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The Role of Information and Knowledge in Poverty Eradication in Africa: a case study of Namibia

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Abstract

This paper starts by exploring and defining poverty reduction in African society and discusses how poverty affects different groups in society, namely: women, Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), youth, rural and urban slum-dwellers.

Different mechanisms used to address poverty alleviation are briefly assessed including policies, and access to resources. The role of access to information and knowledge forms the final part of the presentation and deals with specifically how information stimulate and promote the economic and cultural changes essential for the sustainable development.

1. Introduction

The paper makes an attempt to explore and define poverty reduction in African society, focussing on Namibia, and discusses how poverty affects different groups in society, namely: women, Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), youth, the rural and urban poor. The various mechanisms used to address poverty alleviation are highlighted including policies, access to resources and the influences of cultures. The role of access to information and knowledge forms the final part of the presentation and deals specifically with how information can stimulate and promote the economic and cultural changes essential for the sustainable development of Africa.

2. Definitions of Poverty Eradication

Poverty is a complex phenomenon and can be defined from various perspectives. The World Bank identifies four perspectives. The first perspective is whether individuals in society have enough resources to meet their needs. Another perspective is inequality in distribution of income across the population. The third perspective is consumption patterns between different groups in society. A fourth perspective is vulnerability which refers to risk of falling back into poverty (World Bank, 2001)

Another definition from FAO defines the concept as follow “Poverty is the lack of, or the inability to achieve socially acceptable standard of living...” (FAO 2006). This definition introduces an element of comparison and the notion that poverty may depend on what is socially acceptable or unacceptable.

In both the above cases, poverty reduction is meant to increase resource levels of poor individuals in society. In some cases, however, it is a matter of reducing gross inequality in society. Often poverty is seen in terms of the percentage of income spent on food, the higher the percentage the poorer the individual. Poor individuals are also vulnerable and they can fall deeper into poverty for example in cases of drought or floods which have destroyed their subsistence agricultural and livelihood base.

In the case of Namibia – the Government of Namibia defines a household as poor if 60% of its expenditure is on food, and a household is defined as extremely poor if its 80% expenditure is on food consumption. Using this definition, 28% of the households in Namibia were defined as poor and 9% as extremely poor, according to the 2004 Namibia Household Income and Expenditure Survey (Namibia, 2004; Jauch, 2012).

Table 1: Poverty in Namibia according to different measures

Source	Measure	% of Namibians living in poverty
Household subsistence level (University - Port Elizabeth)	Basket of essential goods and services (N\$ 399.80 person per month in 2004)	82%
Crude International poverty line	US\$ 1 per day	62%?
Namibia Household and Expenditure survey	At least 60% of income spent on food	28%
Review of poverty and Inequality in Namibia (2008)	Basic needs (N\$ 262.45 per person per month in 2004)	28%

Source: LaRRI 2006; Jauch 2012.

Gross inequality is often utilized as an indicator of poverty. A recent UNDP Human Development Report indicates that Namibia has one of the highest inequalities in the World with a gini-co-efficient of 0.625. A comparison with other countries in the sub-region and beyond (Botswana 0.61, Haiti 0.595, and South Africa (0.578) clearly shows that Namibia suffers from inequality more than her neighbours (UNDP 2012)

The implication of these figures, apart from demonstrating the complexity of poverty, is that information and knowledge support to achieve poverty eradication should aim to impact on and improve the lives of the 28% of the population which are categorised as being poor and 9% of the population who were categorised as extremely poor.

Poverty affects different groups differently. Below we provide a brief overview on how different groups are affected by poverty.

3. How Poverty Affects Different Groups in Namibian Society

3.1 Gender based poverty

Several writers have identified the marginalisation of women as a major cause of poverty in African society, and Namibia is no exception (Jauch 2012). Several indicators bear witness to gender discrimination. Unemployment for women is higher than their male counterparts in both rural and urban settings (53% and 38%) compared to male unemployment (41% and 26%) respectively. Female headed households also have a lower per capita income than male headed households (N\$ 7,528 and N\$ 12, 248) respectively (CBS 2006, Jauch 2012).

