

NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF ACTION FAIM COMMUNITY GARDEN IN GUTU, WARD 10, ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

Gutu rural area is hard hit by food insecurity that is partly caused by erratic rainfall received in the area. Thus adopting livelihood diversification strategies as either adaptive or coping mechanisms. The area has attracted humanitarian intervention in the form of Action Faim community garden in order to cushion the problem. The paper identifies the livelihoods brought by Action Faim. Data were obtained through the use of questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and observation. A sample of 30 respondents were randomly selected. Key informants were drawn from Gutu Rural District Council, Agritex Gutu and Action Faim. The researcher concluded that the community garden in Gutu Ward 10 has managed to reduce vulnerability and improved livelihood outcomes of beneficiaries. Despite the challenges of wild animal invasion, pest and diseases, poor markets, theft and financing. Therefore the researcher recommends increased capitalisation in research and extension services.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organisations, Sustainability, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Most if not all rural areas in Sub Saharan Africa are crippled with persistent food shortage (Chitongo, 2013a). According to World Bank (2000) 80% of people in rural areas of developing countries are currently facing food insecurity and are failing to cope with harsh climatic changes to secure their livelihoods. Climate change has rendered the environment not conducive for sustainable agriculture harvest, coupled with this is the governments' inability to provide inputs, social welfare services and reduced commitment to rural development programs and projects (Makumbe, 1996). The failure of governments to provide sustainable support to rural areas draws attention to many non-governmental organizations to undertake various development projects in rural areas.

Community gardens (CG) according to Dunn (1979) have existed since the beginning of cities as evidenced during the archaeological digs showing that there were some form of shared gardens in most cities and rural areas from 1700 century until the present time. Cooperative gardens have been used in American cities since the 1890s, with the first gardens appearing in Detroit (Community gardening toolkit, 2003). According to Eade (2000) they started in the United Kingdom mainly based much in urban areas. World Food Programme (WFP) (2008) noted that successful sustainable field projects have been implemented in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Niger. These gardens have an established tradition and offer great potential for improving household food security and alleviating micronutrient deficiencies (WFP, 2008).

The American Community Gardening Association (ACGA) is a bi-national non-profit membership organization of professionals, volunteers and supporters of sustainable community greening in urban and rural communities introduced to help the poor (ACGA, 2014). The Association recognizes that community gardening improves people's quality of life by providing a catalyst for neighbourhood and community development, stimulating social interaction, encouraging self-reliance, beautifying neighbourhood's, producing nutritious food, reducing family food budgets, conserving resources and creating opportunities for recreation, exercise, therapy and education (ACGA, 2014.)

Community gardens in Lesotho established in the 1960s improved the nutrition of beneficiaries by providing fresh vegetables to combat chronic malnutrition and diseases like pellagra and leprosy (Mashinini, 2001) in Stephen and Sheryl (2011), thus ensuring sustainable development. In Gambia, income from gardens enabled women to take out loans to build new community vegetable gardens to increase their incomes and to pay for school fees and stationery for their children (Stephen and Sheryl, 2011). In South Africa these gardens are often established on school property because the principals are keen to become involved with the communities they live and work in and where they are daily confronted with the devastating effects of poverty, with a vision to contribute positively to sustainable poverty reduction. The national department of education formally supports community gardens on school grounds (Stephanie 2009). The garden projects economically and politically empower people and especially women who, in South Africa, traditionally have to deal with house-hold tasks such as preparing food (Stephanie, 2009). The gardens increase people's economic independence and participation, providing resources to assure basic sustainable livelihood conditions (Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), 2013). United Nations International Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF) implemented and supported community gardens for households in Chipinge, Manicaland Province in Zimbabwe, in 2012 (Nyamanhindi, 2014). Smallholder gardening was viewed as a sustainable livelihood strategy in Chikwanda communal lands, Gutu, Zimbabwe by (Mudavanhu et al, 2012). Whilst Chitongo and Magaya (2013b) assessed the contributions of cooperative gardens brought by Help German in reducing vulnerability and enhancing rural development. Community gardens through non-governmental organizations are perceived to play a major role in household food security (Nyamanhindi, 2014).

