

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND RURAL POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGIES IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE OF BINGA RURAL DISTRICT

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies implemented by Non-governmental organisation (NGOs) for poverty alleviation in Zimbabwe with specific reference to Zimbabwe's Binga Rural District. The qualitative research methodology was employed in the article. Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. Findings indicated that NGOs do not adequately fulfil the needs of the poor due to ineffective strategies that they implement. There is insufficient understanding of the livelihoods of the poor in Binga, hence the need for participatory development approaches. Deepening and widening poverty in the rural areas that are currently served by NGOs is an indicator that their poverty alleviation strategies are inadequate and ineffective to deal with poverty in these rural areas. The paper recommends a policy shift by both NGOs and the government to improve the poverty reduction strategies used by NGOs.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organisation, Poverty, Poverty Alleviation, Development Strategies, Zimbabwe

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1. Introduction

Poverty alleviation, and its eventual elimination, is a central objective of development. In pursuit of solutions to developmental problems besetting the African continent, the donor community is increasingly regarding Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as an important agency for empowering people thereby leading more effective and sustainable local development services than those promoted by the government (Bassey, 2008). This stems from the fact that the state has failed to cater for the welfare of its people (Matenga, 2001 and Ibrahim & Hulme, 2010). However, there remains considerable doubt about how these objectives can be achieved in practice (Riddell. *et.al*, 1995). Development as one of the objectives of development agents has gained much attention from both developing and developed countries. Billions of dollars are donated every year to fight against poverty so that development can be achieved, but little is achieved.

Many developing countries have embraced the intervention of NGOs as alternatives for poverty alleviation (Bassey, 2008). However, the strategies used are seemingly facing sustainability challenges hence the need to focus on what needs to be done to achieve sustainability. The Government of Zimbabwe, since 1980 adopted a number of policies to fight poverty. The emergence of NGOs in

Zimbabwe in the field of development was to augment the role of the government's poverty alleviation strategies.

Therefore, this paper seeks to evaluate the poverty alleviation strategies implemented by NGOs in the rural areas. In this study, Binga Rural District was used as a case study. Binga Rural District is located in Matabeleland North in the Zambezi valley basin in the extreme north-western part of Zimbabwe (Manyena, 2003). Binga District is well known for its inhospitable climatic conditions making it a drought prone area (Marten, 2010). Though the place is regarded as one of the poorest places within the country, it is endowed with natural resources which include the Zambezi River waters, timber, hot springs and a host of wild animals.

2. Sustainable Livelihood Approach

This paper is underpinned by the sustainable livelihoods approach to rural development. The term sustainable livelihoods relate to a wide set of issues which encompass much of the broader debate about the relationship between poverty and environment (Scoones, 1998). The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is an attempt to go beyond the conventional definitions and approaches to poverty alleviation (Krantz, 2001). The livelihood thinking dates back to the work of Robert Chambers in the mid-1980s. Chambers developed the idea of

“Sustainable Livelihoods” with the intention to enhance the efficiency of development cooperation (Kollmair and Gamper, 2002). His concepts constitute the basics for the sustainable livelihoods approach and were further developed by the British Department for International Development (DFID). Since 1997, the DFID integrated the approach in its programme for development cooperation (Kollmair, 2002). The concept was later adopted by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development. The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development expanded the notion, advocating for the attainment of sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty alleviation (Balgis.*et. al*, 2005). The term ‘sustainable livelihood’ came to prominence as a development concept in the early 1990s, drawing advances in understanding of famine and food insecurity during the 1980s (Haida, 2009).

‘Livelihoods’ mean activities, entitlements and assets by which people make a living. In other words a ‘livelihood’ is a source of revenue or income or a source of living. A livelihood constitutes assets, activities and capabilities (Krantz, 2001). Assets therefore, are defined as not merely natural or biological (land, water, common property resources, flora, fauna), but also social (networks, participation, empowerment) and human (knowledge, creation by skills and physical roads, markets, clinics, schools, bridges) (Haida, 2009). The International Institute of Sustainable Development defines Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) as being concerned with people’s capacities to generate and maintain their means of living, enhance their wellbeing, and that of future generations (Balgis.*et.al*, 2005).

