

## Title

# Local community participation and sustainability of foreign funded poverty reduction programmes in rural areas: the case of Murewa district, Ward 10, Zimbabwe

Lloyd Dzapasi, *The Friendship Bench, Research Support Centre, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, lloydzapasi@gmail.com*

Moffat Chitapa Tarusikirwa, *Department of Teacher Development, Faculty of Education, Zimbabwe Open University, mctarusikirwa@gmail.com*

## Abstract

The prominence of foreign funded poverty reduction programmes in developing countries has grown immensely as witnessed by their increase in number and target areas. Considering the increasing demand for aid, local community participation is seen as a vehicle towards ensuring the sustainability of such programmes. This study sought to establish the level of local community participation and sustainability of these programmes in Murewa district, ward 10, Zimbabwe while identifying areas that can be improved by the diverse stakeholders. The study employed qualitative research by utilising the case study design. Participants were purposefully selected, and the data was generated through in-depth interviews guided by a semi-structured interview schedule. Thematic analysis was used where themes were deductively identified as they emerged from the data. The study reveals varied but largely diminished end user participation especially during the formative stages of programmes, poor communication between various stakeholders and the presence of both short-term and long-term interventions. The sustainability of the programmes is affected by the supply of food handouts, diminished local community participation, absence of post project monitoring, poor targeting and technology gaps. The study concluded that the local community participation deficiencies and sustainability challenges faced in Murewa district ward 10 are not unique to this district but is characteristic of African rural communities. It is recommended that foreign funded poverty reduction stakeholders must redefine participation, promote real inside-out development agenda to address both tangible and nontangible human needs. Creation of log frames must be an ongoing process to reflect the priorities of the targeted beneficiaries and funders must avail budgets for local delivery agencies to embrace the culture of authentic grassroots approaches including working with and through local partners.

## Key words

community, participation, sustainability, Murewa, Zimbabwe

## Key dates

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## Introduction

This study sought to determine the level of local community participation and sustainability of the foreign funded poverty reduction programmes found in Murewa district ward 10. Further to this, the study also sought to identify the factors influencing the sustainability of the foreign funded programmes followed by making recommendations on what can be done to increase the overall sustainability of these programmes. There is a lack of knowledge on what exactly these organisations engage in, how they promote people centred development and the sustainability of their efforts. The study reduced the knowledge gap on these programmes and the forementioned issues. The study also contributed towards the academic and research goals of the researchers. The paper unfolds as follows: a background to the study will be espoused, thereafter a section on research methodology will follow. Moreover, findings of the study will be presented and discussed followed by conclusions and recommendations emanating from the study including recommendations for further study.

## Background

Local community participation and sustainability continue increasing their influence as key pillars in development, poverty eradication, health and conservation efforts (Tsai & Liao, 2017). Community participation denotes collective efforts aimed at increasing the control of resources and institutions by groups usually excluded from development activities so that they influence the direction and shape of development efforts. It also helps to align interventions with end user needs (Chirenje, Giliba & Musamba, 2013). Sustainability is yet to be uniformly defined as numerous inconsistencies have been observed and Seppey, Ridde, & Coulibaly (2017) noted that the concept has been distorted due to various terminologies chosen to suit the preferences of various stakeholders. For the purposes of this study, it is loosely defined as the continuity of project benefits beyond the project funding phase without external support as long as their problem still exist (Lungo, Mavole & Martin 2017). Sustainability can be truly ascertained through post project evaluation yet some funders and implementing partners rarely budget for such activities (Awortwi, 2013). The voluntary supply of resources helps in establishing new projects but is more helpful if it helps communities to avoid sliding back when aid is cut off because dependency signals lack of sustainability (Matsa & Dzawanda, 2014). The active participation of targeted beneficiaries must be promoted from programme design, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation stages so that these programmes can survive different circumstances and environments. Moyo (2009) has challenged aid noting that it is partly responsible for the poverty situation obtaining in Africa as it does not address the core challenges. With improved local capacities, rich natural resource societies can neither depend on foreign aid to drive their poverty eradication efforts nor rely on aid for their structural transformations (Adsuyi & Odeloye 2013).