Aim of the Study

To assess the sustainability of Community Garden initiated by Action Faim in Gutu, ward 10.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the livelihoods brought about by Action Faim in Gutu, ward 10.
- To assess if the community garden managed to improve livelihood outcomes and reduce vulnerability.
- To examine the challenges encountered in the community garden.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Gutu district ward 10 of Masvingo province. A mixed method approach encompassing both quantitative and qualitative techniques were adopted (Best and Khan, 1993). Out of a population of 57 beneficiaries a sample of 30 were randomly selected. Three Key informants which included a Gutu Rural District Council official, Action Faim representative and an Agritex officer were purposively selected. One focus group discussion consisting of 11 participants was conducted at the garden sight. This helped to validate information collected from the researcher administered questionnaires. The researcher went

through some of the earlier works done by other researchers of community gardens to come up with an integrated and comprehensive picture of the contribution of community gardens to rural development, as it is said that progress in social science comes from building on the efforts of those who have worked before (Dennis, 1988). Thus secondary data were obtained from journal articles, published books as well as reports from key informants. The quantitative data collected were presented as tables and graphs, whilst qualitative data were organised into themes where document analysis was done to simplify and bring meaning to the findings (Borg and Gall, 1986). The researcher through observation identified the source of water used by the beneficiaries and types of crops grown.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

The majority of the respondents were females. This is supported by Naila (2001) who noted that in most developing countries, rural women are the mainstay of small-scale agriculture, farm labour, and day-to-day family subsistence, efforts to alleviate rural poverty and improve food security will not be successful unless issues relating to women as producers and providers of food are taken into account. More so 68% of the beneficiaries are in the economically active group. This ensures sustainability of the community garden since they have the capacity to work in the garden for a sustained period as they are still below the life expectancy age.

Livelihoods Activities in Gutu, Ward 10.

A number of livelihood strategies are available to the people in Gutu Ward 10. Table 1: summarises the livelihoods of people in ward 10. The majority of the respondents rely on on-farm livelihood strategies. This concurs with IFAD (2001) which argues that, 'In Zimbabwe Over 70% of the country's population stays in rural areas and the majority of people in the country depend on agriculture and its related activities'.

Table 1 Livelihoods in Gutu, Ward 10

Means of livelihoods	Number of respondents	% of respondents
Ground nuts	30	100
Round nuts	30	100
Maize	28	93
Millet	26	87
Small livestock	20	67
Individual gardens	24	80
Remittances	20	67
Brewing beer/ <i>ndari</i>	26	87
Selling mates	3	10
Selling Clay pots	2	7

Source: Field Survey (2016).

There are many sources of livelihoods in Gutu ward 10. Major means of survival practiced by people in Gutu ward 10 is agriculture where people grow ground nuts, round nuts, maize and millet as indicated in table 1. In times of good harvests beneficiaries trade their produce as far as Harare and Mutare. However, the scale at which the community gardens project is

implemented is small. More over the majority of the gardens face problems of poor fencing which leads to the destruction of crops by cattle and goats.

Apart from engaging in crop production as a livelihood people in this district also rely on selling livestock such as goats, sheep ,chicken, fowls and turkeys. The selling of these, however, does not sustain them much since the production is also at a small scale. Other households brew beer commonly known as *ndari/ngoto* and the money which is realised from the sells is used to buy food hence food security can also be achieved. Remittances from the diaspora provides a livelihood diversification option especially during drought periods. The majority of households, have children and relatives who are outside the country in search for greener pastures, thus remittances are a form of safety net. Tevera and Chikanda (2009) indicate that, ‘In the Zimbabwean case, about 60% of the migrants reside within the SADC region and 40% outside it, providing opportunities for survival during Zimbabwe’s hyperinflation environment.’ However, a focus group discussion participant noted that:

Remittances usually only cover emergency services such as paying of school fees, paying hut tax and when someone is sick.