In recent years, the sustainable livelihoods approach has gained increased recognition among development practitioners and policy makers alike as the framework for understanding the multiple and dynamic dimensions of livelihoods (Balgis.*et.al*, 2005). Sporton and Thomas (2002) identify five elements of this framework. The first link is based on rural productivity. Livelihoods become sustainable if they can generate employment either through subsistence production or waged labour in activities that enhance self-worth of rural populations. The second link is based on poverty reduction. For the livelihoods to be sustainable they must address the causes of poverty (both qualitative and quantitative) thereby promoting greater equity access of capital assets. The third element constitutes enhanced capabilities and wellbeing, abilities to access and mobilise assets with more subjective experiences of wellbeing (feeling of self-esteem, security and happiness). The fourth element is based on the resilience of the livelihoods to short term stresses and the ability to recover from long term shocks. The fifth element is the sustainability of the natural resource

base which is the long term resilience of the natural environment to stresses and shocks. The depletion of natural resources beyond the capacity of a system to maintain the productivity may result in the long term depletion of stocks to the detriment of livelihoods (Sporton and Thomas, 2002).

The sustainable livelihood approach was developed to address the failure of previous approaches to community development. Its principles are; holistic, people centred, dynamic and sustainable development, working with people’s strengths and establishing macro-micro links and these principles are further explained in the following part (Salvestrin, 2006). Macro-micro link is the relationship between income inequality and mortality.

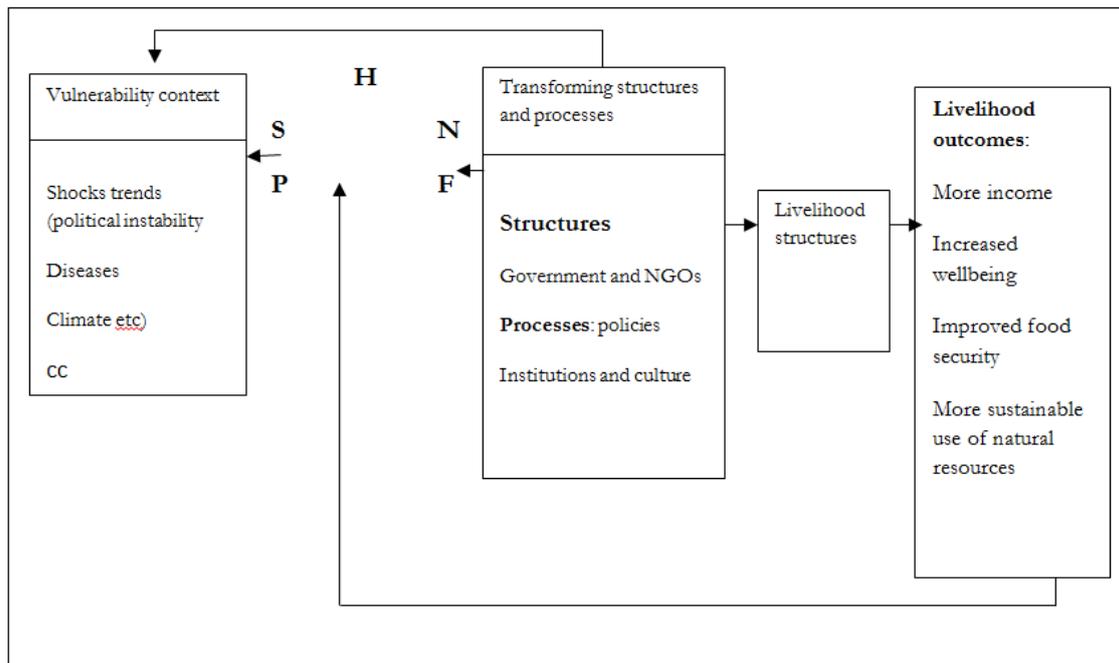
The conceptualisation of livelihoods in Binga and other rural areas of Zimbabwe by NGOs is imperative to understand how poor people live in the era of hyperinflation leading to the rise of food prices, droughts and political instability which threaten their survival. Apart from that understanding the livelihoods of people living in Binga makes it easier to learn how people cope considering that the district is prone to drought, with high a unemployment rate and high illiterate levels. Ellis (1998) views a livelihood as one encompassing income both cash and in kind as well as social institutions, gender relations and property rights, all vital to support and sustain a given standard of living. Social and kinship networks as well as access to and benefits derived from social and public services provided by the state make up and determine livelihoods (Ellis, 1998). Comprehending how people from Binga are constructing their livelihoods in the absence of most state and NGOs’ services and in the middle of the country’s economic meltdown continue to be a great concern. At the core of this study is to evaluate the NGOs’ poverty alleviation strategies looking at their applicability in the rural areas.

