

The Right to Food, Land and Democracy: An Analysis from a Grassroots Perspective in Three Semi-Arid Rural Districts in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This paper shows how changes in the *policy environment* associated with economic reforms have undermined rural food security and increased poverty among the grassroots poor in three research districts in Tanzania. It demonstrates how smallholder producers no longer have access to key support systems such as producer goods subsidies, minimum producer prices, and soft loans. It also shows how smallholder farming and livestock-keeping has become a part-time activity for many women and men, who are forced to seek additional cash incomes from off-farm activities. This reduces the amount of time available to farming and processing of food, thus undermining food security at the household level. The struggles over land, markets and other key resources between large scale investors and small scale producers, both cultivators and livestock-keepers, men and women, are emphasised.

Keywords: food security, household, rural area

INTRODUCTION

Given the significance of food security issues in Tanzania, the Rural Food Security Group (RFS) based at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Dar es Salaam, decided with the support of Oxfam to design a study consisting of two main aspects, i.e.

- research at all levels (i.e. *up and down*) in selected rural locations, and at the institutional level of policy-makers and practitioners in the country
- dissemination of the results of the overall study and field research by means of a public communications strategy.

The study was preceded by a literature review and compilation of an annotated bibliography.

The research was designed to be policy-oriented action research, and was carried out and completed in 1998. Originally, the major focus was on fieldwork in Ngorongoro and Shinyanga Rural Districts, backed up by institutional visits and resource person interviews in Dar es Salaam, Shinyanga, Arusha, Ngorongoro and Loliondo towns. However, in 2000 it was decided to extend the study to Njombe District as well. Njombe District was selected due to its secure

position in food supply at the district level, its favourable climate, greater reliance in agriculture, and adequate accessibility.

A series of feedback workshops were held at community and district levels, and internally involving Oxfam, IDS and the RFS research group, to share results of the research/animation process and to get feedback. A National Feedback Workshop held in April 1999 provided an opportunity to present the findings to a wider audience, including policy-makers, practitioners and activists in government, international development agencies and NGOs.

The overall research project had *three main objectives*:

1. to deepen understanding of the range of factors which undermine or improve food security within rural households;
2. to identify specific and achievable policy changes which if implemented will strengthen the food security of rural households; and then
3. to engage with relevant policy makers in order to promote and realise these changes, in conjunction with a public communications strategy.

The *specific research objectives* were:

1. to identify achievable policy changes concerning (1) land, (2) markets, trade and prices; (3) savings and credit; (4) education/skills; and (5) (self) employment and incomes, which would improve household food security, from grassroots perspectives; and
2. to examine how communities, households and individuals assess, analyse and act on their own behalf concerning the situation and conditions of household food security.

The *focus* of the research was on smallholder farmers, livestock-keepers and traders, analysing, from *their* perspective, policy and development concerning food security. A basic *assumption* underlying the entire research programme was that economic reforms associated with Structural Adjustment (SAP) and economic liberalisation had heightened poverty and food insecurity at household level.

A policy-oriented action research approach was adopted in the RFS process, involving villagers in an assessment of the food security situation at community and household level; analysing causes; and planning actions/strategies to overcome priority problems. A variety of methods were used, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques such as wealth ranking, mapping, and VENN diagrams in Focus Group Discussions. Interviews were held with key informants, especially to learn more in-depth historical information about food security and its causes/problems. Structured interviews were carried out with a total of 433 women and men situated in three villages in each of the two districts. Their distribution was 279 women (199 Ngorongoro,

80 Shinyanga) and 234 men (105 Ngorongoro, 129 Shinyanga). This paper presents the results of that research effort.

1. RESEARCH RESULTS

1.1 DIFFERENTIATING WELL-BEING

Table 1 compares the output of the ranking exercises by the various groups in two of the three research districts. The size of each group or category of households differs widely between the two districts. Although the size of the well-off group of households is characteristically smaller than others in all the districts its magnitude varies slightly between them commensurate with differences in geographical endowments. Other factors (such as history and possibly methodological bias) notwithstanding, this trend would suggest that differentiation in geographical endowments is an important factor in the analysis of poverty and social differentiation *between* villages in rural Tanzania. Villages in the semi-arid zones are, therefore, generally more likely to be poorer and prone to food insecurity than those in the geographically endowed sub-humid zones.

