

Beitbridge Minority Farmer Communities and Climate Change: Prospects for Sustainability

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Abstract

Indigenous minority farmer communities in Beitbridge district of Zimbabwe are on the cutting edge of climate change and climate vulnerability. This chapter assesses through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions how these communities are triangulating their indigenous knowledge systems, government and NGOs initiatives to achieve sustainability. Results reveal that although the farmers are appreciative of external assistance through government and NGOs assistance, such assistance can only be sustainable provided it is built around their indigenous knowledge systems which they hold sacrosanct. The study therefore recommends more use of the abundant natural resources in Beitbridge and The district's competitive advantage is a rich livestock district. The community identifies itself with these resources, so all developmental endeavours should coalesce around these resources for sustained social, economic and environmental growth as a cushion against the climate change phenomenon and associated threats. All such efforts should be community driven rather than being imported from central government or NGO headquarters or country offices. The resilient and hardworking qualities of these communities need not be destroyed by food aid and free farming input hand-outs. Instead, these qualities should be utilised to drive community development initiatives for household livelihood sustainability.

Keywords: climate change, Beitbridge district, indigenous minority farmer communities, Maramani, community sustainability, CAMPFIRE

1. Background

Climate change through natural and anthropogenic forces has drastically changed the earth's climate over the past century worsening key challenges for global food production [1]. Climate change impacts, which are expected to be mainly negative, are likely to be felt mostly by the already vulnerable communities in economically less-developed countries. Most developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas outside the United States of America and Canada are generally poorly equipped both financially and infrastructurally which makes them more vulnerable to climate change impacts [2]. The effects of climate change are alarming enough in themselves, for instance, droughts, burning temperatures, more frequent hurricanes, worse floods and new plagues of diseases.