

“Income Generating Projects” as a development intervention of government: A case of government funded Agricultural Projects in Limpopo

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Abstract

This chapter describes the role of income generation projects as a development intervention of government. A descriptive quantitative–qualitative evaluative study was conducted to determine if the government funded ‘income generation projects’ in the Department of Agriculture in Limpopo province are indeed generating income. Ways in which such projects are able to achieve the objective of poverty alleviation was determined. Food security projects that were funded by the Limpopo Province provincial government were targeted. Evaluation focused on four criteria that were regarded as significant to the projects objectives namely i) the biographical data informing the capacity of beneficiaries to efficiently manage the income generation project; ii) the ability of the project to generate income and capacity to alleviate poverty iii) the impact of the project to the surrounding communities and iv) the sustainability of the project and the impact of the project in the community. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire and qualitative interviews. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis was done for the relevant data set respectively. Biographical data showed that there are issues associated with capacity of project beneficiaries relating to age, gender, and highest level passed and training received to manage the project as most of them were ages 55 and above, female and no tertiary education. It also emerged from inputs of participants that although there was no significant income generated (a salary of less than R200 per month to each member) by most of the projects, they do contribute to poverty alleviation as reflected by the ability of project beneficiaries to provide for basic needs of their family through work in the project. Recommendations are that future feasibility studies should take into consideration the capacity and succession in relation to ages and strength of probable beneficiaries; participatory planning and regular engagement with project beneficiaries including planned continuous support and nurturing. Mechanism should also be put in place for participatory monitoring and evaluation.

Key Words: Agriculture, Poverty alleviation, Food security, Income generation projects,

INTRODUCTION

Poverty and income inequality persist in South Africa despite efforts to eliminate them (Machete, 2004). A considerable number of South Africans, estimated to be in the region of 57% of the population, are living below the poverty line despite initiatives to eradicate poverty since 1994 (Strydom & Tlhojane, 2008).

With regard to poverty of income, it is estimated that just under three million households in South Africa live on less than R1000 a month and half of the country’s households survive on less than R20 a day (Monama, 2006). Current unemployment rates range around 40 percent of the economically active population. The correlation between unemployment and poverty is significant in that 55 percent of people from poor households are unemployed compared with 14 percent of those from non-poor households (May, 1998). At the same time employment does not guarantee people’s ability to move out of income poverty.

In rural development literature, agriculture is considered as the best vehicle to reduce rural poverty. In most developing countries, agriculture and agriculture-related activities provide most of the employment in rural areas. Agriculture contributes to poverty alleviation at rural, urban and national levels in the following ways: (a) provision of food; (b) employment creation; (c) increasing real wages; and (d) improving farm income. Results of studies conducted in several countries indicate that the “pro-poor role of agricultural growth can be dramatic, and much more effective than other sectors at reducing poverty and hunger in both urban and rural areas.

Agricultural growth has strong and positive impact on poverty often significantly greater than that of other economic sectors” (FAO, 2004:12). Irz, Lin, Thirtle, and Wiggins (2001) analysed the relationship between agricultural growth and rural poverty. The results show the poverty-alleviation effects of agricultural growth to be strong. For example, a one-third increase in yield was expected to reduce the number of poor people by a quarter or more. With regard to food security, the studies conclude that growing the agricultural sector is the primary channel for achieving household food security. The study also concluded that unless agriculture reaches some degree of commercialisation, the impact of agricultural growth on food insecurity and poverty alleviation is limited. Another important observation from the studies is that households (in the rural sector) engaged in agricultural activities tend to be less poor and have better nutritional status than other households. A study conducted in Indonesia found that agricultural growth reduced the depth of poverty by 50 percent in rural areas while the percentage for urban areas was 36 (FAO, 2004).

Zungu (2006) explored factors contributing to success or failure of income generating projects in Nongoma, KwaZulu-Natal and the methodology that he utilized focused on four cases of income generating projects for comparison purposes. The main findings from his research were that successful community development projects helped poor women in rural areas to earn a living through income generating activities. These poor women became self-reliant and self-sustaining.