Table 1. Household Economic *Uwezo* in Two Sample Districts (%)

Category	Njombe (N=1,144)	Shinyanga (N= 603)
<i>Uwezo mkubwa</i>	6.6	6.0
<i>Uwezo wa kati</i>	39.4	36.0
<i>Uwezo wa chini</i>	54.0	58.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Data, 1998-2000.

From the table it would seem that poverty is rampant in all the two districts. More than half of all the households appear to be poor and vulnerable to food insecurity. The situation in Shinyanga District seems to be more serious as 58% of the households are in the poorest category.

Another interesting trend to observe from the gender disaggregated data is the significant presence of female-led households in all the sample villages. Field data demonstrate that these households form more than one third of all the households in the sample villages. According to the focus group discussions, among the reasons for such prevalence of female-headed households included sex ratios that generally favour women (i.e. more women are born than men), high male mortality rates, high rates of marital separation (through divorce or desertion), male out-migration and polygyny. Given the trends discussed in the

foregoing paragraphs, many of the poorer households in these villages would, therefore, most likely be female-led.

1.2 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

Several institutions, both national and international, are involved in issues of food security generally. Some of the major national institutions are situated within the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoA). These include the Food Security Department (FSD) that is responsible for monitoring of the food situation in the country and manages the Strategic Grain Reserve. The other is the Crop Monitoring and Early Warning Unit which monitors trends in food production and food supply, forecasts future trends in food production, and predicts impending food shortages in specific locations. The FSD works closely with Marketing Development Bureau (MDB) to monitor food security. The MDB collects information on prices and on supply of grains and disseminates them to the media. Apart from the institutions within MoA there are others such as the Disaster Management Unit in the Prime Minister's Office, the Growth Strategies Division in the Planning Commission that coordinates the formulation of policies and strategies for rural development including rural food security. The agriculture and extension systems are expected to provide basic supportive services to agriculture. In general these institutions lack resources and manpower due to changing economic policies.

International institutions include the World Bank that has supported the extension programme in staff development and provision of vehicles and other operational inputs to agriculture at regional, district and village levels. Other institutions are the United Nations FAO and UNICEF. UNICEF has funded the Child Support, Protection and Development Programme that adopted an integrated approach to food security, health and nutrition. The Tanzania Food and Nutrition Centre has been coordinating this programme in the districts of Mpwawa, Kibaha and Shinyanga. The World Food Programme (WFP) has two units that are directly involved in rural food security. These units involve themselves mainly in food relief provision to refugees and communities hit by disasters. WFP collaborates closely with international NGOs such as Oxfam in Ngorongoro and Save the Children in Lindi and Mtwara.

NGOs carry out other activities related to food security, besides provision of food relief. For example, the philosophy of CARE International and CARE Tanzania is to work and empower marginalized groups and households to enable them to improve their livelihoods. Food security as a concept and project is defined within the realm of household livelihood security. One of the major actors in the food security problematic is CARITAS Tanzania that is managed under the auspices of Tanzania Episcopal Council. CARITAS Tanzania is active in Shinyanga District where it has facilitated a variety of activities such as credit schemes for women and youth that contribute directly to enhanced food security.

Ngorongoro District is marked by a large number of local indigenous NGOs and CBOs. These include KIPOC, SADA, LOSODEI, NGOPADEO and OSEREMI.

1.3 CONCEPTUALISING “FOOD SECURITY”

In Shinyanga Rural District, the major economic activity was agro-pastoralism, along with trade (especially among women in all three villages, Iselamagazi, Ikonokelo and Ng’wamanota) and gold mining (among men in Ikonokelo Village). More than half of the households were considered poor and very poor. A food secure household was defined by villagers as one with enough maize, bulrush millet or sorghum in store to last the year, or with enough money, livestock or other assets to be able to purchase food. The most common causes of food insecurity were land shortage, lack of water, incessant drought, lack of farm credit, destructive birds, poor cultivation techniques, decreasing soil productivity, lack of reliable markets for crops and livestock, and misuse of available food.

In Ngorongoro District, the major economic activity among villagers was pastoralism in all three villages, Endulen (NCAA area), Malambo and Ololosokwan; which was combined with food cultivation, especially in Endulen and Ololosokwan. Food security depended upon several different sets of factors:

- Enough milk and maize flour; good nutrition; and food aid in case of famine
- Ability to produce enough crops for food and cash; owning enough animals for milk and meat
- Access to enough productive resources such as: productive land, modern agricultural production techniques (cultivation, livestock-keeping), modern techniques of land management in semi-arid areas, inputs and implements for agricultural production and cattle keeping
- Access to adequate social services such as: medical care, relevant education, water for domestic and livestock use, better houses
- Adequate economic infrastructure such as: food stores and techniques of storage of food; transport and communications
- Enough employment and incomes to enable an individual to live comfortably
- Competitive markets for livestock, milk and other commodities
- Good social relations: equitable gender relations; peace and security.

