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## YOUTH REACT NEGATIVELY TO FOOD INSECURITY AMID CLIMATE CHANGE IN CHIPINGE DISTRICT OF ZIMBABWE

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the response of youth in Chipinge in face of climate change 's effect on food insecurity in the area. The qualitative research informed by desktop analysis provides empirical evidence that youth in Chipinge district have lost hope in their potential and district ' s capacity to guarantee food security due to adverse changing weather patterns over the previous two decades namely, cyclone Eline and Idai. Chipinge' s climate is the key at changing the narrative at hand as it has proven to favor cash crop plantation and small grain production for example, tea, coffee macadamia nuts, sorghum and millet. The study took Nyerere and Paulo Freire approach to educate and conscientise youth on food security and climate change. Youth have been recommended to form communal collaborative, joint ventures and adopt agricultural insurances, whilst devolution and implement policy to support youth in farming should be considered by government and policy makers.

**Keywords:** *Youth, Climate change, food insecurity, cash crop, small grains, Nyerere and Paulo Freire approach, Chipinge district*

### INTRODUCTION

Climate change comes along with a legion of threats generally on food security i.e. food production and its availability and lack thereof. The inter-dependence of men and the environment make societies prone to threats posed by long term changes in weather patterns detected over a period of time known as climate change (Burroughs, 2001). Society rely more on the natural resources in the environment such as land for agriculture, mining and industrialization as livelihood survival mechanism hence succumb to the latter. These activities directly and indirectly contribute to food availability in the society hence the need to safeguard the environment. Researchers have noted that climate change is an inevitable global phenomenon that includes extreme weather events such as drought, flood and hailstorm (Mudeka and Mandirahwe, 2017). Looking at Zimbabwe an Agriculture based economy, climate change has hit a sensitive nerve of the sub saharan country which in governace and politics is bleeding causing untold suffering of unemployment, poverty and hunger . Meanwhile, the duty of protecting the environment and move to adapt to climate change lays on every human beings ' shoulders.By large, this research is meant to urge the youth in Chipinge to be practically involved in efforts to curb climate change threats towards food production and avaliabilty.

As the future guardians and the largest population dividend, youth have a huge task on their shoulders to ensure humanity survival despites threats like climate change that may lead to human extinction due to poverty and hunger. The research focuses on Chipinge but the lessons are not limited only to the area of study nor the youth of Chipinge only. Negative approach to climate change, environment protection as well as food insecurity among youth has become a cancer in the region.In that light, youth across Africa have been called up to take up responsibilties to shape the Africa they want that is an Africa that is desired by its own not deserted by its own (Ighobor, 2018).Agricultural wise, Chipinge is taken for granted since its climate is not favourable to maize the staple crop in Zimbabwe instead its climate is more suitable for small grains like millet and sorghum which are not largely preffered by Zimbabweans. More so, Chipinge has vast plantations of cash crops like bananas, tea, coffee and recently macadamia nut which are doing well in the humid climate. The odds of Chipinge ' s climate boosting food security in the country is high since climate change has made it impossible for high production of maize in the past years. However, most youth in Chipinge have remained admant to ensure food security through full participation in suitable agriculture in the area such as



millet, sorghum, bananas, tea, coffee and macadamia nuts. Perhaps the youth are reading from the wrong menu as the rest of Africa seems to be doing on tackling climate change effects (Murwira, 2020). The research adopted Nyerere and Freire Paulo approaches to liberate the mind and conscientize the youth respectively.

## BACKGROUND

Climate change effect has not spared an inch of Africa's territory posing huge threats on its food security while making it more difficult for the continent to reduce poverty and hunger UN's SDG(s) 1 and 2 respectively. Evidently the recurrence of intense droughts and flooding is now a norm in the Horn of Africa and West Africa ravaging farming as well as fishing communities in coastal cities from Ghana to Benin (Kuwonu, 2019). Kuwonu further notes that climate change has turned Sahel region into a desert due to prolonged droughts. Unfortunately, Africa might end up unable to feed itself despite the fact that she has approximately 30% of earth's remaining mineral resources, three quarters of the world's arable unused lands and over 60% of its population.