This chapter is thus organized in the following way: First a conceptual frame contextualizing concepts for the purpose of this paper is outlined, followed by the description of the methodology employed to conduct a study which sought to generate and describe empirical evidence regarding the role of ‘income generation projects’ in poverty alleviation and development. It was envisaged that the findings will enable government policy makers to review strategies and plans for the food security programme in Limpopo to maximize income generation. Results of the study are thus presented and discussed. Finally, conclusive statements are made with recommendations.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Poverty takes on multiple dimensions and in essence describes a state of deprivation that characterizes minimum “socially acceptable” standard of living. The multi-dimensional view of poverty attempts to capture the various conditions embedded within a poverty situation such as economic considerations and the human and social conditions of the poor (Calvo, 2008; Sanusi, 2008).

According to May (2000:5) being poor means to “*Be alienated from your community, to be unable to illuminate the regional discrepancies in to sufficiently feed your family, to live in*

wellbeing that exist in South Africa, even on *overcrowded conditions, use basic forms of energy, lack adequately paid and to have fragmented families*". Absolute poverty has long been defined in terms of the income required to provide a minimal food intake for a healthy life and the associated consumption of those so poor that the minimum food intake is all they achieve (Dandekar and Rath, 1971).

Poverty is about deprivation of resources, opportunities and choices and is linked to discrimination and unequal distribution of resources. Altman (2003) further states that a comprehensive definition of poverty refers not only to material deprivation but to other non-material aspects such as the lack of skills development, participation, education, a sense of belonging, and decision-making power.

The literature on rural development suggests that agriculture is considered as the best vehicle to reduce rural poverty. In most developing countries, agriculture and agriculture-related activities provide most of the employment in rural areas. Authors such as Irz, Lin, Thirtle, and Wiggins (2002) and others have written over the years about the importance of agricultural growth to poverty reduction. Theoretical reasons have been advanced as well as strong arguments regarding the inclusion of the creation of jobs on the land, linkages from farming to the rest of the rural economy, and a decline in the real cost of food for the whole economy although the degree of impact is qualified by particular circumstances.

"To be poor is to be unable to sufficiently feed your family" (May, 2000:5). Hunger is one of the direct manifestations of poverty. There is mounting evidence that fighting hunger also helps reduce poverty since hunger and under nourishment reduce labour productivity, increase susceptibility to illness, worsen school performance in children, reduce the willingness to undertake risky but more profitable investments.

The discussion and data on unemployment in South Africa highlights the vast numbers of the economically active population who are unable to find paid work. Clearly, income poverty will be severe for many households to which the unemployed are attached. The consequences of such high unemployment rates are immediately clear when considering food security.

Food security is a concept that has evolved considerably over time (Hoddinott, 1999). There are more than 200 definitions and 450 indicators of food security (Maxwell and Frankenberger 1992); Riely et al. (1995), Chunget al. (1997), and Christiaensen and Tollens (1995). One of the most commonly accepted definitions of food security is adequate access to food at all times, throughout the year and from year to year. Access is ensured when all households and all individuals within those households have sufficient resources to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet (Riely et al. 1995). This is dependent on the level of household resources—capital, labor, and knowledge—and on prices. Adequate access can be achieved without households being self-sufficient in food production more important is the ability of households to generate sufficient income which, together with own production, can be used to meet food needs.

Furthermore, there is a distinction between household and individual food security. Moving from household to individual food security requires consideration of two factors. First, how is food allocated within the household? In households where distribution is unequal, it is

possible for aggregate access to improve and for some individuals to experience no change in their food security status. A second consideration is biological utilization; the ability of the human body to take food and translate it into either energy that is used to undertake daily activities or is stored. Utilization requires not only an adequate diet, but also a healthy physical environment (so as to avoid disease) and an understanding of proper health care, food preparation, and storage processes.

The concept of food security also has spatial and temporal dimensions. The spatial dimension refers to the degree of aggregation at which food security is being considered. It is possible to analyze food security at the global, continental, national, sub-national, village, household, or individual level. The temporal dimension refers to the time frame over which food security is being considered. In much of the food security literature, a distinction is drawn between chronic food insecurity—the inability to meet food needs on an ongoing basis—and transitory food insecurity when the inability to meet food needs is of a temporary nature (Maxwell and Frankenberger 1992). Transitory food insecurity is sometimes divided into two subcategories: cyclical (where there is a regular pattern to food insecurity, for example, the 'lean season' that occurs in the period just before harvest); and temporary (which is the result of a short-term, exogenous shock such as droughts or floods).