Women, men and youth had different concepts of the key causes of food insecurity, in many cases, which affected the way, that they prioritised problems and planned strategies of action.

In Njombe District, the discussions held in the sample villages on the concept and situation of food security revealed that unlike the situation prevailing in urban centres, the types of foodstuffs depended upon for

sustenance in rural areas are almost always environmentally determined. To the villagers in the sub-humid village of Igoma, for example, the concept “Food” meant *ugali* made of maize and finger millet mill accompanied by relishes such as beans, peas, vegetables, and meat. *Matosani* (Irish potatoes) were also used as an alternative foodstuff or substitute by the less well-off and the poor during periods of scarcity.

“Food Security”, on the other hand, meant having enough food to last a family/household from one season to the next. Having alternative foodstuffs such as *mayawo* (sweet potatoes) and *ng’ing’i* (a traditional root crop) to support a family to the end of a season also made a household secure in food. For workers such as teachers and business people having enough money to buy the needed food also made a family/household food secure. Money was also depended upon by villagers from the poor households who spent most of their working days doing *vibarua* in other people’s shambas or collecting firewood or charcoaling for sale. The latter activities were particularly important in the two villages of Mayale and Mung’elenge in the semi-arid part of the district.

In the two semi-arid villages the concept “Food” was characterized by hardy and drought resistant varieties. To them “Food” was *ugali* made of maize, cassava, finger millet or sorghum mill accompanied by relishes such as beans, vegetables, milk and meat. *Mayawo* were the main food substitutes used by the less well-off and the poor during periods of scarcity. There were, however, no differences in the definition of “Food Security”. It invariably meant having enough food to last a family/household from one season to the next, having alternative foodstuffs such as sweet potatoes, and having enough money to buy the needed food.

1.4 FOOD STORAGE

Information on crop production, farm sizes and age of respondents suffer more from problems of respondent recall and incomprehension rather than deliberate manipulation. For example, many farmers could not easily quantify their production since crops are hardly harvested at a single stroke in any one season. As observed elsewhere family members start harvesting the crops for household consumption as soon as they ripen. Secondly, the problems of crop destruction by vermin and loss during harvest and processing for storage are universal in the sample villages, making accurate quantification an impossible task. Hence, amounts of food needed to secure a particular household throughout the year are difficult to determine. However, during the focus group discussions a figure of 5 bags of maize per person in a household was mentioned by the respondents as an approximate quantity required to sustain a household throughout the year.

Several storage facilities for grain and legumes (i.e. beans, cowpeas, pigeon peas, etc.) were mentioned during the focus group discussions. These included the locally constructed *vihenge* and gunny bags. During the discussions it was

evident, however, that the rate of building *vihenge* had decreased quite considerably. One old man told us, for example, that while during the old days it was normal for each homestead to have a *kihenge*, today a homestead with a *kihenge* was an exception rather than a rule. That storage tradition had apparently lost its importance. According to him, very little surplus was being produced these days than it used to be in the old man's days. The younger respondents countered this by pointing out that most of the surplus produced in these days was mostly sold at the farm gate, albeit at low prices. Why should any one need to store anything for long?

Unlike the situation in Shinyanga District where there is an elaborate system of preserving vegetables, *mapalage* (unboiled but dried sweet potato pellets) and *matobolwa* (boiled and dried sweet potato pellets), no such system was mentioned in Njombe District for the preservation of sweet and Irish potatoes. Vegetables were, nevertheless, dried and stored in pots in the semi-arid zone villages of Mayale and Mung'elenge.

1.5 VULNERABILITY TO FOOD INSECURITY

Experiences with food shortages in the three research districts were also investigated, including the institutions that had assisted with food aid and the manner in which such aid had been distributed. It was clear from the focus group discussions that while no food shortages had been experienced in the sub-humid villages in Njombe District, such shortages were quite regular in the semi-arid villages of Shinyanga and Ngorongoro Districts due to incessant droughts. Until very recently drought years in the semi-arid districts tended to follow a nationwide 10-year cycle. This year's shortages in Shinyanga, Ngorongoro and the semi-arid Njombe seem to be a result of worldwide changing weather patterns associated with global warming as observed elsewhere in the country.