Figure 1 below shows that the livelihood of a person, household or community is comprised of assets, transformed by activities or strategies into outcomes. This “internal” relationship between assets, activities and outcomes is seen to be circular. All of this is taking place in the context of and influenced by the external environment (vulnerability context and policies, institutions and processes). According to the World Development report (2000 to 2001) as cited by Ludi and Slater (2008);

“Vulnerability measures the resilience against a shock or stresses; vulnerability is primarily a function of a household’s assets and insurance mechanisms and of the characteristics (severity, frequency) of shock.”

Figure 1 below shows that the actions of people, households and communities themselves have an influence on these external forces.

Figure 1. Sustainable Livelihood Approach Framework



KEY: P - Physical; P - Political; H - Human; F – Financial; N - Natural; S - Social

Source: Adapted from DFID (2001b:24) and Carney. et.al (1999:15)

From Figure 1, assets and economy are the backbone of all livelihoods as they influence the type of livelihood strategy a household may engage as well as the level of returns derived (Carney.et.al, 1999). Assets can be viewed as human, financial, social, natural and physical and all are important in the pursuit of various strategies (Ellis, 1998; Scoones, 1998). Each kind of asset produces benefits and has key indicators which are used to accomplish

livelihoods objectives (Thennakoon, 2004). The potential of assets to produce benefits or yields depends not only on the type and other assets but the external factors within or outside the household’s entitlements and capabilities (Ellis, 1999).

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Age of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	20-39	23	57.5	57.5	57.5
	40-60	17	42.5	42.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March 2012)

The respondents interviewed consisted of the youth and adults. As indicated in Table 1, 23 youth falling between the ages of 20 to 39 were interviewed. There were 17 elderly people ranging

from the age of 40 to 60. The reason for selecting this group of respondents was that NGOs have both programmes that target youth and the elderly of the society.

Table 2. Gender of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	15	37.5	37.5	37.5
	Female	25	62.5	62.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March 2012)

There were 25 females and 15 males that were interviewed (Table 2). Mostly, NGOs in Binga work with both female and male beneficiaries.

3.1.1 Level of Education of the Respondents

The low level of literacy was attributed to factors like lack of money to go to secondary school. Women

also mentioned that most parents favour to send male children to school and they view sending a girl child to school as a waste of money because girls become pregnant or get married and this means they do not plough back into their families. However, some may bring a once-off benefit in terms of *lobola* (bridal price) but this is not guaranteed.

Table 4. Employment Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Attending school	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Unemployed	35	87.5	87.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

Table 4 above shows that the majority of the respondents (87.5%) are not employed, probably, due to lack of skills, and others are old. On the other hand the minority of the respondents (12.5 %) were attending secondary level schooling (Table 3) and with others having their fees being paid by NGOs.

The reason for the high unemployment rate among the respondents is that they do not possess any skills which can make them employable. Most of the respondents mentioned that because they do not possess any skills, they find it better to stay at home looking after their families and livestock.

Table 5. Sources of Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Fishing	5	12.5	12.5	12.5
	Farming	33	82.5	82.5	95.0
	IGPs	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March 2012)

Table 5 above shows that a smaller percentage of respondents (12.5%) indicated that they depend on fishing from the Zambezi River for a livelihood. The majority of the respondents (82.5%) indicated that they depend on agriculture for a living (Table 5). The respondents that do farming mainly practice it at subsistence level and they mentioned that they need to be empowered with agricultural skills, where as those who are fishing do not have licences to do so, they also mentioned that they need to be assisted to get the licences. One respondent in Manjolo reported that, "*kulikabotu kujata baswi kulakukkala luzutu. Kuti ndajata baswi bingi inga nduzya ndajana mali yabana baccikolo*". This means that, "It is better to do fishing than being seated doing nothing. When I catch more fish I sell them and get school fees for my children". In places like Manjolo and Kabuba the majority of people (95%) are subsistence farmers. A smaller number of respondents (5.0%) rely on selling

sculptures and basket weaving. The respondents who depend on selling sculptures and baskets indicated that they need help with marketing their products.