Increased sustainability efforts are not a luxury but necessity as the global community now battles multiple exigencies with thinned resources. For this to be realised, local stakeholder-oriented frameworks must be genuinely utilised as an opportunity to share challenges, how they envision change, what resources and opportunities are available for this to be realised as these local groups share a lot in common. Genuine local community participation is key towards sustainability. Mlambo, Maduku, Mdletshe & Mlambo (2017) noted that without this involvement recipient communities are seen as helpless in their own situations and in the process Africa has been labelled as a “welfare continent”. This helplessness is in part due to diverse challenges faced by NGOs operating at grassroots levels such as fulfilling immediate needs of the communities. Arhin, Kumi & Adam (2018) noted that some NGOs in Ghana were adopting several different approaches such as eggs in multiple baskets, strength in numbers, partnerships and visibility enhancing strategies to enhance sustainability. Many organizations, both local and international battle to establish projects that can meet multiple exigencies at the same time. Pursuing immediate needs in isolation is unhealthy in the long term. This does not underplay the role of short-term projects as they serve lives during their short time especially in disaster situations (Adjei, Agyemang & Kwadwo, 2012).

Foreign funded interventions have been contested due to their limited life span usually five years or less with the possibility of renewal depending on performance and need as a way of trying to discourage the dependency syndrome. Abeselom (2018) however challenged this justification arguing that despite the orotundity to “help people to help themselves” in the early 1940s a lot still needs to be done as NGOs are still engaged in development aid programmes with no sign of slowing down. Seppey et al., (2017) noted that sometimes NGOs just never plan for sustainability rather reacting to funding opportunities. In the end, activities meant to be pre-pilots are sometimes suddenly turned into a pilot when funds for such programmes are spotted to position themselves into partnerships with funders. These hurried efforts fuel the exclusion of targeted end users as NGOs focus on reports and those affecting programmes at the expense of those affected by the same programmes. Amakye (2017) warned that in development efforts there must be no “deal breakers or deal makers”.

Abeselom (2018) reasoned that the comprehensive inclusion of the groups usually marginalised drives sustainability of any collaborative efforts. Mukuni & Bill (2014) warned that this form of partnership is always under threat due to the delicate balance of power between the host and funders which can make or break projects. In the beginning host ministries believe they are in control, yet this power can easily be lost to financiers leaving them frustrated and without interests to look after the joint programmes. Importation and imposition of solutions to local challenges could be an oversimplification of poverty complexities due to technical incompatibilities that can only be avoided through end user consultations. Despite the challenges

embedded in involving everyone in consultation efforts, it is widely acknowledged that participatory approaches foster long term engagements increasing ownership chances at the end of programmes.

Participatory approaches employed by NGOs improve people's confidence, skills, experience and alter prohibitive traditional attitudes while preserving the more useful ones. Through participation in institutional arrangements, individual trepidations and limitations are reduced stimulating social mobility and empowerment (Awortwi, 2013). Watson (2014) noted how China tops the list of newly emerging donors and has made giant strides into Africa through focusing on construction of roads, ports, buildings and railways and mining. All these focus areas are perceived as enhancing Sub-Saharan Africa drive towards sustainability by addressing long term infrastructural inadequacies. Despite the importance of sustainability, few projects address sustainability issues due to various challenges including increased focus on quantifiable indicators and processes which are silent on participatory approaches (Seppey, et al., 2017).

Mukuni et al., (2014) noted the ill-omened effects of multiple donors at one time in a country or community focusing on the same problem or joint projects. The ability of the host ministry to manage varying stakeholder expectations and coordinate the aid received from multiple sources determines their success. Political instability, frequent transfers of personnel and lack of programme ownership by every next government further compromise sustainability. In some cases, donors approach governments with a development project plan when the recipient country does not have a relevant framework in place but readily accepts such projects. In such circumstances, local communities end up having to choose between a garden project or goat project yet choosing between two projects does not fully constitute participation but is a part of it. This also affects the sustainability of projects as the end users may just tolerate such projects without any meaningful investment as they do not identify with the project. This also explains why most NGOs encounter problems that are often traced back to the engagement process. This is not withstanding the fact that sometimes the NGOs administering these foreign funded poverty reduction programmes have no absolute control over these factors.