Support Given to the Beneficiaries

Participants revealed that they received support in the form of information about how to grow crops from Action Faim and Agritex officers these two key informants are located at Makudo shopping Center. Action Faim also assists in the distribution of inputs during the initial stage of the community garden. The support provided to beneficiaries is summarised in table 2

Table 2: Support Given to Beneficiaries

Type of support	% of respondents
farming knowledge	87
Seeds	83
garden tools	90
Borehole	83
Mending broken borehole	7

Source: Field Survey (2016)

The type of knowledge imparted to the beneficiaries is of significance to the sustainability of the community garden. The knowledge is vital in the improvement of production in the garden. The knowledge concerning mending of boreholes helps to foster development in the garden by quickly repairing the borehole at low prices. According to Anseeuw et al (2012) the major thrust of the GoZ’s agricultural policy at independence was to attain equity and efficiency by restructuring of research and development and extension services to meet the needs of smallholder farmers.

Livelihoods Brought by Action Faim

The community garden has brought new livelihoods in the area which improved the well-being of the individuals. Figure 1 gives livelihoods brought by Action Faim in Ward 10, Gutu.

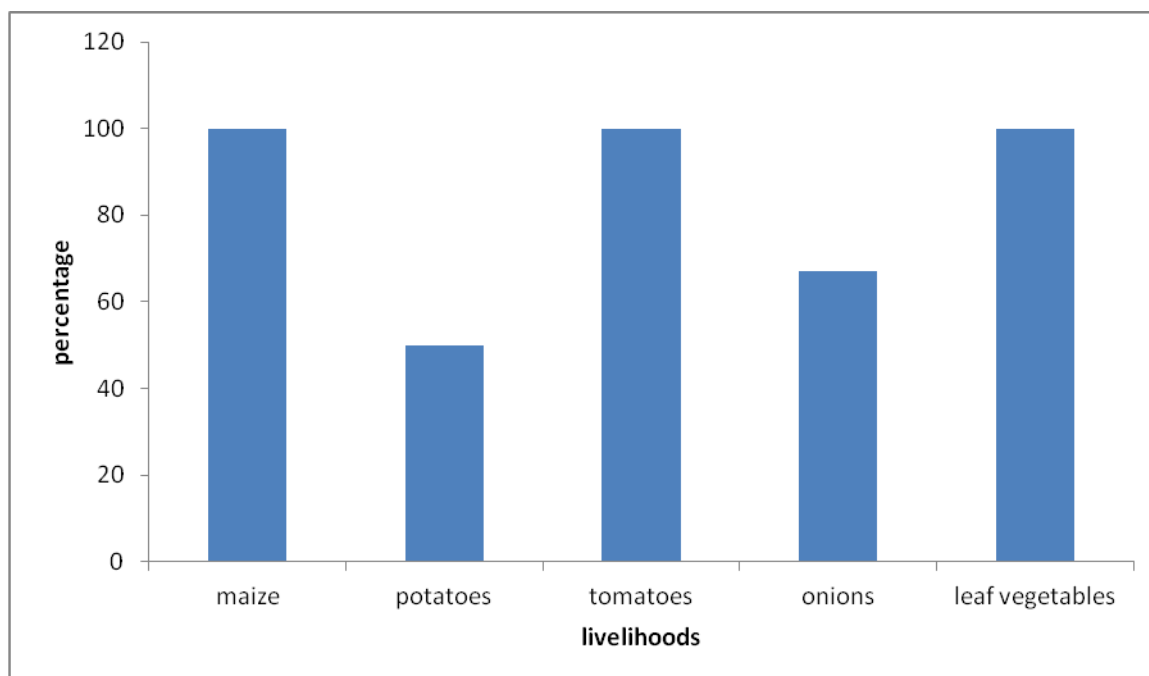


Figure 1: Livelihoods brought by Action Faim
Source: Field Survey (2016)

The respondents confirmed that crops grown in the community garden include onion, leaf vegetables (like cove, rape, spinach and cabbages), tomatoes, potatoes and maize. The crops grown are rich in nutrients and they boost health of people and build resilience to the deficiency diseases like kwashiorkor. FAO (2002) echoed the same sentiments that these crops are rich in nutrition and people who access them experience good diet. The crops grown improved nutritional levels of participants. Subsequently even the number of meals per day also increased from 2 to 3. Thus food security has been enhanced after adoption of the community gardens.