3.1.2 Knowledge about NGOs

All the respondents (100%) knew well Save the Children (UK), CADEC and KMTC. The respondents agreed that these organisations came to them to introduce themselves. Again all the respondents (100%) indicated that Save the Children, CADEC and KMTC were operating in Binga for more than 5 years. Furthermore, all the respondents (100%) had more information about the projects for Save the Children, CADEC and KMTC. The respondents indicated that organisations like Save the Children (UK) and CADEC distributed food in the whole of Binga. They also indicated that KMTC distributed agricultural implements.

Table 6. Satisfaction by NGO Strategies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Satisfied	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Not satisfied	29	72.5	72.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

The majority of the respondents (72.5%) pointed out that they were not satisfied by the strategies implemented by NGOs whilst 27.5% of the respondents expressed their satisfaction about the strategies implemented by NGOs (Table 6). The main reason that were given by those who were not satisfied by NGOs strategies was that NGOs strategies do not address their needs. They mentioned that they need developmental strategies other than relief ones. The respondents both in Manjolo and Kabuba mentioned that they do not understand clearly the criteria used by NGOs to select their beneficiaries. They added that NGOs only select few people as their beneficiaries leaving the rest of the community members not helped. Moreover, the respondents mentioned that as a result of this, serious conflicts arise amongst community members especially between those who get the aid and those who are not beneficiaries. This was well explained by a respondent in Manjolo that;

“I am poor I have nothing. When NGOs officers came to our village they wrote other people’s names they said I am rich because my son is in South Africa I nearly died of hunger, every time I was told that my child is working, my name even to date does not appear in their books. Every time I ask myself, what these organisations are doing in Binga because they are not helping the majority?”

Apart from that, the majority of the respondents indicated that they are not satisfied with NGOs strategies in Binga because they are not sustainable. They mentioned that sometimes NGOs programmes are of great value to the community but they do not last for a long time. The respondents in Kabuba indicated that the farm implements distribution programme of KMTCC, is a very good programme but the fact that it did not last for a long time in their ward and only benefited a few people was worrying.

Table 7. How do You Conceptualise Poverty in Binga

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Poverty is lack of food and clothes	17	42.5	42.5	42.5
	Poverty is lack of infrastructure e.g. school	12	30.0	30.0	72.5
	Poverty is lack of empowerment	8	20.0	20.0	92.5
	Not sure what poverty is	3	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

A bigger percentage (42.5%) agreed that poverty in Binga is lack of food and clothes. The smaller number of respondents (30%) perceived poverty as lack of infrastructure and inaccessibility of social amenities as shown in Table 7. The respondents who disagreed that poverty is only lack of food and also mentioned that social amenities were more important than food distribution. Another respondent explained how she lost her child to malaria because she could not manage to send him to clinic. She said,

“My child got sick at night, his temperature was very high and he had a severe headache. To go to Lusulu clinic was very far and I do not have a scorch cart. Within a small time, my child died in my hands.”

In Kabuba they mentioned their serious threat is lack of clean water. The community members face a shortage of water; the whole ward has only two boreholes which are also 14 km to and fro other homesteads. During the dry season, the livestock only drink water thrice a week, the same applies to people, they also make timetables for bathing and sometimes do not clean their utensils after using them, which poses serious health hazards. In Manjolo they mentioned that though they do have adequate water, it is not clean because they get it from uncovered

wells. The respondents stressed that development in Binga is only going to be achieved by NGOs if they start assisting in building schools, hospitals, more boreholes and clinics. The respondents also said that poverty is being uneducated and lack of livestock especially cows to plough the fields. One granny in Manjolo when asked to explain poverty in her own views, she said,

“If you don’t have clothes, draught power and a mould board plough like me you are poor. Secondly if you are not educated and you are not employed such that you don’t have money to send your children to school, you are *poor*. In Manjolo there are few people who send their children to schools and who have got draught power.