It is worth noting that because the academic literature addresses food security at spatial and temporal levels differently, the concept of food security can become confusing at times. In this study, the focus was primarily on household- and individual-level food security although some attention is given to regional and national food security issues because they impinge on household food security.

The very nature of food security dictates that any responsive strategy should be multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary in nature. People enjoy food security when they have access to sufficient, nutritious food for an active and healthy life. Achieving this involves:

- ✓ availability: ensuring that a wide variety of food is available in local markets and fields;
- ✓ access: people are able to produce or purchase affordable, sufficient quantities of foods that are nutritionally adequate and culturally acceptable, at all times; and
- ✓ utilisation: food is stored, prepared, distributed and eaten in ways that are nutritionally adequate for all members of the household, including men and women, girls and boys.
- ✓ Stability of all.

South Africa's response to food insecurity derived through the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) and the Integrated Food Security and Nutrition Programme (IFSNP). These were politically motivated by Cabinet's view of "unsatisfactory" situation of a "lack of a unified approach" to food security (2002). Other institutional mechanisms in place include the Constitutional Provision for the right to food (clause 27(1)(b)) and the Social Cluster that has been mandated by the Cabinet to ensure that the IFSS is effective. National Department of Agriculture has stewardship of food security resulting in the natural bias towards food availability questions (production) – avoids complexity of food security in SA. There is a tendency to reinforce impression that food security is an agricultural issue as exacerbated by national and provincial functions of Agriculture (Constitution) whereby provincial DG of Agriculture has overall responsibility for food security. The Food Insecurity and Vulnerability Information Management System (FIVIMS) revealed that information is not being shared across departments that are expected to work in an integrated, multi-sectoral manner from local through to national levels.

Household food security issues cannot be seen in isolation from broader factors. Having established the relevant dimensions of food security, the next section links the concepts of food security to government interventions as influenced by the physical, policy, and social environment. Firstly, the physical environment plays a large role in determining the type of activities that can be undertaken by rural households. Secondly, government policies toward the agricultural sector will have a strong effect on the design and implementation of household food security interventions. For example, a pricing policy that is hostile toward agriculture will discourage production (Hoddinott, 1999).

Sustainable development is defined as development activities that seek to meet current human needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Bank, 1992). Sustainable development is not only concerned with the needs of the present generation and present efforts in developing communities should not compromise the survival of future generations. Sustainable development emphasizes the government's commitment to promoting the well-being of its citizens (Midgely, 1995).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study to determine whether “income generation projects contribute to poverty alleviation through income generation has adopted a quantitative-qualitative–descriptive research design. According to O’Leary (2004:99), “qualitative research is value-laden and accepts an ad hoc process that accepts multiple realities through the study of a small number of cases”. According to Neuman (1997), descriptive research designs present a picture of the specific details of a situation and their goal is to find information to stimulate new explanations. The study was descriptive in nature because it sought to describe the inputs of participants regarding income generating projects. Anevaluative qualitative-quantitative case study design was adopted (Rossi and Freeman (1989); and Jackson (2001). Data collection was done through combination of self administered questionnaires and structures interviews. Respondents included people responsible for the everyday running of the selected projects and project beneficiaries as well as key informants who were participants outside the selected projects. Key informants included government officials working directly with the projects; traditional leadership and government policy makers in the area of food security.

Evaluation focused on four criteria that were regarded as significant to the projects objectives namely, the profile of beneficiaries considering aspects such as age, gender and highest level passed; ability of the project to generate income and alleviate poverty; sustainability of the project and the impact in the community. Data was collected by means of questionnaire and qualitative interviews. Qualitative and quantitative data analysis was done for the relevant data set respectively.

The research team consisted of stakeholders that were determined through a stakeholder analysis process. It was important to ensure a participatory approach to solicit buy-in particularly in the advocacy component of the study. Introductory engagements with identified stakeholders entailed problem validation and re-formulation. Research sub-teams were thereafter formed, which consisted of researchers and representative stakeholders and officials as allocated by the responsible office. Several meetings were held during the initial phase of the project where consensus discussions were held regarding the research process and tools to be used during the evaluation. The following stakeholders formed part of the research team: i) Department of Agriculture Limpopo; ii) Office of the Premier Limpopo; iii) District

and Local municipalities particularly where these projects are based. Table 1 indicates the list of stakeholders in the projects and their level of participation:

