

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this study, the problem of food insecurity among rural women was examined. The study focused on the food security project known as the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project, running in Vergelegen village in Bochum in the Northern Province. The discussion of the food security project used information from a literature study and data from personal interviews and questionnaires.

The purpose of the study is to analyse the food insecurity issue in Bochum and the present and the future of the project on the basis of the conceptual framework described in Chapter 1, against the background of the Bochum situation as described in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 summarises the findings and evaluates them against the criteria set out for successful projects in Chapter 1.

4.1 SUMMARY

As was explained in Chapter 1, food security is a function of production, availability, accessibility and utilisation at household level. In the rural households studied, women are the main producers of food, while men are

absent or do not help much in food production. The food security project is mainly geared to increasing agricultural production, giving food to a large section of the inhabitants of the six (6) participating villages. The project also helps with marketing food, reducing a lack of food and initiating income generation projects, with the focus on families headed by single women with children under five.

The concept of food insecurity is related to issues such as poverty, hunger, vulnerability and malnutrition. Food security does not necessarily refer to food self-sufficiency, because a country could be self-sufficient in food production whilst the majority of citizens are food insecure. Harvest failure due to bad weather can force subsistence farmers to cut their food consumption. The problem of food insecurity does not necessary result from an inadequate food supply, but from a lack of purchasing power on the part of nations and of households.

Low productivity in agriculture and high seasonal and year-to-year variability in food supplies are a principal cause of food insecurity and undernutrition, which are often the results of unreliable rainfall and insufficient water for crop and livestock production.

To break the vicious cycle of poverty and food insecurity in the study area, agricultural productivity must increase (that is, food consumption must be

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To break the vicious cycle of poverty and food insecurity in the study area, agricultural productivity must increase (that is, food consumption must be

protected and increased by generating more income and employment, and by strengthening the food security safety net). People should have self-determination, self-reliance, political freedom and security, participation in decision-making and a sense of purpose in life and work.

It is not enough to concentrate on increasing food supply or to respond to crises with food-related interventions. Instead, there should be more vegetable growing in the area itself. Food security means permanent access to food of sufficient quality for an active and a healthy life.

In order to achieve food security, women's involvement in food programmes must be promoted and women must be promoted in the marketing world, as they are the ones mostly involved in marketing programmes. Local food processing in the rural areas can also be of great importance to the people in Bochum and elsewhere and may help them achieve food security. Improved productivity should increase food production and lead to increased income, particularly among the poor. Higher incomes will have to come primarily from increased productivity and improved profitability in the agricultural/horticultural and other activities of multi-purpose projects (for example, bread-making).

To reduce food insecurity, agricultural markets need to be strengthened. Investments in agricultural research, the promotion of health and family

planning programmes and women's participation in nutrition programmes are needed. Health and nutritional checks are needed for mothers and children under five.

Solutions to food problems require fundamental structural changes, but changes will not occur overnight. The undernourished would most probably be able to take care of their needs if they were given access to the market through appropriate price and income transfer programmes. They will have to rely on more direct help, including such basic assistance as free personal health care and meals, in order to relieve the permanent suffering to which they are otherwise doomed. These aspects are part of the Bochum project.

Food security is linked to created assets (for example, a mobile clinic, vegetable garden); these include improved access to health services and sanitation (water). The criterion of improved access to health services is met by the Bochum project, as the people have a mobile clinic which provides them with health service, every two weeks, and the vegetable garden provides nutritious food.

4.2 EVALUATING THE STUDY

The Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project was evaluated by looking at its successes and its failures in reaching its objectives as set out in Section 1.5.2 and 3.3.

4.2.1 Achievements

A project is a one-time job, rather than a repetition whereby a project team is built over time. The food security project was designed as a one-time job with regard to the garden itself, and was funded from August 1997 to July 2000.

It was indicated in Section 1.4.2 that, before a project is implemented, there must be a plan. If there is no plan, then control of the project is impossible. In this case, there was a plan. The project plan for the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project was made by the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare. According to the criteria, the people who must execute a plan should be involved in its preparation; this is important, as, for development to be possible, people should come first, that is, they should be included in each and every step of the project. In this case, the women participating in the food security project were not involved in selecting the criteria, but the *dintona* of the six villages from

which participating women were to come, were involved in the planning.

Of course, the *dintona* do not plant these vegetables, but the women do.

During the planning process of the food security project, a feasibility analysis and appraisals were done, as a result of which the project was implemented. The areas where the project should be managed were being identified and the planting of vegetables is a success, so much so that more land for planting is now needed by the participants, as indicated in Section 3.10.

Control of a project should be thought of in terms of information rather than power, that is, work is controlled and not workers. The officials and the participants stated that jobs at the food security project are controlled and not people. The women have a schedule of what is to be done. Women taking part in the food security project are empowered by a responsibility chart to show who is responsible for various activities in the project. The women themselves are in charge of completing this chart. The Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project is controlled by both the officials and the people taking part in the project.