Southern Africa used to be praised as the bread basket of Africa with South Africa being the hub in trade, Namibia and Malawi with its fishery, Zambia rich in coal, Botswana with diamonds and cattle ranching, while Zimbabwe engaged in all forms of agriculture ranging from horticulture, poultry, cattle ranching, maize, cotton and tobacco farming (NewsDay, 2018). However, the past two decades Southern Africa has been turned into a bread begging region with most of the countries struggling to feed itself due to climate change. Notably the water table has gone below capacity causing water crises due to prolonged drier spells for example in 2018 Capetians went for days without water as dam around Cape Town dams were below 13.5% (Tafirenyika, 2018). The region was badly affected by the El nino and La nino effects resulted in loss of cattle, crops and human resources in the last 5 years. Of late, Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe have lost and injured a several hundred of people with over 1.9 million on the region affected (The Humanitarian, 2006)

Chipinge is a district located in Manicaland province on the eastern part of Zimbabwe closer to Mozambique has not been spared. In the year 2000 cyclone Eline hit Zimbabwe, Chipinge was among the most affected areas by this cyclone leaving many displaced, others in need of food and area in extreme poverty (Chatiza, 2019). Recently cyclone Idai and el Nino left a trail of physical, emotional and economic destruction in Chipinge again. Such natural disasters induced by climate change are a double blow to an already drought stricken area such as Chipinge. It has an altitude of 1131m and has a population of over 25 214 people. The average annual temperature in Chipinge is 18.7°C. The rainfall averages around 1 133mm per annum (Harris et al, 2001).

Despite the climate change short comings, Chipinge's climate favors tea, bananas, macadamia nuts, and coffee plantations. Apart from these plantations it accommodates tradition grains such as millet, sorghum and rapoko which are drought resistant crops. The agricultural capacity of Chipinge cannot be reemphasized if small grain fail they can always fall back to the produce in the plantations. For instance, an estimated 4 584 hectares are under Macadamia in Chipinge. The district has potential to double hectares in five years, given adequate financial and material support (Chinzou, 2018). Youth therefore, have remained adamant by the call to be the pivot for food production in Chipinge while in the face of erratic climatic conditions such as cyclones and el Nino. The role of youth in food security is essential given that they have the energy, knowledge and skill all that is required is support from various stakeholders.

Nonetheless, the Nyerere and Paulo Friere approach adopted in the research to further youth empowerment involve giving skills that liberate the mind and make the youth aware of their traditional energies respectively. Nyerere posits that one should not teach people how to grow beans but people should be taught the nutritional value of beans while Friere is of the idea of conscientisation (Mulenga, 2010). The approach will allow youth to think out of the box towards sustainable development by finding better ways to protect



their environment and guarantee food security. Moreover conscientisation of development theories like bottom-up approach will encourage despaired youth to do more from the grassroots levels not only to expect change to come from the top e.g. government or donors.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Chipinge district is an area rich in cash crop production and traditional small grain but is one of the drought prone areas of Zimbabwe. However, youth in the area have turned a blind eye to the effects of climate change in the area despite the potential Chipinge has in its natural setting. There is more that the youth can do to mitigate climate change effects as leaders of now and guardians of tomorrow. Convinced with the yawning gap between the youth and the environment, the researcher, had the urge to bridge the gap through the article.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative methods were used informed by desktop analysis. The preference for the qualitative approach is justifiable given the nature of the article which explores life and experiences from the subjects' point of view. Qualitative research involves empirical material use and collection such as case study; personal experience; introspection; interviews; textual interpretation of problematic moments and meanings in individual lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) on blogs and the internet in general.

### **YOUTH REACTION TO FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN CHIPINGE**

Many youth in Chipinge district are unmoved in harnessing development potential in the area amid climate change. The research through virtual interviews and desk research gathered various reasons behind the position by these youth. The government is not fully supporting the youth projects in the area, many are not land owners, and youth themselves have lost hope in the area after a series of natural disasters. Furthermore, the researcher through synopsis analysis noted that the youth are accustomed to handouts as well as maize as staple crop while most are not pro-farming as they view it as traditional.

The youth don't have the capacity to fully utilize their land that is those few with pieces of land. The types of crops in Chipinge require advanced machinery or labour especially with crops like tea, coffee, bananas and macadamia nuts. In most cases the youth who have access to land don't have large pieces to operate on as well as the labour or machinery to embark on cash crop farming even on small scale. For example tea farming requires lots of labor, fertilizer and machinery (Dube, 2014). More so, youth focus on traditional small grains is not significant as some don't take farming seriously but pride themselves on ownership of farms that produce nothing towards food security hence making youth high risk cases to government assistance schemes like command agriculture and government input program.

Furthermore, youth in Chipinge live in constant social and environmental fears. The youth have been accustomed to maize as it is the staple crop thus they fear to lead the change of the country's staple crop hence small grain farming is not seriously done. After cyclone Eline, el Nino effects and cyclone Idai their other fear is the possibility of another natural disaster to strike again. Understandably, the youth have lost hope in their area for that reason they are reluctant in investing much of their energy, knowledge and skill into ensuring food security as well as minimizing effects of climate change in Chipinge. The fears have done no good as they have triggered an impulsive get rich quick mindset among youth preferring illegal artisanal mining (chikorokoza) that does more damage to the environment over agriculture. Agriculture takes at least 4-5 years till it becomes profitable thus patience and consistence is valuable for cash crop farming for example macadamia nuts need 4-5 years to reach competitive value (Manica Post, 2020) .