Benefits Accrued from the Community Garden

More than 50% of the respondents outlined that they get more than US\$100 per year from the proceeds from the garden. There was a consensus from the focus group discussion that on average beneficiaries earn less than US\$1 per day. Thus according to World Bank all the respondents are poor. However Satge (2002) argues that poverty is an aggregate of many capitals making poverty analysis highly subjective. An Agritex officer stated that:

Beneficiaries engage themselves in horticultural crops during off-farm season and it is the time where horticultural crop production is high and as a result the market they have is flooded.

Expenditure of Income from the Garden Proceeds

Standards of living determines expenditure patterns. Figure 2 shows expenditure of beneficiary's income from the garden proceeds

Expenditure Patterns of Beneficiaries

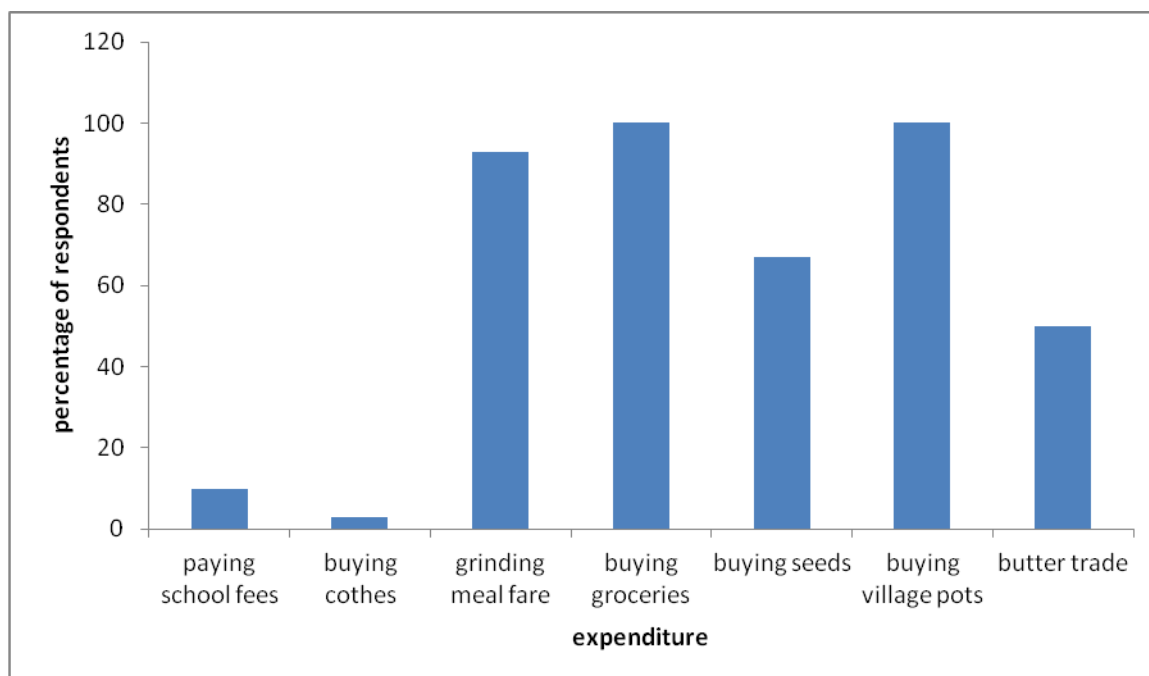


Figure 2: Expenditure Patterns
Source: Field Survey (2016)

Figure 2 illustrates that money brought about by the selling of agricultural produce is used to reduce vulnerability amongst respondents. This helps to cushion them from further absolute poverty and food insecurity. Money obtained is used for paying grinding mill, buying groceries and buying village pots by the majority of the beneficiaries. A woman during a focus group discussion stated enthusiastically:

We are now in a position to earn money which we can use for our daily expenses, we used to face challenges of how to get money and sometimes depend on our daughters who work as house maids

Buying household basics have contributed to improved health of participants. Number of meals increased as people now have breakfast which they missed before the introduction of the CG. People are having proper meals on their tables due to the grocery that they buy. The respondents responded that they use some of the money they get to mobilise the community pots that will be used on different occasions such as at the funerals. The pots will be kept at the village head's compound and collected when they need to use them. This has solved the problem they had of inadequate pots during the time when people assemble in large numbers because most families they have small pots that suit their family size. Thus the pots bought are large enough for the big numbers. The participants during the focus group discussion stated:

"Pots, plates and cups to use at funerals were a big challenge to use because the pots that were brought by people were too small even to cook food for only six people....."