Table 1: List of Stakeholder participants

NAME OF STAKEHOLDER	ROLE (Reasons for participation)	INTEND USE OF RESEARCH OUTPUT
Department of Agriculture	Fund the selected projects	Identification and location of selected projects Representative official deployed in each research team Participated in the research planning meetings
District and local municipal officials	Linking researchers with the communities and projects where the study was to be conducted	Identification and location of selected projects Representative official deployed in each research team Participated in the research planning meetings
Office of the premier	They are eventually the custodians of the projects and would need to understand and own the results. Offered to fund a PhD student.	Compare with previous studies Policy review on funding for poverty alleviation projects
Department of Health and Social Development	Share experiences and research results to the Department since the Department is also involved in facilitating and managing income generation projects	Policy review on funding for poverty alleviation projects

Table provides categories of stakeholders who were part of the study and reasons for participating in the study. It was critical in this study that a full involvement of the officials from government is secured. This was meant to make sure that the findings of the study will easily find their way into policy formulations and development within government.

Population and Sampling

The population consisted of all food security projects as defined by the integrated food security strategy for South Africa (2002). Respondents were drawn from members of the food security projects funded by the Department of Agriculture in the Limpopo province, following a three phase sampling procedure: phase one involved the selection of projects and determination of project categories; phase two involved the selection of participants from each category of the food security projects which were determined in phase one. The final and third phase involved the selection of key informants within the districts. Projects categories that were determined in phase one were as follows: i) poultry, ii) vegetable, iii) broiler and egg production. The determination of categories followed the general categorisation employed by the Department of agriculture for all other purposes in the daily activities of the department. Furthermore, it was necessary for the researchers to ensure maximum variation of the sample by determining that further selection should ensure inclusion of the five district municipalities in the Province, namely Vhembe, Capricon, Mopani, Sekhukhuni and Mokopane. Patton (2002) motivates that maximum variation is desirable for smaller sample size.

A total of 108 respondents who are referred to in this paper as project beneficiaries were interviewed out of a total of 1044. To enhance the data, a series of individual as well as focused group interviews were held with key informants. The focus of qualitative interviews was on the following questions:

- a) How were you selected to participate in the project?
- b) Do you find your project assisting in poverty alleviation and how?
- c) Does your project assist in providing money and employment to you as a project member?
- d) Does your project assist in providing food for your households?
- e) Does your project provide skills necessary for you to manage similar projects?
- f) In your view what needs to happen in order to improve your project?

Table 2: Distribution of participating projects within municipalities

Participating district municipalities	Number of participating local municipalities	Number of Project per municipality
Vhembe	4	8
Sekhukhune	2	8
Mopani	5	7
Waterberg	4	12
Capricorn	3	7
Total	18 out 25	37 out 42

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Presentation and discussion of findings will focus on the themes that emerged during data analysis namely biographical information associated with the current status of income generation projects in Limpopo, issues emerging from the project initiation phase, income generation and poverty alleviation in the targeted communities and sustenance of the projects.

Biographical data informing the capacity of beneficiaries to efficiently manage the income generation project

This section presents data relating to the age, gender and educational level of the respondents. It is intended to describe the people behind the projects. An interesting data, which has implication to the manner in which food security projects and the whole model of income generation can be used as a strategy for government intervention.

Table 3: Age and Gender distribution

Age	Gender in %		Total
	Male	Females	
25 -35 years	20	80	100
36 -45 years	9.1	90.9	100
46 -55 years	15.6	84.4	100
55 -65 years	9.7	90.3	100
66 years	26.1	73.9	100
Total	15.9	84.1	100

It is not uncommon that most income generation projects in rural areas are run by women. The results in table 3 show that 84.1% of the projects were run by female while men only constitute (15.9%) of the project beneficiaries. Ages of participants ranges from 9.3% for ages between 25-35 to 23% from ages 66 and above. The results show that most of the projects are run by elderly women than young adults. In addition, the level of education of most beneficiaries ranges from primary (34.3%) and secondary education which constituted 42.6%. This raises a concern regarding the capacity of such elderly man and women regarding management of these projects, capacity to learn and leadership succession within such projects. The aging population within these projects does not predict a promising future for food security projects. A need exists for government officials to begin to tap in the youth as potential direct beneficiaries of food security projects.

