DROUGHT, RESILIENCE AND ACCESS TO FOOD IN RURAL COMMUNITIES IN ESWATINI – THE CASE OF MPOLONJENI CONSTITUENCY

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Abstract

Drought has been accepted as a major hydrological disaster that threatens the livelihoods of most rural communities in the Kingdom of Eswatini. Over 70 percent of the population in the country is rural and derive its livelihoods on agriculture, which is practiced under rain-fed conditions. This increases the level of exposure and vulnerability of this population to hunger and poverty, particularly in the era of climate change. Drought, which has become recurrent and more devastating to crops, has risen the food insecurity bar and has pushed thousands of the Swazi population over the cliff of hunger, making it increasingly difficult for the country to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 1 & 2) of ending poverty and hunger (and malnutrition) by 2030. The study explores the drought-food production nexus by examining the effects of the 2015/16 drought on access to food in rural households in Mpolonjeni in the Kingdom of Eswatini, and the adaptation strategies employed by rural communities in the constituency during drought periods. The study used quantitative approach to data collection and analysis, where 123 households (out of 2 228) were sampled using the simple random technique. Among the key findings of the study was that drought had major detrimental effects on crops (reduced crop yields, limited food crop variety) and killed a number of livestock in most households in the constituency, thus negatively affecting their economic condition, access to food and food security in general. As a result a substantial number of families are finding it difficult to recover from drought impacts, which also vary between communities and by gender. The study therefore concluded that as climate continues to change, the most vulnerable population in Mpolonjeni Inkhundla will continue to suffer from chronic food shortage, in particular if mitigation measures to enhance rural resilience to drought are not taken. The study, thus recommended that the government of Eswatini must be fully involved in the improvement of the rain-fed agricultural enterprises in rural areas and provide supplemental irrigation systems in the rural areas.

Key terms: *Food access, Mpolonjeni, Drought, Resilience, Eswatini, Rural.*

Recent publications

1. Sipho Felix Mamba, Abul Salam, and Graciana Peter, "Farmers' Perception of Climate Change a Case Study in Swaziland." *Journal of Food Security*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2015): 47-61. doi: 10.12691/jfs-3-2-3.

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Photograph



Dr. Mamba is a human geographer with research interests in rural and urban food security, rural-urban food linkages and urban livelihoods, impacts of climate variability and change on the food system, HIV/AIDS and the poverty-food security nexus. Mamba also researches on environment and development issues. He holds a PhD in Geography and Environmental Science, Master of Science in Environmental Resources Management (majoring in Land & water), Bachelor's Degree (majoring in Geography & English) and a Post Graduate Diploma in Education.

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