Only a few studies have been done in Namibia on poor women and the type of information they seek to overcome poverty. One such study by Mnubi-Mchombu (2013) on information needs and seeking behaviour of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and their caregivers found that, information was very useful to women who were the main caregivers of OVC in Namibia. More than 66% of caregivers were unemployed. And these who were employed 79% earned less than N\$499.00 (U\$49.90) per month. Most of the respondents from Ohangwena, a rural community, managed to register their children for grants (8; 22%) with the help of the information, they managed to get food, blankets and clothes (8; 22%). A few (7; 19%) respondents managed to get financial assistance, and 6 (16%) respondents managed to register with the Red Cross and get birth certificates. 3 respondents (8%) received helpful information on how to handle their children, 3 (8%) were able to send their children to school, and 2 (5%) respondents got medical attention for their children.

In Khomas region, which is an urban area, 3 (30%) respondents got helpful information on how to handle their children, and 3 (30%) respondents were able to get birth certificates. Only 2 (20%) respondents managed to register their children with the Ministry of Gender to get grants, while another 2 (20%) got financial assistance.

The importance of accessing information and knowledge in a poverty environment, therefore, cannot be underestimated.

3.2 Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)

A report by Namibia's National Planning Commission (2010:47) points out that, poverty and the impact of HIV/AIDS pandemic is increasing the number of Namibian children at risk of being orphaned or vulnerable.

Two studies, conducted outside of Namibia, have categorised child vulnerability into five groups, which include: a) Survival vulnerability, which includes lack of basic care, poor health and inadequate nutritional food, b) Economic vulnerability, which includes loss of income in the family, resulting in difficulties in acquiring medication and the loss of property, c) Academic vulnerability, which refer to school dropouts, lack of funds, uniform to attend classes; d) Psycho-social vulnerability- which refers to post traumatic stress disorder, endless grieving, caring for the sick people and siblings, and d) Exploitation vulnerability-lack of protection which results in abuse like child labour or worse forms of abuse and exploitation (Clacherty, 2008:27 and United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, 2006:86)

A study by Mnubi-Mchombu (2009 and 2013) on information needs and seeking behaviour

of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and their caregivers found that, information was very useful in assisting OVC to solve their survival needs problems. For example, OVC from Ohangwena (rural area of Namibia) 68 (18%) respondents indicated that the information helped them to get services which they never knew of before, while 54(14%) managed to get basic necessities like clothes, shoes, blankets, and school uniforms which improved their standard of living. Twenty two (6%) respondents were able to apply for exemptions from paying school fees (as from 2014 Primary Education is free for all), while 21 (6%) respondents were able to register with Namibia College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) to repeat grade 10 and 12 examinations. Sixteen (4%) managed to get financial assistance, and 11(3%) learned about HIV/AIDS transmission and child care.

In Khomas region (urban area), 50 (30%) responded that the information helped them to get basic necessities such as food, clothes, shoes, soap, school uniforms and blankets. Thirty (17%) of the respondents were able to apply for school development fund exemptions and three (2%) respondents said that they learnt more about their rights. Again what stands out in these findings is the role of information and knowledge in meeting the daily challenges of life for the various groups which are vulnerable and poor.

3.3 Youth

There is a high level of poverty among young people in Africa because of lack opportunities in the labour market and the absence of comprehensive social protection programmes (UNFPA and AU 2011). Young people in Namibia, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, have few opportunities and unemployment is generally high. In a recent government report it is revealed that Namibians aged 15-19 experience the highest rate of unemployment 56.3 percent, followed by 20-24 age group (48.5%) which means the majority of youth are unemployed (Ministry of Labour 2013: 4).

Writing from an Asian context, several specific areas of intervention have been identified which have the potential to provide a wide range of benefits to young people including poverty reduction. The Asian Development Bank (2011) has singled out five such areas, including:

- i) Designing appropriate *labour market* policies and programmes to promote employment and the protection of workers;
- ii) Introducing social *insurance* programmes to reduce risks of unemployment, ill health, disability and work injury;
- iii) Creating a safety net by providing *social assistance* and welfare service programmes for the most vulnerable groups with no other means of adequate support;
- iv) Addressing vulnerability and the possibility of relapsing into poverty at community level through *micro and area-based schemes* to address vulnerability at the community level, including microfinance, and social funds and programmes to manage natural disasters; and
- v) Ensuring healthy growth and development of children through *child protection programmes*.

The UNFPA and AU (2011 p.15) on the other hand, have added to this list of potential intervention areas, namely i) curricula review in higher education institutions to equip young people with specific skills required by a country's labour market ii) create academies to

develop and strengthen entrepreneurship, apprenticeship and internship programmes to provide school leavers with practical experience required by economy and labour market.