Table 4: Beneficiaries level of education

Level of education	N in %
No formal education	19.4
Primary	34.3
Secondary	42.6
Tertiary	3.7
Total	100

Table 4 reveals that only 34.3% obtained primary education, 42.6% secondary and 3.7% tertiary education while 19.4% had no formal education at all. Seven percentage of the committee members served longest (25 years) in the project while 1% have served for 3 years (the least duration) and the majority (16%) served for 12 years. The members who received training on project management ranged from 1 (18.9%) to 41 are mainly (1.9% of the respondents) with most of the respondents (20.8%) indicating that 2 members received training. At least 22.7% of the respondents reported that only 6 members received training in both financial management and project management. Other training received include cooking, keeping records, plant production, seedlings planting, poultry farming, stock control, stock taking and planting in general.

Of note is the fact these projects are lead by people who in terms of educational qualification just over 3% has tertiary education. Just over one third of the respondents have been working on the same project for more than 12 years. This educational level combined with age leaves a concern on the capacity of the project leadership on effectively running these entities.

Challenges associated with project planning and initiation phase

Table 5: Proportional distribution of projects per type

Types of projects	Proportional representation %
Vegetable	48
Broiler	26
Piggery	24
Egg production	2
Total	100

Table 5 shows that types of food security projects which participated in the study range from piggery 28%, vegetable 48%, broiler 26%, egg production 2%. These projects were established either as a community initiative (60.2%); government initiative 26%; individual initiative 12% and .9% who could not remember how the project was established. Most (84%) of participants reported that feasibility study was conducted before the projects were established even though it is not known as to what became the outcome of the feasibility study. The projects were identified mostly out of self interest (60.2%) and as a community initiative (28.7%). The distance between each project for most (63.9%) is less than 2km with about 20.4% less than 1km.

It is clear from the study that part of the challenges faced by food security projects relates to how they were initiated. More than 60% of these projects were poorly established. Some being even the directive of government from the choice of project and the type of people to participate in the project. From the study it emerged that there was a clear understanding that income generating projects represented a government strategy to fight poverty, create jobs and uplift the standard of living. Unemployment was the main reason for participation in income generating projects. The current practice is that, government is the main initiator of community projects promotes dependency and lack of ownership by communities of such entities.

About 23.1% of the project were initiated prior 1994. By 2006, about 80% of the projects evaluated were already in place. An insignificant number of the project .9 % had less than a year at the time of evaluation. In addition, more than half of participants in the project (55%) are of the opinion that funding from government is not sufficient; suggesting that more is still needed. Of these projects 40% of the funding is still continuing whilst the funding of 55.6% of the project stopped. In this regard, it goes without saying that although they maybe issues associated with funding, it is not clear if increasing the funding alone would yield any significant change. The researchers noted however that they may be a need to unpack further issues associated with funding, which could not be determined in this study

Main source of water is borehole (70.4%) and communal water tanks for about 13.9% of the projects. A .9% of participants indicated that they use rain water. 66.7% of those projects in the sample are connected to electricity whilst 25% are not. Improved management of land and water is important for increasing productivity, but equally important is farmer access to non-

land and water related inputs and services, which through their complementary relationships with water, increase the productivity and value of water. Therefore, in order to bring any major increases in productivity such that it will contribute significantly towards poverty reduction farmers' improved access to non-land and water factors and services is also important. This can also be done through the private-public partnership efforts.

The results of the study therefore suggest that appropriate intervention programs in the area of agricultural and financial market is necessary to ensure a higher return from investment by farmers. Further attention need to be focused to the complementarity of different interventions programs such as access and services. In this regard, an integrated approach to provisioning and a public-private sector partnerships is desirable as it would promote a holistic view of intervention.

The ability of the project to generate income and capacity to alleviate poverty

It has been widely revealed in this study that no viable income is generated from the study at the very most members get R200 per month. Most (67.9 %) indicated that over the past 1-3 years the project has been generating some income. About 64% reported that income is mainly greater than expenditure per annum. This shows that projects are not breaking even. Projects which are not breaking even are found to be still receiving support from government, while 36% reported that it is less than annual expenditure.