Other causes of food insecurity mentioned included poor farm producer prices, poor farming methods and soil infertility resulting from high prices of farm inputs. It was consoling to note, however, that no food shortages had in recent years developed into full-fledged famines in the study villages.

According to the focus group discussions, responses to instances of food shortage differ between well-being groups in each sample village. While the *wenye uwezo mkubwa* group and the *wenye uwezo wa kati* group have a flexibility in the choice of alternative foods through agricultural diversification and/or purchase, the *wenye uwezo wa chini* group is the most vulnerable in most cases. Their dependence on *kibarua* in other people's shambas or on sale of firewood and charcoal to the rural towns like Ilembula and Makambako in Njombe District make their lives entirely dependent on the fortunes of other social groups. In case no one needs to hire them or to buy their wood fuel their families stand the risk of going hungry for a long time. And once they fall sick

during such a period they would certainly die, as they cannot pay for medical care. Nonetheless, the *uwezo wa chini* group in sub-humid villages such as Igoma in Njombe District stand a better chance of surviving as the natural resource base in such villages is more bountiful than in the semi-arid villages of the three research districts.

In the Shinyanga District local beer brewing and drinking associated with dry season feasting were identified as a significant source of food insecurity in some households. The situation in the study villages in Njombe is rather different. Beer drinking was traditionally allowed for all adults. It was normally done after a work party, or during a socio-cultural ritual/festivity. Beer was also drunk during the slack period in the agricultural season. However, it is noted from this study that brewing and selling of local beer has increased in recent years with more of the menfolk getting involved in the activity. In many villages beer brewing is the only booming business. In surplus maize growing villages brewing has become an important means of adding value to maize that has had a deteriorating market value.

Unfortunately, a general decline in the traditional drinking prudence and social control has also accompanied this development. Frustrations in life force some people, both men and women, to drink heavily; sometimes starting early in the morning and lasting the whole day. Very little economic activity is carried out in the households of such people; as they slowly but surely fall into spirals of poverty. In Mung'elenge village, for example, we were warned to hold all our meetings with the villagers in the mornings when most of the villagers were still sober. In the afternoons everyone would have had the so-called *manywa* (drunk) and we would not understand each other.

The result of all this has been the enhancement of alcoholism and social problems such as increased single parenthoods and increased incidences of HIV-AIDS and other related diseases. Generally, in the sample villages drunkenness is perceived to affect household food security not only in terms of reducing resources that might have been used for food production/purchase, it also takes productive labour out of agricultural production.

Some of the cultural norms and behaviour related to the eating of food observed in the Shinyanga District as contributing to food insecurity for certain groups of people in the households include women and children not being allowed to eat such nutritious foods as eggs and certain types of meat. Furthermore, the habit of men eating first and/or getting most of the food before the women and children is also reported to be common in all sample villages. The habit affects food security for the concerned women and children in that the leftovers are often meagre and not as nutritious as the food that is first partaken by the men. The restrictions on certain foods being eaten by women and children hinders them from access to some nutritious foodstuffs that are important to their well-being (Box 1).

Box 1. Of Women, Chicken and Slaughtering

...In the old days women were not allowed to eat chicken. There were even special pots and cooking pans for chicken meat. A woman was supposed to use only such utensils when chicken was cooked and served for men... As for other types of meat only sick animals were slaughtered. Cattle and other domestic animals are "wealth" and one would be publicly ridiculed if he slaughtered a healthy animal just for home consumption. Slaughtering was only done during wedding and other ritual celebrations... (Source: Elderly Woman, Iselamagazi Village, September 1998.)

Another cultural factor that influence certain households' food insecurity is polygyny. In Njombe District single wife marriages are predominant in rural communities. The data indicate, for example, that more than 60 per cent of the married male heads of households had one wife, 27 per cent had two wives, while 13 per cent had more than two wives. These figures compare well with an earlier study done in the district that showed that only 33 per cent of the sample households were polygamous (Jakobsen, 1978).

Generally, however, polygamy is more pronounced in some villages than others due to differentiation in wealth and religious-cultural perceptions. Indeed polygamy is confined to either the rich males or village leaders/elders, who are in most cases one and the same people. For example, areas entrenched with the Islamic culture such as Mayale and Mung'elenge in Njombe and largely animist communities in Shinyanga and Ngorongoro have been observed to have more polygamous households than areas with predominantly Christian populations.