It was also urged that an audit of the financial statements of a project should be conducted. With the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose

Project, the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare indicated that their statements are taken to the auditors every quarter.

Development is achieved by people working together (see Section 1.3). People from the six (6) villages in Bochum district are working together to try to fight food insecurity in their villages. The women participating in the food security project work together in a group and they get feedback about their produce from the villagers, who support them. The Department of Health and Welfare, together with the Department of Agriculture, gives support to women working in the garden.

If poverty could be reduced, then the people of the six (6) villages will no longer go hungry, as they stated, but they will be food secure. At present, the women have an opportunity to work and learn from the Vergelegen garden. The women participating in the food security project survive by planting vegetables and the women are equipped with skills so that they can be economically independent. Through selling those vegetables, they also get money.

Achieving food security might take a while longer, but a clear and positive step has been taken in this direction.

The women at the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project have been given access to water, as there is a pump at the project that caters for their vegetable garden. The water is also available to the women and their children, especially during the day when they are at the project. Households can, however, not use the water for home use purposes.

It was stated in Section 3.2 that, prior to 1994, children under the age of five in the study area were ill and that people in these areas lacked health education. The people were affected by many diseases, but with the help of the food security project, the children no longer go hungry as their mothers are working in the project and earn money, and they get healthy vegetables from the project. Lastly, the children are given health support by the officials from the Department of Health and Welfare. It does not mean that before or prior to 1994 there were no hospitals or clinics, but they were far from the people, as indicated in Section 2.1, and the people had no money for transport to go and get treatment from the hospitals. Now, the mobile clinic comes every fortnight.

The children at the food security project get assistance from the food security project. The health of children of women in the project has improved, as has their status (see Section 3.10.18). Children who are ready to go to school can go freely, with much less fear of lacking school-clothes or school-fees or that they will fall asleep in the classes due to hunger.

Education and training opportunities for women have increased to help them provide for the basic needs of their families. As the women are given training and education, that provides them with knowledge of how to deal with difficult situations in their families. Women are taught leadership skills, a woman has been selected to be a leader of the project. Women are motivated by the officials and the people from surrounding villages, and they realise that what they are doing is important for the villages as a whole.

The aim of the food security project was to alleviate poverty and food insecurity in the study area, as stated by the officials. Participants pointed out that they now eat healthy vegetables. The objectives of the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose project were clearly defined. The scope of the Babina-Chuene project was defined, for example, the planning procedures were followed and project activities were controlled.

Decisions with regard to aspects concerning the project were taken not only by the officials, but members of the project were also included, even though the broader community was excluded from the initial planning stage. Women are given authority. The project belongs to them; they should have the ability to run the project by themselves and they are responsible for the actions taken in the project.

4.2.2 Shortcomings

Although the project seems to have made quite a large difference in the lives of at least some people in the six (6) villages, there are a few shortcomings which have to be pointed out.

It is debatable whether the participation of 67 women on a project meant for 120 indicates a success in terms of people participation. The project only addresses the food security problem of a few people (families) in the Bochum district. At most, one can state that the project is a start in helping to achieve food security. But this cannot be done if the project remains a government project, driven by welfare needs and using welfare principles. Community ownership is then excluded.

The officials from the Department of Health and Welfare were the ones involved in the selection criteria for the people to participate in the food security project, as indicated in Section 3.2. Even though the *dintona* and their councillors were involved in the selection of the participants, after being given the criteria by the officials, not all the community members were given a chance to select people to participate in the food security project. Hence, the criterion of inclusion of the participants is not fully met in that, while the *dintona* were involved, the women themselves were not.

Some of the women who are participating in the project are there for money and not because they want to improve their health status. This was proven by those women who left the project, as was stated in Section 3.10, because the money they were getting was limited. Even those who are still with the project complained about the low remuneration and are not fully satisfied. The number of women participating in the food security project decreased because they did not get what they wanted or expected, as stated in Section 3.10. Firstly, they were not given access to free vegetables and, secondly, the remuneration was limited. If the number of women continues to decrease, then the project will die, as the produce will be less.

The fact that people get paid a monthly salary reduces the development potential of the project to a Welfare project and not a community development project. It is not certain whether the project will be sustainable when the initial three-year period has elapsed. Only time will tell. Resources for the project were not used effectively, because the officials and the participants took a long time to implement some of the activities, for example the bakery.

Welfare projects such as these are not sustainable, as the officials themselves stated that the funding for the project will come to an end, (see Section 3.10). If it falls flat, the people's hopes will be gone and the people

are going to suffer, as they will lose the income they now have. Community developers should not make any promises that are not true or create high expectations that will not be met.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

The officials from the provincial Department of Health and Welfare indicated that they are thinking of introducing other functions into the Babina-Chuene Women's Multi-purpose Project, for example, a bakery. However, they are really procrastinating. Neither the officials nor the people have as yet implemented these additional services. The officials stated that the income generated from the vegetable garden is not enough, so they should try to work faster to implement other aspects of the project.