3.1.3 Poverty Indicators in Binga

The respondents (100%) agreed that the shortage of hospital is a sign that there is poverty in Binga. The respondents mentioned that the whole district have got one hospital and is located far away from other wards which makes it to be inaccessible. Furthermore, they mentioned that lack of skills amongst community members which make them to be unemployable was also a poverty indicator. Again, they added that inability to send children to school

and lack of farm implements as well as lack of draught power are indicators of poverty in Binga. Respondents in Kabuba reported that their children

normally start going to primary school at the age of 7 because Kabuba or other primary schools are very far.

Table 8. Poverty Levels in Binga over the Past Five Years?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	7	17.5	17.5	17.5
	No	33	82.5	82.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

The majority of the respondents (82.5%) indicated that poverty in Binga is deepening because even the people who were better-offs of the community have joined the poorest of the community (Table 8). On the other hand a smaller percentage (17.5%) indicated that poverty has decreased in Binga for the past 5 years because NGOs like Save the Children are distributing more food, so people are no longer starving anymore. A respondent in Manjolo mentioned that; “nothing has improved so far. What I

have noticed for the past five years is that, the people who were better off, having joined the very poorest of the society, and I do not understand why”

The deepening and widening of poverty in Binga was attributed to the strategies that are implemented in Binga by NGOs. The respondents indicated that NGOs have been using the same strategies to deal with poverty in Binga and the same strategies are not impacting the lives of people positively.

Table 9. NGOs and Addressing Poverty in Binga

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	13	32.5	32.5	32.5
	No	27	67.5	67.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

A smaller percentage (32.5%) of the respondents mentioned that NGOs are addressing poverty especially by distributing food in Binga during times of drought. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents (67.5%) disagreed that NGOs are addressing poverty (Table 9). They argued that if poverty was being addressed by NGOs in Binga, people were going to be independent and empowered by now. The respondents gave an example about the fertiliser distribution programme that it is not addressing their needs. They mentioned

that CADEC has a programme for fertilizer distribution. Fertilizer is being distributed in Siachilaba Ward every year, the most arid ward in the district. The community members find the fertilizer to be of less importance to them as a result most people sell the fertilizer in Zambia. Respondents also mentioned about some cases whereby people immediately after getting food from CADEC or Save the Children or any other organisations involved in food distribution, they exchange it for alcohol or money.

Table 10. The Selection of Projects Implemented in Manjolo and Kabuba

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Consultation	11	27.5	27.5	27.5
	Not sure	6	15.0	15.0	42.5
	No consultation	23	57.5	57.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

The majority of the respondents (57.5%) indicated that NGOs just implement some of their projects without consulting them and that is the reason they are not addressing the needs of the poor. On the other hand a smaller percentage (27.5%)

indicated that NGOs do consult them before implementing their projects (Table 10). The respondents mentioned that NGOs rarely consult them before implementing a programme. They argued that, if NGOs were really consulting them

before implementing their projects, they were going to be able to know the real needs of the community members, who are their clients. The respondents

indicated that they were not quite sure about the criteria used by NGOs to select their strategies.

Table 11. Benefit Accrued from NGO Strategies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not benefited a lot	38	95.0	95.0	95.0
	Average	2	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

The majority of the respondents (95%) mentioned that they are not benefiting from NGO programmes because the same programmes are not addressing their needs. In Kabuba they indicated that programmes like food distribution are not benefiting them a lot since they produce more food on their own. The minor percentage (5%) of the respondents agreed that they are benefiting from the NGOs programmes, and these were respondents in Manjolo (Table 11). Most of them were elderly people who are no longer able to work on their own. Even the respondents in Manjolo highlighted that even if they need relief aid almost every year, they also need empowerment. The respondents pointed out that there was a linkage between the NGOs strategies and dependency syndrome in the district. They mentioned that continuous food distributions make them to be reluctant and wait for hand outs from NGOs everytime.

