supporting this view, where a third of the interviewees acknowledged that they had never employed any similar coping strategies.

Food aid on its own is not a viable and sustainable solution to the plight suffered by IDPs. Although it is difficult to achieve and to sustain, the participation of the IDPs and of the local citizens should be obtained as part of the functioning of civil society. The inclusion of as many citizens as possible will counter the possibility of local elites monopolizing power and exercising hostility towards the newcomers. The inclusion of the residential community in food aid programmes plays a significant role in neutralizing the conflict that might arise between the IDPs and the resident community especially in cases where the hosts are seen to be aligned with the perpetrators, while the IDPs regard themselves as the victims.

NOTES

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