"On the side of the pots we are warm and dry what is left is to buy the plates and cups that we will serve people in."

"We do not want to be limited to buying pots, plates and cups only but we intend to buy drums to keep water in the money will not be sufficient enough but we can add with the money from our burial society."

Buying of seeds is another way the money is expended by the beneficiaries. This idea of mobilizing farm inputs was also highlighted by FAO, (2002) where it was found that Women's purchasing power may not only be used to buy food and other basic assets for themselves and their families, but also to pay for the inputs used in food production. On rare cases people pay school fees and buying clothes as indicated by small number of respondents (below 20%) who said they use money for these uses. This shows the positive contribution of the community garden to the livelihood means to the rest of the community rather than at individual level.

Impacts of CG

The community garden resulted in positive impacts on the livelihood development of people.

Impacts on Source of Food

Often, vegetable gardens work as some form of security safety net for the beneficiaries to cushion food insecurity and augment subsistence farming practiced in the Ward. The community garden have provided source of food to the community in Gutu, ward 10. Community garden project has demonstrated an improvement in access to the quality and quantity of food where crops produced in the garden help to improve dietary diversity and micronutrient status. This addresses the Millennium Development Goal of food security where food sovereignty is regarded by NGOs as “the right of peoples, communities, and countries to define their own agricultural, labour, fishing, food and land policies which are ecologically, socially, economically and culturally appropriate to their unique circumstances. It includes the true right to food and to produce food, which means that all people have the right to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food and to food-producing resources and the ability to sustain themselves and their societies” (International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, 2001). In an interview with an officer from Gutu rural district council the food security of the people improved as he stated:

“Through these community gardens in this district many people have access to food and their number of meals increased per day. Some were used to skip breakfast but now they can eat green mealies, butternuts and potatoes at break.”

This shows that community garden influence positively to the food security of the rural people in this area

Impacts on Income

Beneficiaries posited that they get some money after selling the excess crops (tomatoes, onions and vegetables) from their production. They could sell excess vegetables and buy other groceries, pay for household necessities like school fees for their children, A respondent from focus group discussion noted that:

“When my child had no books, I sold tomatoes for money and managed to buy him books and pens so that he can go to school.”

Sales of garden produce can supplement household income, thereby augmenting beneficiaries' contributions to household expenses and increasing their influence on household decision-making and this suggests the sustainability of benefits since the benefits are seen taking place well after the intervention by the Action Faim. Garden project in Gutu, Ward 10 improves income to the households.

Impacts on Socialisation

Working together on gardens can provide a source of relaxation and stress relief, increasing feelings of unity among vulnerable communities. In this community garden people of different age groups interact with each other and a sense of belongingness is felt among the beneficiaries. Beneficiaries also take advantage of this interaction to share and discuss issues of how to improve their quality of life since they share a common problem. Beneficiaries also cited other intangible benefits from garden membership, including community cohesion as stated on the focus group,

“The spirit of individualism has disappeared with the introduction of this community garden, now we can work as one family.”

“Hatred and envy is no longer present among us since we help each other in this garden. In case of one of our member fall sick we help by tending his/her crops so that they cannot wilt.”

Thus inclusion and collaboration of community members in the community garden provided a good standing for social cohesion meant to prosper in the face of challenges.

Impacts on Farming Knowledge

The beneficiaries gained farming knowledge that they can apply beyond community garden. Such knowledge as crop rotation and intercropping as well as manure application is of greater use to people in their fields. Improvement of villagers' knowledge on environmental conservation was gained. Knowledge about conservation was considered as an important benefit. These pieces of advice imparted to them by the Agritex officers and Action Faim experts is seen useful not only to the beneficiaries but to the community at large as some imitate what is being done in the community garden in their farms. This is useful for it improves the yields both in the community gardens and on the individual fields. This knowledge contribute to the sustainability of food security as people are equipped with the knowledge of how to improve yields, thus education is power for the perpetuity of the projects like this one of gardening. It is in line with the modern theories which emphasize rise in human capital/education (knowledge) which increase house hold labour that is sustainable (Ellis, 2000). Thus farming knowledge imparted to the farmers sustains the human capital that will lead to the sustainable development of the community at large.