3.4 The rural and urban poor

In most countries in Africa, there is an income disparity between rural and urban areas, and Namibia is no exception. The poverty map of Namibia shows clear economic inequality between rural and urban areas. The average income of rural areas stands lower than the average income in urban areas (N\$ 6,139 and N\$ 17,898) respectively (CBS 2006). The National Planning Commission (2008) has also found that about 85% of poor households are located in rural areas. The gap in average rural-urban incomes has been cited as the main driving factor in rural urban migration leading to the growth of informal settlements and shanty townships in both Namibia and elsewhere in the Third World. The recent arrivals from rural areas are likely to form the bulk of the urban poor with similar characteristics to their rural counterparts.

The poverty figures of Namibia cited below (Table 2) indicate disparities between the regions of the country. Regions which are predominantly rural (Okavango, Ohangwena, Oshikoto, Hardap) also suffer from higher levels of poverty compared to regions which have big urban centres (Khomas, Erongo, Oshana).

Table 2: Regional differences in poverty levels by % of population in poverty

Region	Average	Khomas	Erongo	Oshana	Karas	Kunene	Otjozo	Zambezi	Omaha	Omusa	Hardap	Oshikoto	Ohangwena	Okavango
Poor %	27.6	6.3	10.3	19.6	21.9	23.0	27.8	28.6	30.1	31.0	32.1	40.8	44.7	56.5
Severely Poor %	13.8	2.4	4.8	7.8	12.5	13.1	15.8	12.5	17.5	12.8	21.9	16.6	19.3	36.7

Source: A Review of Poverty and Inequality in Namibia. Windhoek: National Planning Commission, 2008.

The above outline indicates poverty in Namibia has a several dimensions – including gender, youth, orphan hood, and rural based. One implication of this finding is that provision of information related to poverty should, as far as possible, prioritise the identified groups and establish their needs and information use behaviours for poverty eradication information.

Each one of the groups has information and knowledge needs implications and how access can be improved to reach the targeted group (s). The data on rural and urban poverty disparities implies that for information and knowledge to support poverty eradication, there is great need to prioritise rural areas which often suffer from information poverty as well as economic poverty.

4.1 The Major Causes of Poverty

In the context of this paper aimed at discussing access to information and knowledge which is capable of addressing fully poverty alleviation and eradication in Africa, it is important, first to briefly look at the causes of poverty at the continental (Africa) level and after that at

country (Namibia) level. The causes of poverty have been identified by various authors. In a 2010 publication, titled '*Why Africa is Poor and what can Africans do about it*', Gregg Mills states that 'the primary reason Africa is poor is because their leaders make this choice' (Mills, 2010:12). On the broad theme of poor leadership and weak policies, Mills identifies the following specific reasons on why Africa is poor:

- i) The varying abilities of government to translate opportunities, arising from technology and market forces, development and prosperity has resulted in widening inequalities within and between countries.
 - ii) Over reliance on primary commodities exports because of wide fluctuations in prices.
 - iii) Low productivity among people in all sectors because of poor health, low skills levels and inefficient land use.
 - iv) Rich natural resources which are mostly used to enrich elites leading to corrupt practices and diverting development focus.
 - v) Private sector not independent but part of an elite linked system of rent seeking.
 - vi) Hostile attitude of many governments towards the private sector, except where they benefit directly.
 - vii) Leadership problems including lack of democracy and culture of patronage and big men chieftain style of ruling.
 - viii) Africa's low population density, lack of critical mass of skilled people to participate in development and urban bias in development to the neglect of rural areas.
 - ix) Land holding structures which discourage entrepreneurship and lack of individual ownership of land and mortgage schemes.
 - x) Failed or fragile states which failed to take responsibility to rebuild their own countries but expecting external donors to provide resources and to rebuild their country.
- (Mills 2010)

The reasons given by Mills are not all applicable to Namibia, but a few are relevant, for example, problems of land distribution where Africans still cannot have access to land because of former apartheid policies of the previous colonial government. The ability of government to strategically translate opportunities to prosperity of the population, and overreliance on primary commodities, mainly minerals, is certainly also a problem in Namibia. The IFAD (online) report confirms the negative impact of apartheid on present day economic imbalances in Namibia, which denied the black population access to land and other productive resources and basic infrastructure, while white settlers had exclusive access to large areas of productive land and strong government support for farming and business activities. IFAD gives other reasons for the high incidence of poverty in Namibia as expensive and slow land redistribution. Namibia has a predominantly arid climate which is prone to land degradation and desertification. In addition, the rural economy is held back by low demand for domestic products mainly because of competition from South African based products (<http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/Namibia>).