This study sought to determine local community participation and the sustainability of foreign funded poverty reduction programmes in Murewa district, ward 10. The study also makes recommendations on what can be done to increase local community participation and sustainability of these programmes.

## Methodology

This study used the qualitative research process to gain an in-depth understanding of the sustainability of the foreign funded poverty reduction programmes in Murewa district,

ward 10. The focus was on how sustainability was promoted, the extent of people centred engagements/ local community participation, challenges faced and what could be done to increase the sustainability of the programmes. The qualitative research methodology therefore helped to understand sustainability levels as perceived by the local stakeholders, how programmes were built with sustainability in mind and what informed the nature of interventions targeting ward levels.

### Case study design

The case study design was utilised as it is a suitable empirical form of inquiry when investigating phenomenon in real life context. This allowed the researcher to keep the context undiluted whilst obtaining rich information. Case study design is also suitable when assessing performance and progress in development work. The case study was also helpful in generating new information as not much is known in terms of factors affecting sustainability in the district. This study utilised the single case study with embedded units and this presented the opportunity to explore the case whilst extending the benefit of cross case analysis by looking at the sub-units (villages) located within ward 10 in Murewa district of Zimbabwe.

### Sampling

The study included 21 participants as follows: 13 village heads, one ward councillor, one headman and one chief from ward 10 in Murewa district. Three participants were also drawn from NGOs operating in ward 10 and two participants from relevant government ministries.

Purposive sampling was employed to deliberately identify participants well informed about the research topic. Purposive sampling thus helped to identify participants with in-depth knowledge on the research subject. This improved the relevance of results by filtering out irrelevant responses. Working with participants who were a close fit also reduced the margin of error. Diverse and rich sources of information increased the usefulness of information generated by including key participant quotes and probes.

### Instrument

An interview schedule was used. The interview schedule consisted of open-ended semi-structured main questions as well as anticipated follow up questions. The main questions sought to understand the sustainability of foreign funded poverty reduction programmes while other questions sought ways to increase sustainability as perceived by the participants.

### Pilot study

Before embarking on data generation, the interview schedule was shared and discussed by both investigators to ensure validity and reliability of the results. The exercise also sought to eliminate the use of any ambiguous terms or expressions.

Psychological or emotional harm of the participants was prevented through piloting the research tools.

### Data collection

Data was generated using a face-face semi-structured interview schedule. This was achieved through main open-ended questions as well as anticipated follow up questions. All participants were asked identical questions to generate comparable data. The interviews were conducted in English or Shona guided by the individual preferences. The interviews were also digitally recorded each lasting between 45-60 minutes.

### Data analysis

The study utilised thematic coding to analyse data. The data were coded without fitting them into predetermined analytic presumptions. Themes were inductively identified as they emerged from the data. The researchers read the transcripts multiple times to build a clear understanding of the content. Emerging concepts and phrases were noted down and coded during the review of data. The central emerging themes were identified in line with the research objectives. Member checking was done to clarify any unclear information. During data generation, clarity was sought from participants whenever new or ambiguous terms were used.

### Ethical considerations

The researchers obtained a support letter from the University which was used to approach local authorities. Another letter was obtained from the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works through the District Coordinator's office in Murewa district for approval to enter the community. Local protocols including being given clear directives on how to gain access to some of the high traditional offices such as the Chief were followed. No food or drink was accepted by the researcher to avoid burdening participants as the interviews were done within their environments. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they participated in the study. Codes were used to anonymise the data to avoid identification of actual persons. Harm and discomfort were avoided by encouraging participants to avoid answering any questions if they felt uncomfortable, stopping the interview or referring to the university if they felt abused in any way. No false promises or deception was done. Debriefing was utilised to address all critical issues related to the research and how data will be used. Upon completing data generation, the researchers notified the District Coordinator's Office. The researchers also obtained approval from the African Independent Ethics Committee, reference number EA0232. The next section will present the findings and discussion of the findings.