The results reveal that most of the projects are unable to reach the desirable outcomes although 89.8 % of participants in the study felt that the projects are assisting in alleviating poverty whilst 7.4 % indicated that the projects do not contribute to poverty alleviation. Further response to the question that focused on whether the projects are contributing to alleviation of hunger confirmed that participants felt the projects are contributing to alleviation of hunger (88%). Participants felt that even though the projects may not show significant income, they (77.8%) are able to get food out of those projects. 44.4 % of participants indicated that the projects benefit the community by providing easy access to farm produce whilst 32.4 % indicated reasons around saving on costs. The view that money is not all that matters was supported by the qualitative data which revealed that members are attracted to projects not only for financial gains but also for reason of social association and belongingness. "I am participating in this project because I want to be with other people, "it is better to be here than being home alone" said one respondent answering why she is continuing to be part of a project which is not helping improve her life circumstances.

Lategan and Raats (2005:264) assert that farming has long been accepted as a "business", though more challenging due to the uncertainty of the South African climate and general agricultural production environment. For beneficiaries to be successful they also have to be skilled business people and entrepreneurs. It is therefore clear that the only assurance for long-term sustainable agricultural growth in the Limpopo Province is to identify and train beneficiaries of these projects to be entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, nothing can replace functional skills in the running of community projects. In this study it is clear that most members of these projects have no formal training in such basic skills as Marketing, book keeping and project management. Thus arguments could be made that more success, in this case income generation in the food security projects could be

achieved through training in technical skills to manage the projects such as marketing, budgeting and financial management.

Impact of the project to the surrounding communities

Despite very minimal or no financial returns to project members, 89.8 % of participants in the study felt that the projects are assisting in alleviating poverty whilst 7.4 % indicated that the projects do not contribute to poverty alleviation. 44.4 % of participants indicated that the projects benefit the community by providing easy access to farm produce whilst 32.4 % indicated reasons around saving on costs.

When asked about the impact of the project participation to the surrounding communities, whether there was any significant change before and after participation in the income generating projects, a significant number (90%) of participants agreed that their participation in income generating projects did bring significant changes to their lives and that of family and the community. They indicated that even though they ‘*may not be making a lot of money*’ they had income for their basic needs and. Only a few i.e. less than 10% were of the opinion that their participation in income generating projects did not bring any significant change in the quality of their lives. Reasons stated by less than 10% of participants were that the project(s) in question did not generate any income; hence no significant change could be seen since participating in the income generating projects. 65% of participants indicated that they were able to maintain their dependants from the income generated from the projects (35%) were not able to do so. Those who answered in the affirmative explained that even though they had an income to maintain their dependants, the income was not sufficient for most of their needs, or to maintain the lifestyle that they would prefer. They further stated that there was nothing they could do to change their present circumstances as their businesses were still developing and the funding provided was limited. These findings underscore the need for the development of more market-driven projects that will fill a gap in the market and are likely to generate income for participants.

Sustainability of the project: Monitoring and Evaluation

The income generating projects are faced with an enormous challenge of access to input suppliers. This affects the sustainability of some of the income generating projects.

Table 6: Projects’ access to input suppliers

Access to input suppliers	Type of project and level of accessibility %				
	Piggery	Vegetable	Broiler	Egg production	
Yes	27	47.6	23.8	1.6	
No	73	52.3	77.2	98.4	
Total	100	100	100	100	

Table 6 indicates that almost all categories of projects do not have access from where the needed materials to can run their projects are found. This affects productivity and sustainability of such projects. Egg production and broiler projects are the most affected projects with 99.4% and 77.2% of non-access to input suppliers.

Most of the projects are currently registered 92.6% as a legal entity (Non-profit organisation) and most participants indicated that they have business plans for the projects and that the funding was linked to the business plan. Officials visit the project weekly (35.2%), monthly (45.4%) and quarterly (13%), however the clarity of the work they do when visiting is not known. Government needs to take advantage of the availability of officials who visit project at the mentioned intervals. Most often, problems with development policies and strategies arise not in the statements of the policy or crafting strategies at national or regional level. The problem arises at the grass root level implementation of the policies and strategies. A well stated and best articulated policy and strategy might fall short of achieving the intended target if micro level implementation programs are not well designed.

