

Constructing the Food Security Institution: The Early Warning System and Disaster Management Policy in Zambia

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Abstract

In Sub-Saharan Africa, establishment of an early warning system and disaster management policy has been an urgent matter since the 1970s. In Zambia, the initial effort for enhancing national food security started in the early 1980s. In FY 2008 research, we focused on the historical process of establishment of food security institutions and the system of food aid by examining administration documents in several organizations and field surveys. The purpose of my research is to analyse the political and social process of building food security institutions in which several international organizations have been involved, especially focusing on the establishment of the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) and the Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC).

This paper firstly examines the concept of 'Food Security' that has a significant influence for development policies in Sub-Saharan African countries. The concept and its focus have been changed and sophisticated since the 1970s. Food aid is a main measure widely adopted to enhance the food security in the developing countries. Especially, the U.S. has continued to be the biggest supplier of food aid in the world. The recipient countries of food aid have increasingly shifted from Asia to Sub-Saharan Africa in the 2000s.

The research on the food security institutions in Zambia reveals that several organizations and systems for food security have been built with external funding since the 1980s, but many of them have not functioned effectively enough, partly because of lack of government initiative and ownership for those projects. In the process, United Nation's organizations, such as FAO, UNICEF, the World Bank and other donor agencies have played important roles as financial supporters. Nevertheless, those newly built agencies frequently stopped their activities or reduced their functions when the financial support ended. Since the establishment of the DMMU and VAC, the food security institution has been much improved, but the actual implementation still has many difficulties.

In the 2008 fieldwork, we observed the actual implementation of the government food relief programme and the distribution of maize grain in the Sinazongwe district, in which we found some problems concerning its delivery and distribution at the local level. Our research issue in FY 2009 will be focused on an intensive field study about those government institutions' activities and their impacts on local communities. By interviewing NGO staff, camp officers and local farmers, we will try to investigate the food relief programmes and the local responses to them. Through the research, we are expecting to reveal the social and political impact of early warning and disaster management activities on the resilience of local communities.

1. Introduction

In Sub-Saharan Africa, establishment of an early warning system and disaster management policy has been an urgent matter since the 1970s. In Zambia, the initial effort for enhancing national food security started in the early 1980s. This paper shows the process of building food security institutions in Zambia based mainly on the research from August to September in FY 2008.

The purpose of my research is to analyse the political and social process of building food security institutions in which several international organizations have been involved, especially focusing on the establishment of the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) and the Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC). These analyses suggest that United Nation's organizations, such as FAO, UNICEF, the World Bank and other donor agencies have played important roles in building food security institutions in Zambia.

2. Concept of 'Food Security'

The concept of 'Food Security' has a significant influence for development policies in Sub-Saharan African countries. The concept and its focus, however, have been changed and sophisticated since the 1970s (Pottier 1999: 11-18).

The initial concept of food security was to provide a solution to a global supply problem, focusing on the secure flow of basic foodstuff at stable prices. It was launched at the first World Food Conference in 1974. International societies had two concerns about the underperformance of agriculture in the 'Green Revolution' area, especially in South and South-East Asia, and the uncertainties caused by large-scale cereal exports to the Soviet Union.

In the 1970s, disasters such as drought in Sahel and floods in Bangladesh and north-east India occurred. The humanitarian crisis in such disasters has become a critical agenda in international development policy. But it was not until the early 1980s that a new perspective on food security emerged. Sen's approach on poverty emphasizing the 'access' to food encouraged the focus shift from supply to demand (Sen 1981). The FAO argued that, this meant ensuring 'that all people at all times [had] both physical and economic access to the basic food that they [needed]' (FAO 1983).

In the 1990s, the concept was sophisticated much by considering multiple elements on food security. The Rome 1996 declaration on world food security and action showed the widest possible approach, stating:

food security, at the individual, household, national, regional and global levels...exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO 1996: 3).

Pottier (1999: 13-14) argues that the Rome declaration reflects post-modern uncertainties and that the nutritional status of vulnerable groups, as the delegates agreed, is determined by pathways more complex than previously assumed.

3. Food Security and Food Aid: US and Sub-Saharan Africa

The definition of food security is now targeted to appropriate demand and access to food. Food aid is a main measure widely adopted to enhance food security in the developing countries. Among all, the U.S. has continued to be the biggest supplier of food aid in the world. In 2007, 44.2% of the total amount of food aid was delivered by the U.S., 24% by EU member states, 7.3% by South Korea, 5.2% by China, 4.0% by the UN, 3.6% by Canada and 3.2% by Japan. The U.S., donating 61.1% in 2000, is still the most influential contributor for food security policy nowadays.