## Findings

The study established that there is very minimal community engagement during the formulation of programmes which is

further compounded by their inflexibility once on the ground. There is also a mix of both long-term and short-term programmes such as food handouts and training programmes that equip communities with various skills. Due to communication, some of the programmes carry technology gaps much to their detriment as outlined in the section below.

### Community participation

#### *Diminished participation of targeted end users*

Study participants expressed different opinions over the degree of local community participation especially during the formative stages of intervention as follows:

*ADDC: "People have this notion about Africa, a pre-conceived notion to say that in Africa they need this and that which they then come and force on to the people".*

*DAEO: "So, for us our duty is just to distribute what has been prepared already without any flexibility. We just take it wholesomely. There is no room for us to decide anything, we are not on that platform. There are some people who think on our behalf what must be done".*

*NGO2Rep: "You will find that from stakeholder level it is an issue of using statistics using things like census, baseline surveys and you get results indicating that this is what we found on the ground, right".*

*NGO3Rep: "Aaah rural development cannot be rural development without participation. So, participation is very key and that is why I was saying working with the people where you have NGOs coming with solutions but that is not the case. Solutions are already there on the ground, and you are coming to compliment those solutions...".*

*VH3: "Aaah that is another problem because they just come with their own programmes and impose to the people".*

*VH11: "No, they come and say we are NGOs we are here to reduce poverty, so we are here to give you this and that. We do not tell them what we need".*

#### **Conflicting opinions**

The study participants' responses revealed mixed opinions regarding the participation of local communities in the foreign funded poverty reduction programmes as recorded in some of the responses below.

*NGO1Rep: "Yes and no. However, it is yes on the greater side...".*

*NGO3Rep: "Aaah it is very very high. Community participation is very high".*

*VH8: "We also have some who cannot walk at all, and they have to send little children they live with but if it is such a young child they cannot fully explain things...".*

### **Minimal flexibility of programmes**

Participants of this study also reported that foreign funded poverty reduction programmes lacked flexibility as they cannot be adjusted to match what is on the ground. These sentiments were expressed by participants from the local community, government representatives and the NGOs as recorded below.

WC: *“What happens is that when these NGOs come they come with their own plans and you do not divert from what they have planned...”*

DAEO: *“So for us our duty is just to distribute what has already been prepared without room for flexibility...”*

NGO2Rep: *“But apparently where we are coming from our package has already been designed to say that each farmer is going to get 30 birds...so it is predetermined”*

ADDC: *“So recently we had an organization that wanted to distribute food for nutrition. So we asked them to use some of the money to buy seeds, unfortunately they did not accept the idea and they left with their money”*

### **Sustainability of foreign funded programmes**

There were mixed feelings about the sustainability of the foreign funded poverty reduction programmes as some were long term whilst some were short term. Only seven out of 21 participants believed the programmes were sustainable as shown by the following statements made:

ADDC: *“Yah what happens is that they can be sustainable assuming people grasp the concept and they continue doing exactly that”*

WC: *“Yes, they are sustainable because they teach people how to do things. If it is farming or poultry, you do this and that. They are very sustainable...”*

NGO1Rep: *“Communities are going ahead with the practice of mulching and the benefits of mulching as well as the benefits of growing legumes. They are on-going as I speak”*

NGO2Rep: *“The idea is not to keep spoon feeding the farmer but for the farmer to be independent. So, for the programme we can safely say it is ongoing because what the donor did was just to provide start-up capital and now the focus is just on monitoring”*

According to 14 participants the programmes were largely unsustainable.

AC: *“When Caritas came, they told us that they think there is a time when people are most vulnerable. So, they served from January, February and March then they said goodbye”*

DAEO: *“For PIGAD it is sustainable. For some of them haah their sustainability is very low, they just phase out as soon as they go”*

VH3: *“They are just short-term otherwise people remain suffering in the same situation”*

VH10: *The thing is people think differently. Some might even want to continue receiving food handouts whilst others prefer fertilizers so that we solve our future problems. Not these things you are given just for that time and you will be back into the same situation again. Just like now we had Caritas, they have left but nothing has changed.*

VH12: *Aaah as soon as they go that is it. It collapses (laughs). Sometimes just a few people may keep on doing it but to be honest it does not last”*