Furthermore, data from this study show that too many of the respondents take polygamy for granted. For example, no concrete proposals were made either at the village meetings or at the District Workshops to challenge its existence. There is, nevertheless, a general feeling among women that polygamy creates conflicts in the family and reduces the size of household's assistance from the husband/father. There is a feeling also that polygamy facilitates husbands to use women and children as tools for the creation of goods and services whose proceeds are in the end appropriated by the husbands/fathers as male heads of households.

1.6 LOCAL GOVERNANCE

In the present context of globalisation, democracy should be in the service of national liberation and social progress. The new democratic process refers to the democratisation of government, on the one hand, and the separation of government from civil society, on the other. Within civil society, all sorts of civil organisations develop, reflecting the different positions and interests of different sectors of society; for example, big business, informal sector enterprises, workers, farmers, livestock-keepers, fisher folks, women, youth, students, the disabled, and other marginalized cultural groups. Special attention

needs to be given to the empowerment of the poor and the disempowered *in* civil society, vis-à-vis more powerful stakeholders.

Basic aspects of liberal democracy are necessary, though not sufficient, to provide the conditions for popular democracy. They include freedom of association, of speech, of movement, and of the press; the rule of law and order; the separation of executive, legislative and judiciary powers within the state. They are not sufficient, in that the poor and marginalized are denied equal access to and control over key resources necessary to exercise these freedoms.

Oppositional political parties have a special role to play in ensuring democracy, by acting as a challenge to the ruling party, and as a watchdog on behalf of different interest groups in society.

It has been hypothesized elsewhere that the economic position of a social group in society determines to a certain extent the amount of political power that can be accessed by individuals of that social group. It is further argued that economic power is a prerequisite for a particular social group's ascendance to political power (Mung'ong'o, 1995:46-47). Data from this study demonstrate that there is no clear delineation as to which socio-economic group has had a monopoly of political power in the three research districts. As far as gender is concerned there is an overwhelming preponderance of men in position of power. For example, apart from being members of local community organizations, many women in the well-off and middle social groups have never held any leadership positions. Those who have, have done so because of the preferential 20% representation dictated by the Local Government Act.

Political power seems to have been evenly distributed among all the three socio-economic groups, suggesting that local politics in rural districts may not necessarily follow the distribution of economic power. This would tend to confirm the assertion made by some respondents during the focus group discussions that, as a legacy of the Ujamaa Experiment when village leaders acted as agents of the state, village leaders are often chosen not on merit but rather on their inability to act so as to avert the hustle of implementing government orders and regulations.

At another level of analysis this phenomenon could also suggest a possible existence of both multidirectional and centripetal mobility of households within the socio-economic groups. As noted in Mung'ong'o (1995:95) multidirectional mobility involves opposing movements of individual households between the socio-economic groups that cancel each other out. At the same time there is centripetal movements of households in relation to the median wealth in society. This means that there is a simultaneous rise of poorer households as well as a fall in the economic fortunes of the wealthier ones due to state policies (e.g. villagization), fluctuations of weather, changing terms of trade between the rural and urban centres, et cetera.

According to the focus group discussions in all the three research districts good governance was emphasized as an imperative in any development initiative. Though not so specifically defined in the discussions, by good governance the villagers tended to imply the presence of democratic practices,

transparency in decision-making, and accountability of the leaders to their constituencies in the day to day running of village affairs. In order to gauge the effectiveness of local institutions as indicators of good governance and sustainable development, this study analysed between 10 and 15 institutions in each of the sample villages.

Generally, there are serious weaknesses in governance in all the villages. Leaders elected/chosen to lead the various institutions, including the village government, are not trained to do their duties well. Principles of good governance are not imparted to the incumbents. Neither are their responsibilities to their constituencies properly understood. The village chairpersons are also chairpersons of the Ruling Party. Due to the infancy of Opposition Parties there is virtually no watchdog to criticize or forestall any excesses or abuse of power in the villages. In case of food shortage in the villages, no one felt responsible to take action at the community level to alleviate the problem. Afflicted families had to cope by themselves through doing *kibarua* in the farms of the well-off, or through sale of firewood and/or charcoal to urban centres.

People's participation in decision-making and accountability in resource allocation is at its minimum in these villages. Women are the most marginalized group in both villages. During the Community Feedback Workshops, for example, women had to be prodded to speak. Otherwise they would remain silent and leave the men talk. Even after the prodding oftentimes they only reiterated what the men had said. "*Kama walivyosema...*" (As they have said...), was the common answer in most of these efforts.