4.2 Efforts to Address Poverty in African Countries – the case of Namibia

The Namibian Government efforts to address poverty have been wide ranging since independence in 1990. Interestingly, Namibia is also categorised as a middle income country in spite of the high number of people who are poor. Several government reports and researchers have written on how poverty can be eradicated in Namibia (World Bank 2009- Namibia country brief; Jauch 2012, National Planning Commission 2011). Below is a summary of the various strategies to reduce poverty as presented by one local researcher (Mwinga 2012).

- 1) Affirmative Action Policy whose aim was to include the previously disadvantaged groups (blacks and women) into the formal labour market and address inequities in the labour market;
- 2) Reform of the Namibian educational and training system, including strengthening vocational training;
- 3) Expanded government capital expenditure (infrastructure spending), public works and the recently introduced targeted (TIPEEG) Programmes;
- 4) Private Sector Support: In order to expand the size of the economy and create jobs, government introduced various tax incentives and tax breaks targeting private sector, especially manufacturing sector;
- 5) Enterprise development through government tender procurement system biased towards previously disadvantaged Namibians and rural based entrepreneurs;
- 6) Creation of the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN) to close the financing gap by providing financing to SMEs and finance large projects that cannot be undertaken by commercial banks.
- 7) Communal farming support: Government has since 1990 introduced various interventions such as affirmative action agriculture loan schemes administered by Agriculture Bank of Namibia (AGRIBANK) targeting communal farmers;
- 8) Youth employment schemes such as youth credit support, national youth service,
- 9) Community based employment creation programs such as creation of conservancies, and other community projects;
- 10) Promotion of SME and entrepreneurship support through provision of finance, skills and other support to emerging entrepreneurs administered by various ministries and agencies;
- 11) Subsidies and employment creation through self-employment;
- 12) Black Economic Empowerment: The aim was to build a new class of black entrepreneurs and as part and parcel of overall economic restructuring and employment promotion;
- 13) Rural development initiatives: Increases in budgetary allocations to transform the relationship between formal and non-formal sectors, rural farm and non-farm activities (Mwinga, 2012).

The picture which emerges from the brief discussion above is that causes and solutions to poverty alleviation are complex and any implementation programmes are carried out in an equally complex socio-economic environment as respective countries try to eradicate poverty among their citizens. In the case of Namibia, one can detect multiple interventions at the level of policy (Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes-PRSP), education and training reforms, creation of institutions e.g. Development Bank of Namibia, SME Bank, rural development initiatives, as well as efforts to address historical policies of the past apartheid regime.

Suffice to point out here that each of the interventions has vast implications for access to the right information and knowledge at the right time for all the players involved in poverty eradication. It is important perhaps to point out that information and knowledge should not only target the poor but also those who are working with and for them to eradicate poverty. As one participant put it in a World Bank Institute study:

“The challenges are working through the value chain. If you only support one area of the chain, it won’t be successful. If you support throughout the chain from the farmer to the consumer, it’s going to work.” Devangura Mmari, Managing Director, Tan Dairies Ltd. (World Bank Institute 2013)

5. Information and Knowledge Support for Poverty Eradication

5.1 Information and knowledge for sustainable development

Several writers from South Asia have identified sustainable development as a very important factor in the provision of information and knowledge support for poverty eradication.

Talisayon and Suministrado (2008:7), for example, note that the sustainability movement which originated from the 1992 Rio Summit had agenda 21 in which it was concluded that sustainability depends on preservation and enhancement of three forms of capital: social capital (community cohesiveness and trust, relationships, local values and local support system. Natural capital (refers to the natural environment), while and economic and financial capital (refers to economic benefits, participation and control and ownership.)

Talisayon and Suministrado (2008) argue that successful knowledge for poverty alleviation interventions should make use of both the tangible and intangible assets found in a poor community. In the view of the authors, sustainable development should be participatory, people centred, and with what the community already has in the form of financial, human, social and physical and natural assets and structures which affect livelihoods.

In support of the above framework, FAO (2006) argues that development workers should draw on five categories of assets or capital to explore the various dimensions of development and the means for achieving it. They are:

- Natural capital. Access to land and to resources such as trees or animals allows people to invest in productive processes.
- Social capital. Relations among people are shaped by histories of interactions which regulate further interaction, including their understanding of their rights over resources
- Human capital. Development and poverty eradication requires good health, nutrition and access to medicine. Moreover, development require skills and knowledge, which are in short supply when access to and information is weak or non-existent.
- Financial capital. People need money to make long-term investments but access to financing is often problematic for those who live in rural and remote areas. Most commercial banks will not lend money without collateral.
- Physical (built) capital. Buildings, roads and tools provide the security, mobility and capability that allow people to produce, transform, exchange and consume goods.

