

Role of food security groups' networks in poverty reduction: a case study of Chamwino district, Dodoma region in Tanzania

Rasel Madaha ¹

Abstract

This study focused on role of food security groups' networks in poverty reduction in Chamwino district, Dodoma Tanzania. Specifically the study concentrated on a) Food Security Groups Networks in terms of membership, performance, organization, management, history, activities and sustainability. b) roles and extent to which Food Security Groups Networks have contributed towards poverty reduction. c) factors of success or failure and best practices in Food Security Groups Networks. d) and finally strategies for strengthening FSG networks. A combination of qualitative and quantitative tools was used to collect data. In quantitative methods, measurement must be objective, quantitative and statistically valid. A sample of people from a population is asked a set of questions on a survey to determine the frequency and percentage of their responses. Qualitative methods are much more subjective than quantitative methods and use very different methods of collecting information, mainly individual, in-depth interviews and focus groups discussion. It is important to recognize that both quantitative and qualitative techniques are tools that play a useful and complementary role in improving our understanding of a situation in a given area. Qualitative data was analyzed using content analysis technique. Content analysis refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, themes or any message that were communicated during the study. The data obtained from structured questionnaire was inspected for accuracy, coded, summarized and then entered into a computer. Analysis of data from questionnaire was conducted with respect to the objectives of the study using statistical package for social science (SPSS).

The economy of the people in Chamwino district almost entirely depends on agriculture and livestock keeping for their livelihood. However the average farm size in the area lies between 2-3 hectares per household making agricultural production low. Livestock on other hand is still of subsistence nature affected by key problems such as diseases, shortage of water and pasture. The major food crops grown in the area include sorghum and millet. These crops are suitable for low and unreliable rainfall of the area. Other crops grown include maize, peanuts, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, cassava and pumpkins.

Farmers' networks have in recent years been used as a tool for extension communication. This is based on the assumption that not only farmers communicate with extension workers but also amongst themselves. Furthermore, in view of the liberalized market economy and globalization agenda farmers are seeking new ways of organizing themselves through networking so that they can become dependable, effective, and efficient in an endeavour to improve their welfare. The problems of working with networks include poor leadership, uncooperative attitude of some of the network members as a result of poor awareness on the importance of networking, making use of the network services and inadequate capital. On the other hand, networks play different roles to include (a) improving performance of members in their day to day activities as 1

farmers (b) facilitation of information exchange between members and other stakeholders as well as facilitation of information among members (c) reducing the negative impacts resulting from market led economy especially in terms of market and price for their produce (d) improving the standard of living of the members i.e. having household food security and increased income. (e) A large informal network of all Food Security Group Network members across the food security project area has been created. It allows informal flow of useful information and experience among members. (f) enabling members to gain entrepreneurial skills and engage in other income generating activities such as petty business. Furthermore, this study discovered that network members are richer, more powerful and happier than non-members. A detail of other discoveries will be discussed fully in the full paper. The wrong perception of some of the community members with regard to developmental interventions is harmful. It is considered whatever comes from a white man is free and henceforth the services given to them by white men should never be returned. For example, in places where western development agencies implement the revolving fund scheme, it is believed that field officers usually black Tanzanians collect the loans for their private use. This perception may be as a result of past interventions by other western organizations, which provided aid in the name of loans but never collected those loans. A detail of other discoveries never seen in any of the previous study on the subject will be discussed in the full paper.

¹ World Vision Tanzania. Project Manager. raselmpuya@gmail.com.