Lack of accountability and transparency often breeds and thrives on dictatorial tendencies. Village meetings are never called, as village chairpersons tend to hold almost absolute powers in all villages. The key informants told us that little could be done without the approval of these leaders. During the Community Feedback Workshop in Mayale, for example, one courageous villager requested us to protect him while he was unravelling the weaknesses of the village leadership. "*Naomba nilindwe!*" was the cry. Later we were warned not to forget to invite the chairperson to the District Feedback Workshop if we wanted the village's action plan to be adopted and implemented!

1.7 SOCIO-ECONOMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

1.7.1 Education

Educational levels in Njombe District are quite high compared to areas like Shinyanga and Ngorongoro Districts. Every village has a primary school while every division has a secondary school. By September 2000, Njombe District had 14 secondary schools with a total enrolment of 3,907 pupils. Half of these were girls. The average literacy rate was 88 percent. Education is thus highly valued in the district as a whole. During the drawing of Venn Diagrams, for example,

the school was in all the three villages always given a large card and placed at the centre of the community circle.

Despite the encouraging situation, some major infrastructural problems were mentioned during the focus group discussions as hindering better performance of these schools. Among the problems given included serious shortage of both reading and writing material, lack of teachers' houses, shortage of desks for the pupils, shortage of teachers and teaching material and bad condition of school buildings. All of these sometimes made both learning and teaching exercises unappetizing and tortuous.

Cost sharing programmes had added another set of problems to the performance of these schools. Households from the *wenye uwezo wa chini* group found it very difficult indeed to pay school fees for their children. This was especially so among female led households from this group. The fact that the poor form a sizable number of the population, many of them being women, educational costs can rightly be said to be a major reason for the persistence of illiteracy (12%) in much of the rural areas of the research districts today.

1.7.2 Health services

Ill health is a normal ingredient of life in the semi-arid research districts of Ngorongoro and Shinyanga Rural. From the focus group discussions on the prevalence of diseases it was clear that malaria, diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, bilharzias, eye infections, upper respiratory infections and diseases associated with malnutrition were rampant in the sample villages. However, the incidence of these diseases differed with the seasons, the situation worsening with the coming of the rainy season. While the demand for medical services is highest at this period the roads are impassable and the flow of medicine is thus hampered.

Low utilization of modern medical services by the poor sections of the community was noted in the two districts, possibly attributable to the introduction of user fees that has made these services less accessible to the poor. This observation was in fact corroborated by the interview data from the present study that show that on average an individual needs around Tsh. 250 per visit to see the doctor and at least Tsh. 300 to buy a doze of chloroquin in cases of malaria. These amounts of money are in many cases out of reach of many of the poor households, especially so for female headed households among them.

From discussions with health officials on the prevalence of diseases in Njombe District it was clear that malaria, diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, bilharzias, eye infections, upper respiratory infections and diseases associated with malnutrition were common in the area. However, the incidence of these diseases differed between ecological zones and with the seasons. While bilharzias, diarrhoea, and upper respiratory infections were more common in the sub-humid zone during the rainy season, malaria, dysentery and sometimes cholera were the most common diseases during the season. The incidence of

these diseases, however, tended to subside during the dry season, with eye and upper respiratory infections becoming more common in the semi-arid part of the district.

HIV/AIDS is also becoming a subject of major concern among the medical personnel in the district. Exact figures of rates of infection were not immediately available. However, a recent workshop on the spread of AIDS in Tanzania noted that Makete District in Iringa Region was leading the country in the incidence of the disease. Most of the cases recorded were from among migrant labourers and itinerant business operators. Njombe District borders this district.

To compound the problem health facilities are very poor indeed in all the sample villages. The average population-per-dispensary ratio for Shinyanga Region, for example, during 1998 was 16,000. This is approximately twice the national population-per-dispensary ratio of 9,000 for the same period. Furthermore, it was generally pointed out during Focused Group Discussions that government medical services faced serious shortage of drugs, supplies, equipment and staff.

Of the three research villages in Njombe District only Igoma had a dispensary serving Igoma itself and adjacent villages. The other villages depended on the Lutheran missionary hospital at Ilebula and the health centre at Wanging'ombe, 7 and 8 km away, respectively. While the services at the Lutheran Hospital are too expensive for an ordinary villager, those at the Wanging'ombe Health Centre are very rudimentary. Although during the drawing of Venn diagrams the dispensary always got a big card, it was in many cases placed far from the centre of the community circle due to these shortcomings.