Regarding the money generated by the food security project, it was stated by the officials that the project did not generate enough compared to the number of women participating in the project. As was indicated in Section 3.4.1, the food security project was to be funded for three years only and the year 2000 was the last year, so the project may not have enough money to implement the other services proposed.

When one looks at the selection criteria used in the food security project, the women who are taking part in the food security project were not

involved in their selection on the choice of criteria. It could be difficult to involve the villagers, but it is really important for them to be included in some way. Where the *dintona* are involved, if the *dintona* call up their people, then all the people can be involved in the selection process. For future projects, this is important.

A project leader should be a well-trained person (see Section 1.4.1), but the leader in the food security project is not trained. In future, when a leader is chosen, the people involved should try to find someone who is trained or, if no one has training in the group, the people (officials from the different departments concerned) should assist such a person to receive the necessary training.

The idea of concentrating on selected children under the age of five is a good one, but the community should also look at other children who are under the age of five whose mothers are not taking part in the project. This implies that all children who are under the age of five should be taken into consideration.

The health of the people from Bochum is not stable, because the mobile clinic comes by only once every fortnight. If more than one mobile clinic can cater for the people, then one might talk of health improvement. The mobile clinic is important to the people from the study area. It would be

helpful if the Department of Health and Welfare could try to ensure that a permanent clinic is built in the area. The people from the project and the villagers stated that the mobile clinic is close to them and they can even walk to the mobile clinic, so it shows that the area may need more mobile clinics that can really help the people, or that the clinic needs to come more often.

Water supply is poor; the water pump installed in the study area is only for the project and is accessible only to people taking part in the food security project. If another pump and street taps could be installed, it could give the villagers the advantages of better water without wasting time on long walks to crowded water points or using possibly contaminated river water.

Most of the women taking part in the food security project do not have **education**. The most important thing that can be done by the officials from the departments concerned would be to try to introduce Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) to the people, as adults, including elderly people, also have a right to learn. ABET is adult education. Education is a life-long process which includes both children and adults. Education is limited among these people, especially among women, so it is important to involve them in education (Mcquoid-Mason, O'Brien & Greene 1991:14). Adult education should not involve just training women on how to read and write; it should be much more than just teaching literacy. Adult education

must serve the whole of South Africa; that is, the broader concept of adult education is to stress the importance of serving all in need of more knowledge, information and skills.

If the area of the land under cultivation in the project could be extended, there would be more land for planting. If another pump could be installed to satisfy the water needs of the produce it may really help. If the extension of the land means that more women are needed to work in the garden, there are women in the villages who also want to be involved in the garden. If more products are produced, then the women can go out of Bochum to other areas to sell the produce. The people participating could supply local boarding schools and hospitals, and outside markets. The people on the project could end up opening a big market for their villages.

Individuals outside the community, as indicated in Section 3.10, introduced the food security project. People from the outside (the Department of Health and Welfare) identified the project and not the individuals themselves, that is, the officials introduced the project acting as external community developers, which is problematic (Wassermann & Kriel 1997:18).

The departments concerned should establish contacts with the leaders of the community and thereafter all the members of the community, not only

selected ones. That is, the whole community should be fully informed about the work of the officials concerned in developing their community. The community as a whole needs to be empowered so that it will not be difficult to engage with a reasonable measure of success in the process of community development.

In terms of marketing, the people should be helped to set up marketing opportunities for themselves, as they do not have enough access to the marketing world at present. The people are poor and do not have an idea about marketing outside their own communities.

4.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Food security cannot be reached overnight. The primary result of malnutrition and insufficient food consumption is not a lack of supplies, but poverty resulting from inefficient supply. The solution for the rural poor is not only to add to the supply of food but also to raise the incomes of the poor so that they can buy the food that is available.

The aspect of alleviating poverty and improving the health and welfare of people in projects such as the project in Bochum, in the My-Darling district, is of the utmost importance. In order to improve human health and welfare, the people should come first in each and every decision to be taken

that includes them. If people in the communities concerned are involved, projects are more likely to correspond to people's felt needs.

As was stated in Section 1.3, development is more than simple change. It is change in some particular direction, involving social development, whereby the welfare of the whole community is taken into consideration. Physical development means developing the whole area (infrastructure), while political development helps the community understand the field of politics. The last aspect is economic development, which is aimed at agriculture, trade and industry. Development in the study area was aimed primarily at economic and social targets.

The officials from both the departments concerned should try to help people with development so that, at a certain stage, the people will be able to help themselves. In other words, people should be helped to help themselves. People's development choices and life chances should be put on the development agenda, while development should be focused on helping the poorest of the poor.

The community themselves should have their own objectives, be able to analyse their situation, identify their own needs and finally take actions to achieve their own objectives (Wassermann & Kriel 1997:46).

Increasing production and the productivity of the women who are involved in agricultural gardens may require improving their access to resources and information so that they can help themselves. Women must not be marginalised, but must be brought into the mainstream of economic and social life so that they can use their productive capacity fully and contribute more to the health and welfare of their families and the nation.