The political environment in the country has also contributed in Chipinge youth folding arms on climate change as they have more focus on the need to change the political system (Zimbabwean Independent, 2019). Politics of the stomach has made society to be selfish and poor as Africans. In Chipinge district food handouts by government and organisations has become the norm of the day however, the distribution is questionable. The Platform for Youth Development (PYD) in Chipinge has observed that politicizing of food



aid after the cyclone Idai has negatively affected women and children (Platform for Youth and Community Development Trust, 2019). Food aid is necessary for emergency cases but in the long run it seeds a syndrome of dependency in the society and this is the problem that the youth in Chipinge have since they are accustomed to food aid.

## **RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION**

The impact of climate change in Chipinge is devastating thus calls for combined effort between communities specifically the youth and the policy makers. Devolution, good governance, unity of purpose and appreciation of small grain through adopting traditional ways like communal collaborative (Nhimbe), would ensure food security even in this period of adverse climate change effects. However, youth's positive response to food insecurity in Chipinge is of essence for sustainable food production and mitigation of climate change effects.

Firstly, devolution will push provinces to be self-reliant and secure their own food through harnessing fully their areas as well as their potential (Ali, 2019). Looking at the agricultural capacity of Chipinge, the district can actually produce traditional grain for other provinces, be the biggest exporter for macadamia nuts, coffee and bananas in the country if it is well harnessed. In turn such effort will plough back to the betterment of Chipinge creating youth employment, improving disaster alert systems and even boosting disaster funds. This will go a long way to reduce food insecurity in the face of rapid change of weather patterns causing floods and cyclones that threaten food production and availability in the district.

More so devolution would also trigger good governance in the area through rural integrated development. Rural integrated development is a holistic engagement approach of all sectors of development from individual, ward, district, province up to national level (Geyer, 2006). Good governance involves managing of institutions and resources to address society affairs for development (Kaufmann, 2005). Good governance through the rural integrated development approach will benefit Chipinge youth to be supported in their various sustainable projects that mitigate the effects of climate change from different levels starting off at the grassroots levels in wards, village, district, province and such development may influence up to national level or beyond. As well, good governance will ensure politicians are accountable towards to community resources promoting sustainable development in the process. Henceforth, issues like politics of the stomach will be at minimal thus people will vote for leaders that are not rhetoric towards initiating development.

Furthermore, unity among youth is highly recommended in Chipinge. Unity on its own brings about development (Chingwaramuse, 2018). Youth in Chipinge like youth elsewhere usually avoid forming development syndicates due to the fact that they are disunited sometimes for various reasons. However, if the youth could unity for purpose of development, Chipinge would achieve more with its natural resources and youth. For instance, some youth have access to funding, some have pieces of land, and some have knowledge and skill, if youth could combine efforts food insecurity and climate change effects would reduce greatly.

In as much as we are being Europeanized youth should not look down upon some traditional practices such as communal collaborative (Nhimbe). In the process of modernity we have stepped on our cultural practices instead of carrying them forward, embrace them and make them relevant to our time. Such practices reemphasize the need for unity of purpose as we glance across the Zimbabwean boarder, the Ujamaa of Tanzania; Umurenge Saccos of Rwanda have made communities in these countries build better relations among each other, boosted agriculture in these countries.

Agricultural insurance to young famers might encourage young farmers to invest their skill, labour and small pieces of land towards food security. Agricultural insurance covers agricultural risk such as droughts, floods or diseases that may affect the agricultural outcome (FAO, 1992). For example in Ghana as well as India insurance has transformed smallholder farmers' planting behaviour, inspiring more investment in their



farms (Ramm & Steinmann, 2014), Chipinge farmers may adopt such insurance policies to spread the risk of these natural disasters at the same time it boost their energies towards professional farming that is sustainable.

In conclusion, climate change is a global phenomenon and its effect like food insecurity hit hardest on already vulnerable rural communities like Chipinge District in Zimbabwe. Youth in Chipinge have folded their arms allowing food insecurity to worsen in their area. Chipinge is an area that has been strike by various cyclones in the country hence it ' s marked as a drought prone area relying on food aid from government and NGOs yet it has the capacity to feed itself regardless of the climate change effects. Nonetheless, the youth have a role to play despite threatening effects of climate change given that Chipinge is an area rich in coffee, banana and macadamia nuts production as well as traditional grains.

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