4. Questions for Key informants

4.1 Need for Improvement of NGOS Strategies

There was an overwhelming agreement by the respondents (100%) that NGOs' programmes need to be changed because the current ones are not fully addressing the needs of the people in Binga. They mentioned that most NGOs in Binga are duplicating the projects as a result their programmes lack diversity. They gave an example that, CADEC, Save the Children, and KMTC all have a programme of distributing seeds and fertilizer distribution. They stated that even though the NGOs keep on duplicating their project, little has improved as far as poverty alleviation is concerned. Considering the rate at which poverty is deepening in Binga all the respondents (100%) indicated that NGOs are not addressing the issue of poverty in Binga. They all mentioned that though NGOs are striving to deal with poverty in Binga, their strategies are not addressing the needs of the poor in Binga. Apart from that, the key informants indicated that NGOs in Binga are dealing with the symptoms of poverty and not its root

causes. They added that NGOs need to understand the history and root causes of poverty in Binga .

4.2 NGOs and the Poorest of the Poor in Binga

All the key informants (100%) indicated that NGOs do not manage to reach the poorest of the poor in Binga because of various reasons. They indicated that the poorest people mostly are left out of the NGOs programmes because of the inaccessibility of the villages they stay in. They indicated that especially during the rainy season, it is hard to reach some places because they are not linked with proper roads and the others do not have bridges, therefore, when the rivers are flooded no vehicles can reach such places. Again, it was indicated that in Binga the roads are poor with the majority being dust roads full of bad potholes; as a result it is also difficult for NGOs vehicles to travel on such areas. Consequently, NGOs choose a central place for the meeting which might not be central to other homesteads. Apart from that, the poorest of the poor were sometimes left out from the NGOs programmes because of the selection criteria of NGOs. They mentioned that NGOs solely depend on kraal heads who might sometimes not manage to write down the names of all the needy people. It was raised that mostly, NGOs do not give themselves time to do home visits to some of their clients who need special attention while such clients remain very poor. These include people living with disabilities, very old people, child headed households and sometimes female headed households. Failure to discover such people was mainly attributed to NGOs offices being located very far from their service users. They indicated that NGOs need to decentralise their offices in Binga. It was argued that, NGOs in Binga only have contact with their clients during food distribution time only. They also indicated that only the wards which are next to Binga Growth Point maintain regular contacts with NGOs and these included wards like Manjolo, Siachilaba and Sianzundu .

4.3 The Extent to which NGOs have achieved their Goals

All the respondents (100%) indicated that though NGOs are trying to intervene in Binga with their strategies; they are not achieving their goal of alleviating poverty. They added on that poverty in Binga remains a serious challenge to NGOs strategies.

4.4 Food distribution of social amenities in Binga?

All the respondents (100%) indicated that NGOs need to focus on social amenities like building hospitals, roads construction and schools. The reason being that most clinics in Binga are inaccessible, that the roads in Binga are very poor making it difficult for other places to be accessible, again the available schools do not have classrooms, books, electricity and laboratories. They all mentioned that shortage of hospitals and ambulances in the district poses a serious threat to the people especially during outbreaks of deadly diseases like malaria, cholera and dysentery. In addition, they indicated that shortage of hospitals and ambulances is also a threat to pregnant women as sometimes their pregnancies will be having complications. They added that the available clinics in the district are facing acute shortage of professional nurses and doctors. Some clinics are situated about 10 kilometres from other homes. All the respondents (100%) mentioned that they are not satisfied by the strategies that are implemented in Binga because they are more of relief aid than developmental aid. Both the respondents and the key informants mentioned that poverty is not lack of food or clothes only. They added on that, though there are

such cases where by the family lacks food and clothes and in most instances such households do not have assets like cattle, farming implements and are unemployed, hence they solely depend on hand-outs. They explained that poverty is the lack of farm implements, hospitals, schools, lack of clean water and poor roads. All the field officers and the key informants mentioned that NGOs strategies implemented in Binga need to be changed since they are not addressing poverty. They mentioned that NGOs need to understand the livelihoods of people in Binga. Again they argued that, NGOs should not have a monolithic view of different people in Binga because their understanding of poverty differs from one family to another. Their goal of poverty alleviation can only be achieved when NGOs understand the different livelihoods of people in Binga.

