

ABSTRACT

The study was an investigation into the impact of prolonged food aid interventions on households in the Matobo community. The problem was investigated qualitatively using the methodologies of document analysis, focus group discussion, and interviews for triangulation. The findings and results confirmed the theoretical thesis adopted in the study that the persistent vulnerability, poverty and dependency in the Matobo community was a direct result of protracted food aid programming. The study discovered deep seated and strained political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental conditions that have become a threat to achieving improved food security status in the district. In other words, the excessive food aid has tended to paralyse the productive capacities of the communities trapping them in increasing vulnerability, prolonged dependency and ultimately, poverty and outmigration. Consequently, the district is inundated with donors in competition against each other for both the food aid and the 'hungry'. While the programmes are meant to provide temporary insulation against hunger and starvation, their prolonged implementation has modelled a new mindset wholly dependent on food aid, to the extent that food aid is now a way of life to be proud of and commonly, the communities would fight to be included on food aid registers even if they do not qualify, as well as defend it against other alternatives. Given the wholesale entrenchment and contextualization of food aid, the people now firmly believe that they are vulnerable, poor, fragile, exposed and incapacitated. Little by little the food aid programmes rolled out year after year continue the exposure to poverty and dependency. Recommendations to improve the situation embraced mainstream agricultural activities mostly restocking and irrigation, and to a less extent mining and tourism. There is no doubt that more effective, lasting initiatives are called for if the communal community in Zimbabwe, and the Matobo district in particular, is to escape the food aid trap.