At the same time, the recipient countries of food aid have shifted from Asia to Sub-Saharan Africa (INTERFAIS 2008). In 2000, 37.3% of the total amount of food aid was delivered to Asian countries, while 33.4% to Sub-Saharan Africa. Until 2007, the proportion of Sub-Saharan African countries increased to 53.7%, and those of Asia decreased to 29.4%. When we talk about food security in the early twenty-first century, we can never neglect two major actors, the U.S. and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The food aid programme of the U.S. is known as 'Food for Peace' (USAID 2004; Barrett & Maxwell 2005). It started in 1954, through the enactment of Public Law 480 (PL 480) 'Agricultural Trade Development Assistance Act', which became the world's primary food aid programme, providing approximately 106 million metric tons of food to three billion people in 150 countries over the past 50 years. The main purpose of PL 480 was for market promotion, surplus disposal, geopolitical and humanitarian assistance for Western countries. President Eisenhower said, 'Food can be a powerful instrument for all the free world in building a durable peace', and again, it was to 'lay the basis for a permanent expansion of our exports of agricultural products with lasting benefits to our selves and peoples of other lands' (USAID 2004: 6). Early in his administration, President J. F. Kennedy underlined the importance of PL 480 to the U.S. by renaming it 'Food for Peace' and placing it under the U.S. Agency for International Development. By analysing the U.S. policy of food aid, Barrett and Maxwell (2005) argued that because U.S. food aid programmes are captive to domestic political interests, their effectiveness as development tools is limited and thus use of food aid to achieve multiple objectives diminishes its ability to attain any one objective.

4. Food Security Institutions in Zambia

Among the Sub-Saharan African countries, Ethiopia has the longest history of organizing food security institutions. In 1974, just after a disastrous famine in northern Ethiopia, the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was established. It played an important role in distributing food, medicine and shelter for displaced people. Subsequently, their main task shifted from emergency relief to development programmes, for example, the promotion of conservation farming, mechanized agriculture and resettlement.

In 1994, the organization changed its name to Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) focusing on early warning and disaster prevention rather than development. In 2004, a newly organized office, the Food Security Coordination Bureau (FSC), took over the co-ordination of emergency aid that were provided by various donor agencies, such as NGOs and UN organizations. As international donors have increasingly had concerns about food security in

Africa, various institutions have been organized and their role has been expanded.

In Zambia, the initial attempt at enhancing national food security started in the early 1980s. Because most of these institutions were established with external funding, their ability to function effectively through time has been highly dependent on an uncertain funding environment.

As one of the first attempts, the FAO and the government of the Netherlands provided financial support for technical training to build an early warning unit for natural disasters (FAO 1990). The main focus of the early warning system was crop forecast and post-harvest monitoring. It was phased out in 1988 and restarted again as a new project with the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Central Statistics Office (CSO) and Meteorological Department (MET). For this, the FAO provided more than US\$ 2.4 million, but some reports have mentioned lack of budget to continue their task as well as the problem of vertically divided administrations (FAO 1991). Since the MOA and CSO conducted separate crop forecast and post-harvest surveys, their results were not shared and sometimes quite different from each other.

While the early warning office at the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MACO) was set up as the National Early Warning Unit (NEWU), UNICEF supported the CSO in organizing the National Food and Nutrition Commission (NFNC) in 1990, which conducted household surveys about nutrition intake in rural areas (SADC-FANR RVAC 2005). In 1991/92, southern African countries were hit by an extensive drought and the government of Zambia declared it as a national disaster. Many UN organizations and NGOs operated their emergency relief programmes and the government set a management committee for encouraging co-operation between donor agencies and separate administrative departments. Although the Food, Health, Agriculture and Nutrition Information System (FHANIS) were established in 1993 at the CSO with support from the FAO, it stopped its activities in 1998 at the end of the financial support.

In order to overcome the fragmentation of disaster management and build an effective unit, the government set up the Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) under the Office of Vice-President (OVP) in 1994. As an official provider of food crops, the National Food Reserve Agency (FRA) was established in 1995, which purchased crops from farmers and reserved them for emergency distribution in case of national food insecurity.