Furthermore, the data from the wealth ranking exercises demonstrate that much as the deficient provision of medical services affects all the people in the sample villages, access to the available services is more constrained to the *wenye uwezo wa chini* households than to the other social groups. Female led households among the poor suffer the most. Hence the prominence of utilization of traditional medicine and consultation of traditional healers was among the poor in all the sample villages. It was thus that during the drawing of the Venn diagrams in all the research villages traditional midwives were given a medium card and placed within the community circle close to the centre of the village.

1.7.3 Water supply

Water supply is not a big problem in the sub-humid villages such as Igoma in Njombe District. However, water is very inadequate in the semi-arid villages of the three research districts in terms of quality and availability. During the dry season water supply is inadequate due to limited water sources brought about by the semi-arid nature of the areas and the breakdown of existing water schemes

such as those at Wanging'ombe and Oldonyo Ogol in Njombe and Ngorongoro Districts, respectively.

Most people are forced to resort to natural water sources such as shallow wells dug in sand rivers and ponds whose waters are often unpalatable and a source of waterborne diseases as discussed above. The village water tanks at Mayale and Mung'elenge, for example, got medium cards during the drawing of the Venn diagrams that were placed far from the centre of the village but within the community circle, highlighting the erratic and very irregular nature of water supply.

According to the focus group discussions it was pointed out that livestock had invariably to be taken to distant chaco dams to be watered. In the process, concentration of large numbers of animals at few water sources led to silting of the sources and land degradation along the routes used by the animals. This factor was a major reason for the silting of many water sources in drier parts of the three research districts.

From the village problem identification and planning exercises chaco dams were preferred by most of the villagers in the semi-arid villages. The preference for this water source by both men and women is probably due to the fact that chaco dams can simultaneously be used to water animals and supply water for domestic use. Villagers in the sub-humid village of Igoma, however, preferred piped water, and were in fact planning to install a pumping system by the time of this study.

Scarcity of water during the dry season also means an increase in the workload of women and children who have to travel long distances to fetch water for various uses in the households. The well-off are better off in this respect, in that they can transport large amounts of water in ox-carts or on bicycles. However, since women and children from poor households have to carry water on their heads and travel on foot they have to make several journeys to the water sources and use all the available labour time in the household for this activity alone.

1.7.4 Communication

Transportation of commodities and human beings between villages is usually by road with bicycles, buses and lorries as popular vehicles. Transportation of crops within the sample villages is normally by head, always done by women. Njombe District is, however, more accessible than the other two districts. It is served by the Makambako-Songea road, Dar es Salaam-Mbeya road and the TAZARA Railway. Its feeder roads are also all weather. The district's development problems cannot, therefore, be attributed to lack of accessibility. This is, however, not the case with Shinyanga and Ngorongoro Districts.

2. LESSONS LEARNED: A CONCLUSION

In terms of the general objectives, the research/animation process succeeded to:

- deepen an understanding of the range of factors which undermine or improve food security within rural households—although much more emphasis was given to problems than to strengths by community participants and the facilitators themselves;
- identify specific and achievable policy changes which if implemented would strengthen RFS at household level—though more emphasis was given in FGDs to strategic recommendations at the meso and micro level of institutional structures and/or systems, than to macro policy level; and
- engage with relevant policy makers and practitioners at district level, in particular, in order to promote and realise these changes.

Concerning the specific research objectives, all five factors—land, markets/trade/prices, savings/credit, education/skills, and employment/incomes—were validated as significant in the pursuit of rural food security. Additional factors were added in Ngorongoro: water and peace/security. Concerning the second research objective—the question of how communities, households and individuals assess, analyse and act on their own behalf concerning the situation and conditions of household food security—we found that people had clear ideas of the components of household food security, and of the different levels of causation which explained the problems and opportunities which affected RFS. Most actions seemed to have been taken at the individual household or boma level, with the exception of the land crisis in Ololosokwan, Ngorongoro District. In the case of land, villagers had been forced by circumstances to organise themselves, sometimes successfully, and to work with partners locally, nationally and globally. However, other community initiatives were identified, including ‘traditional’ forms of mutual assistance to support people living in poverty, and more modern efforts to organise and secure needed resources.

