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"Urban agriculture as a sustainable livelihood strategy in Khayelitsha, Cape Town: A critical appraisal of the *Harvest of Hope* marketing project"

M.Sc. Integrated Natural Resource Management

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Abstract

More than half of the world's population presently lives in urban areas. Increasing population growth, migration to urban areas, environmental degradation and lack of economic growth have contributed to higher levels of unemployment and less secure livelihoods. Urban agriculture is one of the strategies that tackle these problems and improve livelihoods in poor or disadvantaged communities. Often socio-economic and political situations are the reason for many people to pick up urban agriculture. However, stakeholders have identified multiple hurdles limiting urban agriculture success including unstable access to money, labour, land and water. Furthermore, institutional and governmental support including local policy concerning urban agriculture is lacking. Studies say that South Africa is able to provide enough food to feed its population; however, almost half of all South Africans live below the poverty line, are food insecure and experience malnutrition. Recent problems such as droughts have led to rising food prices, crop disasters and reduced production on agricultural land. Moreover, the impact of HIV/AIDS and rapid urbanization have placed people living in urban areas in a very difficult situation. The City of Cape Town is one of the largest urban centres in South Africa and has the highest annual population growth rate, resulting from natural birth rates and in-migration from other provinces

and abroad. All these factors have resulted in urban agriculture becoming an important tool to tackle socio-economic difficulties. This is especially the case in so-called “black townships”, which are characterized by a poor socio-economic situation and where people live under low standards and quality of life. People would prioritize different jobs over farming, but often there is no opportunity for them to work or generate any income. Therefore, urban agriculture is a survival strategy for many South Africans.

Abalimi Bezekhaya, a NGO in Cape Town, established a project called Harvest of Hope, which supports poor people from townships such as Nyanga and Khayelitsha to engage in urban agriculture to improve their livelihoods and quality of life. This is done through training and supply of farming equipment. The organisation created a development continuum, which describes the different levels farmers should go through in order to succeed. It starts with the production just for self-consumption and proceeds towards working with Harvest of Hope and selling vegetables to local restaurants in order to generate income, save money and eventually turn it into a job.

The present study triangulated diverse data sources and methods to reduce bias and advance the convergent validity of the results. Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and secondary research gave a big scope of information as well as data which was analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The study found that practicing urban agriculture in the townships of Cape Town is a primary livelihood strategy for a certain group of people. Applied by Harvest of Hope members it functions as a tool towards a sustainable and food secure livelihood. All capitals included in the Sustainable Livelihood Framework are enhanced, foremost the social and human capital. However, the degree of dependence of the farmers on the organisation is very high and brings concern of their sovereign activity in the future. In addition, the mission of Abalimi Bezekhaya shifted from food security projects and tight cooperation with home gardeners towards production gardens. Funding is defined as a major problem, which inhibits the organisation to shift back to home gardens, improvements of garden centres, and focus on food security programmes.

Keywords

Food security; Urban agriculture; Sustainability; Sustainable Livelihood Framework; Commercial Small-Scale Farming; Cape Town; Abalimi Bezekhaya; Harvest of Hope;

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