Income generating projects represent only one strategy for alleviating poverty and enhancing community development. A holistic, multipronged approach needs to include income generation and job creation and promoting sustainable livelihoods; and human development via knowledge and skills (Davids, Theron & Maphunye, 2009).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results and analysis of data in this paper, a summary of the main findings are outlined, conclusions are drawn and recommendations made in line with the emerging themes as follows:

i) The biographical data informing the capacity of beneficiaries to efficiently manage the income generation project

It emerged that the majority of project beneficiaries were middle aged women mostly above 60years of age and had no high school education. It is recommended that the recruitment process should be community based and participatory in nature. Potential beneficiaries should be thoroughly screened prior to their participation in projects. It is therefore recommended that criteria for selecting or targeting the correct beneficiaries should be determined which should include targeting youth. A deliberate involvement of youth is necessary and should be regarded as a priority to ensure that there is development of a critical mass that are still energetic and ambitious to transform the economy of the country, in this regard through agricultural farming.

Furthermore, the research noted that challenges experienced during the initiation phase are interdependent and therefore intervention requires an integrated approach that should look at a whole as opposed to the individual parts of the problem. It is necessary that intervention programmes looks at the root cause of the problem. The researchers noted that a private – public partnership is desirable in some of the projects to ensure that there is exchange/transfer of skills and expertise.

It is further recommended that the Department needs to improve on its communication and support. This would enhance the relationship between the two parties and provide opportunities to discuss challenges experienced. Project plans should be discussed in an engaging way. Beneficiaries should be encouraged to plan for their projects before beneficiaries engage in full-scale activities with the aim of making profits. It is also recommended that project members be engaged in decision-making to gain skills that will help them to be self-reliant.

ii) The ability of the project to generate income and capacity to alleviate poverty

It is recommended that projects beneficiaries must be capacitated to become effective successful entrepreneurs through training on value chain and how to manage the projects such as marketing, budgeting and financial management. Nothing can replace functional skills in the running of community projects. In this study it is clear that most members of these projects have no formal training in such basic skills as marketing, book keeping and project management. Thus arguments could be made that more success, in this case income generation in the food security projects could be achieved through improved tailor-made training.

The results of this study show that most participants were not empowered with financial management skills to be able to take their small businesses to the level of making substantial profits. For beneficiaries to be successful they also have to be skilled business people and entrepreneurs. It is therefore clear that the only assurance for long-term sustainable agricultural growth in the Limpopo Province is to identify and train beneficiaries of these projects to be entrepreneurs.

iii) The impact of the project to the surrounding communities

For most of the participants' reasons for participating in income generating projects were unemployment and alleviation of poverty. Most participants expressed their gratitude to government however it emerged from the study that most participants were dissatisfied with the lack of clearly spelled out support plan for projects on the part of the Department. They also felt that planning and monitoring by the Department of Agriculture was not conducted appropriately.

Further research need to be conducted to determine the long-term impact of income generating projects on the beneficiaries and the effectiveness of the present poverty alleviation strategies in achieving sustainable development.

iv) The sustainability of the project and the impact of the project in the community

It emerged from the qualitative data that most participants felt that officials responsible for monitoring did not have a clearly spelt out and shared monitoring and evaluation tool. Visits were either not done regularly or not done at all, reports were not collected or read which meant that project challenges were not addressed at desirable times. As a result the overall support was regarded as insufficient. Stakeholder dialogue with civil society is necessary.

Regarding sustainability, it is recommended that officials provide regular feedback on a monthly basis regarding financial spending of funding provided to projects. In this regard project participants would know exactly how funding was spent and for what purpose, thereby facilitating transparency and accountability on the part of project participants and that they should be enlightened in terms of budget issues.

Participants raised concerns relating to markets as a critical factor in determining the success of poverty alleviation projects. It is clear that without a proper marketing strategy, projects struggle to move beyond the survival stages to reach a point where they generate enough profit to benefit project members

Funding provided to projects should be increased to enable projects to get off the ground. Expectations should be clarified upfront from both sides, so that the implications thereof are clearly understood. Service level agreements should be signed with project participants in order to improve accountability on the part of the project participants. Projects must have legal agreements with the Department to spend appropriately in line with Public Finance Management Act (PFMA).

Officials responsible for monitoring of projects need to spend time with project participants, read reports in order to understand the dynamics within projects and provide the necessary support for the development of the projects.

At least one department should be assigned responsibility of addressing food security in a comprehensive fashion. The food security policy of the department needs to provide a full scale framework for both inter-departmental and private/partnership collaboration.

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