The **concept of rural food security** that was adopted by the RFS study emphasised both adequate food supply and food self-sufficiency *and* access to food. Access to food in turn depended on food *entitlements*, i.e. the extent to which different groups were entitled to food as a result of structures of power and social relations at all levels. Food was understood to be a *human right*, and access to adequate food a citizenship right which governments *owed* their citizens.

Changes in the *policy environment* associated with economic reforms have tended to undermine rural food security among the grassroots poor, according to many reports and analyses. Poverty has increased, as have the costs of living, in turn associated with the rising costs of education and health associated with cost-sharing. Smallholder producers no longer have access to key support systems such as producer goods subsidies, minimum producer prices, and soft

loans. Smallholder farming and livestock-keeping has become a part-time activity for many women and men, who are forced to seek additional cash incomes from off-farm activities. This, in turn, reduces the amount of time available to farm and process food, thus undermining food security at the household level. Women have been empowered by their increased access to and control over cash, but this has led to increased work for them and growing gender conflict in the household. Some men have reacted by adjusting to a more egalitarian relationship; others have become more abusive in a desperate attempt to maintain patriarchal domination, in spite of the decline in male income and viable employment.

The research explored feasible policy changes at the immediate and underlying levels of causation, with a focus on land, markets/trade/prices, savings/credit, education/skills, water, peace/security; and (self)employment/incomes from grassroots perspectives. The research connected these changes to systems and policies of resource management which are represented here as part of basic causes. These factors were found to cut across macro, meso (institutional) and micro levels of analysis, and to have been documented by practical organisational experience as well as research as being key determinants of household food security. They all directly or indirectly pertained to macro and sectorial policy reforms.

Several constraints and limitations have been identified, concerning the research process itself, as well as the implications of the RFS process for future actions. The following constraints were given special emphasis:

- coping with villagers' high expectations for external support
- conflict over resources e.g. NGOs, RFS, villagers
- corruption of local NGOs/CBOs by international organisations
- security and threat to peace, especially in Ngorongoro
- government not likely to have the political will to support the policy recommendations, given the conditions set down by IMF/World Bank

Villagers prepared a set of action plans intended to map out strategies to overcome specific problems that they had prioritised themselves. They also agreed upon a set of policy recommendations that were presented and discussed at the District Feedback Workshops in Shinyanga, Loliondo and Njombe. These were synthesised, revised and further refined at various workshops.

3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS ON FOOD, LAND AND DEMOCRACY

Introduction

1. Having understood that Rural Food Security, from a grassroots perspective, refers to access and control over adequate food and nutrition, as well as the

resources necessary to acquire food: land, water and other natural resources, markets, employment and incomes, health, education/skills training, peace and security, savings and credit, and the means to produce efficiently in an environment which benefits the producers themselves and their community;

2. Having recognised the negative impact of globalisation, debt, economic reforms and increasing poverty on Rural Food Security, and the need to (a) democratise the decision-making process concerning macro, meso and micro policies; (b) develop and implement an alternative people-centred development strategy which prioritises sustainability of human and natural resources; and (c) eradicate poverty; and
3. Having realised the significance of policy coordination, implementation and monitoring to ensure accountability, transparency, consistency and credibility.

The Vision

4. The Rural Food Security vision is a people-centred poverty-free society based on full and equal access to food and nutrition for all, and to the resources necessary to achieve the same; control over key resources; full participation in decision making on policy-making, implementation and monitoring; and the strengthening of sustainability and self-reliance from the grassroots to the national to the global level.

Recommendations

5. To lobby for (a) changes in the policy-making process at all levels, so as to ensure full participation of all sectors of society, beginning with the grassroots; (b) democratisation of structures of decision-making in government and civil society, with transparency, accountability and legitimacy; and (c) the promotion of human rights
6. To lobby for review, reform and implementation of development policies which focus on the poor, especially those in semi-arid areas, so as to ensure that there is: (a) full democratic participation; (b) direct benefits to the grassroots; and (c) the grassroots' increasing access to and control over resources, with particular attention to gender and class differences. The key sectors for attention are:
 - (i) land and natural resources, including wildlife conservation and mining;
 - (ii) farming and livestock-keeping;
 - (iii) marketing and pricing, taxes and subsidies;
 - (iv) education, health and water;
 - (v) savings and credit;
 - (vi) roads and communications;
 - (vii) security, law and order; and

7. To strengthen and build capacity for self-organisation at all levels among grassroots and other likeminded groups (e.g. women, youth, the poor, landless, pastoralists) so as to be able to act on their own behalf to realise the necessary policy changes to realise the *right to food, land and democracy*.

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