Even in the new century, droughts continued to occur every few years. In 2000/01 and 2001/02, Zambia was hit consecutively by severe droughts. Just after the drought, several international agencies and NGOs such as the WFP, WHO, FAO, UNICEF and CARE, supported the setting up of a Vulnerable Assessment Committee (VAC) aiming at conducting an extensive assessment of risk for local livelihoods hit by drought. Since then, this committee has continued assessments twice a year, usually a first rapid assessment from March to April, and a second in-depth assessment from May to June. It was in August 2002 that the VAC conducted an assessment for the first time. The published results are submitted to DMMU with suggestions of needed crops as emergency relief in each district. This committee then played a central role in disaster management and emergency food relief in Zambia. Moreover, their published report is now almost the only publication with official information disclosure about the food relief activities of the Zambian government.

In 2003, the Zambia Social Investment Fund (ZAMSIF), which was established in 1991 as the second social fund in the world and the first in Africa to support the government poverty reduction strategy, began to support the reconstruction of FHANIS. Furthermore, the World Bank started the 'Emergency Drought Recovery Project' from 2003 to 2005 providing US\$ 57.03 million to construct the institution for disaster management and preparedness. It is not very clear, but much of the fund might be used for improvement of DMMU and VAC institutions. Probably because of such huge funding support, it was in 2005 that the government of Zambia first published the 'National Disaster Management Policy' and finally started the systematization of disaster management institutions, even at the local level. The severe drought that occurred in 2004/05, which the government declared a National Disaster again in 2005, became the first case of disaster and relief programme under the official policy.

5. Outline of VAC and DMMU Institution and Operation

The two main actors of the food relief programme in Zambia, VAC and DMMU, have now played a significant role in cooperation with various organizations. Those players in disaster management range from government ministries and departments, donors, the private sector, NGOs to local community structures such as satellite committees at village level. The DMMU co-ordinates their activities and shares the responsibility among various stakeholders. Figure 1 shows the food aid flow and relations among those stakeholders.

In the first place, the VAC organizes survey teams and sends them to each district. Many international agencies, such as the WFP, FAO, NGOs and other government departments, such as the CSO provide their human resources as survey team members. At the in-depth survey on June 2007, for example, the VAC sent the survey teams to 45 out of 72 districts in the country. In each district, the survey team randomly selected fourteen Sample Enumeration Areas (SEAs), which consisted of 300–600 households, and in each SEA, twenty households were surveyed with a vulnerability assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 78 questions involving household demographics, productive asset ownership, cereal production in the previous season and current season, cultivated area, received food aid, income sources, expenditure patterns, food purchase, agricultural inputs, health, water supply, sanitation, coping strategy and so on.

Based on the result of the sample survey, VAC calculates the food needs and the number of affected persons in each district and submits the report to DMMU. The DMMU make arrangements with the organizations concerned and decide the amount of food aid to be delivered to targeted districts. The DMMU make a memorandum of understanding with local NGOs or other organizations that operate their activities in each district, and delegates the actual distribution of food, in most cases maize grain. The cereals, usually stocked at the FRA's granaries, are delivered to targeted districts, the local NGO or another organization to take the delivery to each satellite and distribution point in co-ordination with the District Disaster Management Committee (DDMC). A satellite committee usually consists of one representative from each village who decides the beneficiaries of food aid based on the government guidelines. The guidelines show that 20% of food aid should be distributed to the most 'vulnerable' persons for free, such as the aged, the

disabled, orphans or widows, and 80% to the 'vulnerable but viable' persons through Food For Work. The latter have to undertake work to receive food at the community project designed by the satellite committee, such as road maintenance or brick making to build a teacher's house.

In the 2008 fieldwork, we observed the actual implementation of the government food relief programme and the distribution of maize grain in the Sinazongwe district, in which we found some problems concerning its delivery and distribution at the local level. We will continue to analyse further, the process and its impact on local communities in 2009.

6. Research Summary and Further Issue

In FY 2008 research, we focused on the historical process of establishment of food security institutions and the system of food aid by examining administration documents in several organizations and field surveys. This research reveals that several organizations and systems for food security have been built with external funding since the 1980s, but many of them have not functioned effectively enough, partly because of lack of government initiative and ownership for those projects. Those newly built agencies frequently stopped their activities or reduced their functions when the financial support ended. Since the establishment of the DMMU and VAC, the food security institution has been much improved, but the actual implementation still has many difficulties.

Our research issue in FY 2009 will be focused on an intensive field study about those government institutions' activities and their impacts on local communities. By interviewing NGO staff, camp officers and local farmers, we will try to investigate the food relief programmes and the local responses to them. Through the research, we are expecting to reveal the social and political impact of early warning and disaster management activities on the resilience of local communities.

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