4.5 Perception of NGO officials

The project officers mentioned that NGOs in Binga focus on relief aid. They added on that while NGOs are providing relief they need to focus on developmental aid. They agreed that it is a fact that people in Binga need relief aid every year because of drought, but NGOs also need to take into consideration that Binga is one of the poorest district in the country, this means that Binga is also lagging behind in terms of development. They added on that NGOs need to venture into more developmental projects for sustainability. 25% of the respondents indicated that NGOs are sustainable, and 37.5% indicated that they are not and 37.5% were not sure (Table 12).

Table 12. Sustainability of NGOs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	10	25.0	25.0	25.0
	No	15	37.5	37.5	62.5
	Not sure	15	37.5	37.5	100.0
	Total	40	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Research (March, 2012)

4.7 Suitability of NGO projects in Binga

All the field officers and the respondents (100%) mentioned that most of the NGOs' projects are not suitable in Binga. They indicated that though some projects of NGOs are applicable in some parts of Binga, it is true that some of them are not applicable to other parts of Binga. The reasons being that NGOs do not do through needs assessment and that they do not monitor and evaluate their projects. Again they mentioned that it seems NGOs have different expectations from their projects and the same applies

to the community members. They indicated that NGOs view the issue of poverty as uniform across Zimbabwe because the same projects which are implemented by NGOs in Binga are the same with those implemented in Gwanda, Gweru, Masvingo, and Beitbridge.

4.8 NGOs' Strategies and their Problems

NGOs strategies were blamed for the deepening of poverty in Binga by respondents, the key informants and the field officers. The field officers mentioned

that sometimes these programmes are determined by the funders. They highlighted that whenever NGOs get funding the donor specifies what the NGO should do with the funding. Mostly, the donors do not interact with the service users hence they do not understand what exactly are the needs of the poor. They added on that the funders have a different understanding of poverty; they believe that poverty is the same across Zimbabwe. The field officers also indicated the problem of not interacting with the clients in most cases before implementing a programme as a contributor to the issue of poverty in Binga.

4.9 Dependency syndrome

The respondents agreed that there is dependency syndrome in Binga because people are no longer able to work for themselves knowing that NGOs like Save the Children will distribute food to them every year. They explained that NGOs do not develop the strengths of their service users in Binga and this makes their clients to develop dependency syndrome. People in Binga might be poor but it does not mean that they are not able to participate in their own development; they do have some strengths which need to be developed. They added on that, in Binga especially in places like Manjolo, Siachilaba, Sianzundu people are suffering from the dependency syndrome because they are not empowered and that their strengths are not developed. They added on that though Binga is arid, but with the little rainfall the district receives some people manage to cultivate crops enough for feeding their children while others on the other hand because of the dependency syndrome they do not trouble themselves to cultivate their fields. Such wards where people managed to cultivate food enough for their families included, Lubimbi, Kariangwe, Dobola, Kabuba and Pashu. Again Binga is rich in natural resources like hot springs and perennial rivers but the fact that the people are not taught how to manipulate these resources to be independent makes them remain dependent on NGOs.

4.10 Prevailing political situation

All the field officers agreed that the prevailing political situation in Zimbabwe has affected NGOs in Binga negatively. They mentioned that political instability affects the funding of their organisations and makes it difficult to meet the community members. They said normally when the political situation become tense they are forced to shut down temporary until the conditions stabilizes. This perception of the political situation in the country implies that NGO projects are also affected by the political environment in which they are operating.

5. Conclusion

Poverty alleviation and its ultimate elimination is an important development aspect. NGOs work in developing countries as a way of fighting poverty for the promotion of people's livelihoods. A number of strategies are employed to achieve the painstaking target of poverty reduction set in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Our research findings show that there is a lot that still needs to be done by NGOs as far as their strategies of poverty alleviation are concerned. Though they strive to alleviate poverty, NGOs' strategies seem to be lacking sustainability in many rural areas since they induce a dependency syndrome. The deepening of poverty in the areas currently being served by NGOs makes the strategies to be questionable. After an analysis of development efforts by NGOs in the Binga district of Zimbabwe, this paper recommends a policy shift by NGOs so as to improve their poverty reduction strategies by focusing on the sustainability of their interventions. The government of Zimbabwe can also create a conducive environment for NGOs so as to give them enough political economy space for them to design and implement effective poverty alleviation strategies.

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