### **Food handouts vs inputs**

As reported by the study participants the main difference between the programmes is that some of them provide handouts for immediate consumption whilst others are meant to transform the lives of the local communities in the long-term. See the following statements from participants:

VH6: *“They were also giving food handouts, they used to ask us to write down all households so that everyone would get food.”*

NGORep1: *“Recently I was writing a report on challenges under the WFP programme. Aaah I highlighted that on challenges and recommendations to say eeh we move into more developmental work. Food for Assets, FFA instead of FA, instead of food assistance let us go for Food for Assets, yes”*

NGO2Rep: *“Basically, the programme was aimed at eradicating poverty number one. So, it was an issue where we are moving from an annual income concept to a daily income concept where people will always have cash”*

### **Technology gaps**

Technology gaps were also reported as another challenge affecting the sustainability of foreign funded poverty reduction programmes. These gaps usually manifest after the handover stage. The following are some of the responses from participants:

VH5: *“The problems which are faced is that for example, these ones who came and drilled this borehole and left. After that the borehole is no longer working... We do not even know who to tell that the borehole is no longer working... We do not even know, no one was trained how to fix it”*

VH12: *“We have boreholes that were no longer working that they looked at as a way of helping us...”*

### Lack of post project management

The interviews revealed a sense of poor post project management as expressed by participants in the following statements:

*WC: “They do not even send their representatives to monitor how their inputs are being used”.*

*VH8: “They never come back because at least if they come back then people would be committed to continue with that project as they know that the organization will be coming back to monitor whether the project is viable or not.*

*VH12: Once they leave, they go for good, we will be waiting for new projects and then another new programme comes which will be totally different from what you would have been doing.*

*ADDC: “What happens is that if an organization comes to the district, they are assigned to a certain ministry depending on the work they would like to do... So yes, they bring monthly reports and if time permits when it is time for monitoring we also go with them for the monitoring of the programmes”.*

## Discussion

### Long term vs short term programmes

The study established the presence of foreign funded poverty reduction programmes with different structures and goals. Some were purely emergency programmes designed to curtail human suffering in the immediate term. Such programmes are triggered by the onset of unanticipated conditions such as droughts and floods. Adjei, et al., (2012) emphasized the importance of these short-term acts in minimising the catastrophe triggered by such unexpected events. It is globally recognised that NGOs play a crucial role in ameliorating human suffering in emergency situations even though Moyo (2009) has challenged the role of this aid. The short-term projects found focused on provision of food handouts for immediate consumption during the lean season before harvesting. The duration of such programmes ranged from 3 to 6 months. In this case, Caritas provided maize, mealie meal, cooking oil and beans for 3 months. Upon fulfilment of their goals, some of the NGOs are either dissolved, move to other disaster struck populations or start new projects in the same area. The study observed that Caritas had moved to other areas after believing their mandate had been met. Similar findings have been reported where NGOs are repeatedly locked into 3-6 months cycles even if they may receive successive funding for the same programme. Seppey, et al., (2017) noted that most projects rarely address sustainability issues as they give primary attention towards quantifiable indicators.

The study also revealed 2 long-term programmes. The first one (Green Impact) offered Climate Smart Agriculture support through training local farmers to increase crop

resistance against droughts. The second organisation (PIGAD) offered poultry projects meant to assist farmers to earn daily income as opposed to seasonal income among other benefits. The existence of different organisations and programmes in the same community at the same time has been widely reported. For instance, Gillo (2017) also recorded similar findings in Tanzania where NGOs offer long term interventions in partnership with government. Matsa, et al., (2014) noted that such interventions are worth acknowledging if they empower locals so that they do not slide back into poverty. This aligns with the developmentalist theory which empowers families, groups and communities to address poverty through maximising people’s utilisation of land.

Due to the diverse nature of the programmes (short and long term) found, study participants also expressed varied opinions over their sustainability. 7 (33 %) believed the programmes were sustainable while 14 (77 %) believed they were unsustainable. These findings confirm what has been found elsewhere for instance, Arhin, et al., (2018) as some organisations pursue diverse activities to strengthen their interventions leading to eggs in many baskets. This has however led to the absence of universal definitions and measurement standards in the work done by NGOs.