Challenges Pertaining Community Garden

The beneficiaries in their undertaking of the gardening project they are facing a number of challenges which they presented as wildlife invasion, pests and diseases, labour intensive, marketing, financing, theft and shortage of inputs. These challenges threaten the sustainability of the community garden.

Wild animal invasion

The researcher observed that the garden is sited near Dambo Mountain Range and Chikato Mountain. These mountains are a home for monkeys and baboons as indicated during the FGD. This area where the garden is situated is also used as the grazing land for cattle. All beneficiaries responded to the questionnaires complained about the baboons that invade their garden and destroy the crops. The baboons invaded the garden every time of the year when there is something in the garden. They destroy crops at their youthful stage up to the maturity state. This is a real menace as stated by respondents,

“The problem with this garden is its site that is close to mountains where baboons and monkeys live.”

“We are only two here at this home, one has to attend the garden when we are on duty and the other will be tending cattle, no one will be working on the field. We regret to be involved in the community garden during this time of the year where we will be growing in our field. We shall decline the garden during this time and resume in the project after the farming season.”

It is crystalline clear from the above complaints that wild animal invasion disrupts the productive potential of the respondents since they create an additional labour or task that require human attention.

Pests and diseases

A large number (66%) of beneficiaries encountered challenges of pests and diseases that affect their crops. Aphids, rats, birds and grasshoppers affect the crops in the garden. Birds invade the garden and affect vegetable crops like rape and cove; rats eat tomatoes and they can also spread diseases to the crops and diseases like red spider affect the tomatoes that lead to the decline in food production in the garden.

Market supply

The market that is available for the beneficiaries are shops, schools and the community. More than 66% of the respondents revealed that though the market is near to the community, it failed to be reliable to the suppliers. The production outweighs the market and the market is not enough for their produce. The chief reason for this is that there are other two community gardens in the neighbouring villages which also rely on the same market. Lack of market leaves people storing their produce in their homes, with some (tomatoes and cabbage) rotting. This cause a great loss as the products that come out of sweat, commitment and labour is thrown in to dumb site since they have no proper storage to store the crops remaining after selling to keep them fresh. Lack of proper markets can be explained by Naila, (2001) as due to “the decline in investment in rural infrastructure, such as feeder roads that link rural areas to markets, affects access to markets. In addition, lack of access to membership in marketing cooperatives also limits women's ability to market their produce. These constraints act as a disincentive to women farmers to produce surplus food, since the difficulties of marketing it are too great if not insurmountable.” This scenario is also similar to that of Gutu, ward 10. The respondents complained about the poor market.

“Our produce end up rotting in our homes since the market is so thin that our products can be bought in time.”

“It is difficult for us to secure a proper market in this area because there are other gardens in Muranda and Mubonderi villages.”

There is no market for the produce which is an impediment to maximum production in the community garden. Competition for the market from other gardens around which then becomes a challenge is worth mentioning as the factor leading to poor market.

Labour intensive

The community garden is labour intensive in that it requires more time to work in the garden. People spend more than two days per week in the garden which compromises other activities that need to be done. Furthermore 8% of the female respondents showed that the borehole they use is very heavy to pump which render their bodies weakness.

Financing

12% of the respondents revealed that they need support to improve the production in the garden. Some suggested for the implementation of the engine for pumping water for the irrigation to replace the hand pump they consider to be heavy for them. This is not feasible to them given the profits they get from the garden proceeds. Shortage of inputs to some of the members is another challenge that will impede development and growth of the community garden which when continue unchecked can lead to the collapse of the garden project. Those facing these challenges yearn for financial support to mobilise their inputs.

Theft

Stealing of the garden produce is a problem that the members are facing especially tomatoes and potatoes as indicated by 10% of the respondents. People complained that their garden tools were stolen which made the work difficult for them in production in the garden.