### Conflicting opinions

The study revealed a conflicting pattern of opinions with the implementing agencies on one end and local communities on the other side over the participation of local communities in the foreign funded poverty reduction programmes. Representatives from the three NGOs were convinced that local community participation was high whilst the local community representatives expressed contrary opinions. This was in part influenced by the fact that implementing agencies viewed participation as defined by the number of people involved in their activities at various stages. On the contrary, local community representatives bemoaned their exclusion and participation in key stages such as the identification of their real needs, goal formulation and decision making. Seppey, et al., (2017) noted that the field of community development suffers from the visible absence of a common definition leading to numerous gaps in the promotion of local community participation in poverty reduction efforts. This was also confirmed by NGO3Rep who acceded that community is defined at various layers, hence community participation also varies depending on context.

### Factors affecting sustainability

#### *Diminished participation of targeted beneficiaries*

The study established that participation of targeted beneficiaries affected the sustainability of foreign funded poverty reduction programmes depending on context as these programmes battle in realizing inclusivity especially during formative stages. This happens as organizations consult different sources of information without directly engaging the targeted beneficiaries. As a result, the end users fail to

appreciate how programmes meant to help them are designed without their input when their lives are designed to do everything together (Ofuoku, 2011). Nine out of 13 VHs and two local government officials reported that they were never consulted to establish the exact needs of the local communities but rather made to choose between options identified by the funder or host organization. Such projects often collapse after the exit of donors. Tensions faced by many agencies frequently arise from poor inception approaches which mostly undermine inclusive efforts. Even during emergency operations organizations must not by-pass the consultation of targeted end users as this is an opportunity for them to articulate their specific needs at the outset. Communities provide different yet numerous resources including ideas on how development should look like (Mugumbate, Tarusikirwa, Nyoni, Mtetwa, Nyikahadzoi, Dhemba & Nyaruwata, 2022). In the absence of inside-out development frameworks, the programmes breed a mismatch between programme goals and community expectations as locals tend to view some of the interventions as irrelevant. Chirenje, et al., (2013) proffers how NGOs can utilise community engagement to sidestep such entanglements.

### **Minimal flexibility of programmes**

Participants of this study also revealed that foreign funded poverty reduction programmes remained largely inflexible as they cannot be adjusted to match what is on the ground. These sentiments were expressed by participants from the local community, government and NGOs. Only two village heads noted isolated cases where one NGO had responded to some requests to repair a dip tank and borehole but otherwise these were exceptions. NGO2Rep acknowledged that they come with pre-designed programmes which they cannot deviate from whilst DAEO noted that they were mere distributors of what is designed elsewhere without any room to make reasonable moderations. This behaviour has been castigated by Mlambo, et al., (2017) as it leaves locals with a sense of helplessness and disempowerment. Kaberuka (2011) noted that it is not easy to shift policy, budgets or goals from those set by the funder due to protocol concerns. This intransigency has seen some organisations even going back with their money as reported by the ADDC conforming how some NGOs shun the same localism claims behind their financial attraction in a bid to satisfy protocols. Mukuni, et al., (2014) bemoaned the absence of true partnership in most projects, this closes doors to engagement and reengagement efforts needed to find common ground in these interventions. Such interventions need realignment so that they become worthwhile by meaning something to the communities they are located in. Without this, they become contrary to Afrocentric values which advocate for the strengthening of communities as opposed to weakening them.

### **Food handouts**

Some participants appreciated handouts in increased quantities over lengthier periods whilst others felt the community has taken long to develop precisely due to handouts. Short-term solutions are not a problem in

themselves but over reliance on them is a long-term problem. Muchadeyi (2013) also established that even the able bodied tend to prefer handouts instead of working in their fields promoting lassitude in the process. Long-term interventions such as provision of inputs are well documented in other studies but that does not in itself guarantee a change of fortunes. As a result, Matsa et al., (2014) questioned whether beneficiary communities suffer from the dependency syndrome or are let down by insufficient assimilation periods.