CONCLUSION

The households in the rural communal areas including ward 10 in Gutu are not food secure as a result of failing crops partially attributed to the effects of erratic rainfall received by these places (Mugabe et al, 2003). A large number of people in ward 10, Gutu are facing this challenge of food insecurity. In the face of this challenge they employ strategies to fish themselves out of this mess which are growing ground nuts, round nuts, brewing beer, receiving remittances as well as keeping small livestock. According to Chazovachii (2010) people in Gutu are practicing the growing of small grain crops to sustain their lives. Chazovachii also noted that people in Gutu are practicing livestock production to improve their livelihood.

The strategies implemented are noble but they are inadequate in quantity to fully provide food to the community. Action Faim augmented the livelihoods in ward 10 of Gutu by introducing CGs. Action Faim supported the garden project through the disbursement of garden tools, borehole drilling, fencing material, inputs (seeds) and knowledge of how to meant the broken borehole. Different types of crops are being grown in the CG as a result of Action Faim's efforts. Crops include maize, tomatoes, onions, potatoes and vegetables like cabbages and rape. Among these crops tomatoes and leaf vegetables dominated in the garden. This indicates that community gardens play a fundamental role in the provision of households' food and improvement in livelihoods. This is consistent with Shisanya and Hendriks (2011) who identified the contribution of CGs to food security in the Maphephetheni uplands in South Africa.

Majority of the respondents produced food that is enough for their family. This is similar to the case of low income gardens implemented by Action Faim in Chipinge where the people involved in the low income gardens provide nutritional food for their families and people living with HIV (Chloe, 2014). Beneficiaries of CG in Gutu Ward 10 sell their surplus crops to Firomumwe Primary and Secondary school teachers, the community and the shops. The income obtained by beneficiaries of the community garden in Gutu Ward 10 is used to buy other households necessities like groceries, buying community pots, buying inputs and paying grinding mill fare. This improved the livelihood of the people in ward 10 of Gutu District. This improves people's access to the livelihoods assets which is a vital component in the issue of sustainable development. Chambers (1997) highlighted livelihood as encompassing food, health, a strong family, wealth and income, thus CG in Gutu Ward 10 improved the livelihoods of the community.

Through the CG food and income benefits were the main benefits obtained from the CG. Beneficiaries cited additional financial and dietary benefits that come out of the garden. The CG helped not only the beneficiaries of the garden project with the farming knowledge but the community at large since people imitate what is being done in the community garden in their fields. The effects of the CG in Gutu, Ward 10 are similar to the benefits of CGs elsewhere since the benefits that were identified in the literature review were also identified by key informants and CG respondents as being available and important in Gutu ward 10. The dietary improvements from the community garden are in line with the expectations of the 1996 World Food Summit that was held in Italy and the Millennium Development Goals that aim to provide food and reduce hunger to people. The ability of the CG to increase food production was the idea initiated by World Food Summit of 1996 that development agencies must focus on the availability of food through increased food production (Karl 2009). FAO (2002) in Karl, (2009) also remarked, "Focus should be on helping producers, especially small-scale farmers, to boost food production..." which the Action Faim managed to do, thus ideas of sustainable development are taken cognisance of in the design of this CG for the people of Gutu.

In addition, the garden is still functioning with crops introduced by Action Faim being grown well after the withdrawal of Action Faim program support. The yields increased to the extent of producing surplus they sell. This shows the relevance of the CG project to the needs and aspirations of people in Gutu Ward 10. Continuity of the CG project after withdrawal of support of Action Faim indicates the sustainability of the CG. The CG enables the villagers to diversify their livelihoods into selling of crops produced in the community garden to improve their income which results in sustainable livelihoods development. Thus, the project impacted positively to the socialisation process in the community, income improvement, knowledge transfer and on food source which are livelihood out comes on the part of sustainable livelihood framework approach.

Although there are many benefits that accrue to the beneficiaries and communities at large, challenges that the community gardeners encounter threaten the sustainability of CG and the potential for them to thrive. The invasion of the garden by the baboons is biggest threat to the sustainability of the CG. Yields from the community garden are decreased by these animals. The baboons are difficult to prevent from invading the garden. Pests and diseases affect the crops in the CG. Market that gardeners depend on is not sustainable. People in Gutu Ward 10 lack money to travel their produce to large markets like growth points where the market is wide, thus marketing remain a challenge to the people. Existence of other gardens in the surrounding villages produces stiff completion for the already poor market.

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