### **Technology gaps**

Participants in this study expressed concern over technological inadequacies associated with foreign funded poverty reduction programmes. In this case, boreholes in different villages were no longer in use after breaking down. In some cases it was almost four years since they last used the borehole. Similar flops where end users are usually neither skilled enough to address any technological glitches nor do they have resources for outsourcing have been identified. Consequently, they either fail to utilise the various equipment, fail to find necessary repair options, unable to maintain or totally resist their use. In response to these observations, some participants felt the solution lies in promoting inclusive formative preparatory work to avoid the oversimplification of development matters. For instance, drilling a borehole is not just about identifying a site with a high-water table without establishing if the end users have no other concerns or preferences. The prescriptive stance adopted by some of the implementing agencies dampens the spirit of ownership necessary for avoiding vandalism as well as maintaining and repairing any investments made in local communities.

### **Lack of post project monitoring and support**

Study participants reviewed that communities quickly abandon foreign funded poverty reduction programmes as project staff always leave as soon as the funding cycle ends and never come back. After the implementation phase, NGOs hand over to relevant ministries guided by MOUs. ADDC noted that organizations handover such programmes to parent ministries. However, the ability of the government to look after such programmes was hindered by resource constraints as VH2 bemoaned the distance covered by agricultural extension officers who walk across the villages instead of using cars or motorcycles. Awortwi (2013) remarked that it is an exception for NGOs to budget resources for the purposes of revisiting old projects or strengthening government systems. Garden projects implemented by Caritas in Chirumhanzu quickly declined following the departure of the organization as disagreements erupted over diverse preferences (Matsa et al., 2014).

## **Conclusions**

This study shares similar findings with various studies. Existence of both short and long-term interventions,

provision of handouts, inputs, water projects and agricultural related interventions characterise findings of different studies. Absence of post project monitoring, technology gaps and diminished community participation breeds information deficiency and apathy. Various efforts by stakeholders to promote community participation are also hindered by the need to meet multiple and varied stakeholder expectations. There is significant room for poverty reduction stakeholders to solidify their efforts so that resources are not continuously recycled in one place or same activities. Sustainability is increasingly becoming a necessity than an option in the face of increasing disasters worth the attention of the same funders.

## Limitations

This study was conducted in one ward only thus affecting the generalizability of the results hence serves as a foundation for more studies to be carried out in other rural communities. Zimbabwe has numerous different NGOs involved in poverty reduction efforts whose outlook, purposes and activities may not be represented by those found in Murewa district ward 10 only. It must however be remembered that the main goal of qualitative research is not to determine what happens elsewhere but to understand phenomenon as it affects a specific population.

## Recommendations

Recommendations for foreign funded poverty reduction implementing agencies and local stakeholders  
Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Community development stakeholders must consider adopting and applying the following definition of participation: “Participation is the creation and maintenance of relevant and authentic dialogue leading to mutually agreed goals, responsibilities and actions involving targeted communities and other key stakeholders in all stages guided by context so that end users can play an active role in the decision-making processes affecting them”.
2. The creation of log frames must be done in part and be completed or redefined after genuine community participation has started to reflect real community needs, opinions and expectations.
3. Donors should encourage their local delivery agencies to be committed to the culture of authentic grassroots approaches including the provision of budgets to support working with and through local partners.
4. Technology related interventions must be fully assessed to establish the availability of necessary post implementation support systems such as relevant skills and spare parts at local levels.

## Recommendations for further studies

This study was carried out in Murewa district ward 10, Zimbabwe only and is therefore not entirely representative of all foreign funded poverty reduction programmes in the district and Zimbabwe. The researchers therefore recommend that similar research should be carried out in other wards, districts and provinces of the country.

## Conclusion

Foreign funded poverty reduction programmes remain key but need increased sustainability through intentional involvement of targeted end users especially during the formative stages so that they do not just tolerate programmes they consider imposed upon them. Inside-out development agenda affords local communities the much-needed opportunity to express both the tangible and non-tangible needs. Joint development of goals sets the right tone for eventual ownership and shepherd hood of programmes without which more white elephants are born. Emergency aid must not lead to disempowerment, whilst post project monitoring must be well thought out including availability of technical support.

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