Each one of these dimensions has an information and knowledge implication, particularly social capital which enable knowledge sharing, human capital which refers to capacity to acquire and absorb knowledge and financial capital which is a frequent constraint in development situations where the poorest do have sufficient information on available financial resources they can utilize with the limited collateral at their disposal.

Of great relevance to this paper, is the World Banks proposed knowledge based development model which consist of four pillars, namely education, science & technology and innovation, ICT infrastructure, and economic incentives. The multipronged approach of the World Bank

can be monitored through the use of a tool called Knowledge Assessment Methodology (KAM) to be able to monitor and compare performance of countries across the four pillars.

In conformity with the above framework, the Asian Development Bank (2007) has adapted the World Bank model of knowledge for development and added a sustainable development dimension, which is applicable to poverty eradication. The modification has resulted in an expansion of the four pillars to include a fifth pillar which is social and natural capital elements.

5.2 How Access to Information and Knowledge Stimulate and Promote Sustainable Development

The World Bank (1998) Development Report subtitled Knowledge for Development increased awareness of the role of knowledge for development in the world. The vital role of information and knowledge in human development has been hailed by many agencies in the world. The World Bank (1998) and PANOS (online), Asia Development Bank (2007) have all noted that all human development is based on the acquisition, dissemination and use of knowledge. Poverty eradication, therefore, would also be one area which would benefit tremendously benefit from access to relevant and appropriate information (FAO, 2006).

The report gives an example of how important knowledge can be in the development of countries is cited in the *World Development Report* of 1998/99. Ghana and the Republic of Korea started off with almost the same gross national product (GNP) in 1960. Thirty years later the Korean GNP had risen more than six times. Half of the gap could be explained in terms of traditional factor inputs, the other half, according to the World Bank report was attributed to “knowledge” as a factor of production.

The first condition is that information needs should be accurately mapped out with the full involvement of all stakeholders.

Table 3: Self-assessed knowledge of resettled farmers, 2005

Topic	Self-Assessment				
	Very poor	Poor	Moderate	Good	Very Good
Technical Skills					
Breed characteristics	10	21	36	23	7
Breeding programmes	13	19	36	16	14
Animal health	21	29	24	10	13
Marketing processes and cost calculations	23	19	26	14	16
Grading of livestock and skins	47	19	13		
Financial skills					
Farm budgeting and cash flow	23	14	34	19	6
Financial management	33	19	23	14	9
Financial record keeping	11	9	30	29	16
Practical skills					
Basic tractor and implement management	44	10	9	16	16
Motor mechanics	56	10	20	6	4
Electricity	56	13	17	1	6
Welding	73	9	6	1	6

Building construction	59	13	9	6	9
Fence making	30	16	19	17	14
Maintenance of water supply	53	10	9	10	10

Source: Werner and Kruger, 2007: 29

The study by Werner and Kruger (2007) was aimed at establishing the level of knowledge and skills of resettled farmers (who practice communal farming) which would enable them to transform their farming to commercial farming which is more profitable. It is quite apparent that the level of knowledge deficit is high in most areas which are core to commercial farming. Table (1) provides a summary of the findings. Nearly half of the farmers interviewed had poor to very poor knowledge in technical areas of livestock farming, while more than a third rated their own knowledge in financial management as very poor or poor. Practical skills areas of knowledge were rated as poor or very poor by nearly three quarters of respondents. Kruger et al (2007:29) conclude that these finding clearly indicates there is a great need for information support and skills capacity building.

Mchombu (2012:83) study conducted in Katutura, one of the poorest parts of the City of Windhoek, found that the information needs of poor people to address poverty eradication differed slightly between adults and young people. Whereas adults indicated b information needs as follow i) small business and income generating opportunities ii) practical information on how to eradicate poverty iii) self-employment opportunities iv) agricultural knowledge to start agricultural projects. For young people, their greatest need for information was i) employment opportunities ii) financial information ‘to know where to get loans’ iii) skills and know how to manage finances iv) hygiene information. It was evident that while the adults wanted information to enable them to set up their own small business, young people preferred information to enable them to join the employment sector. Agriculture information needs were not prominent in this study, partly because it was done in an urban context. Indeed other studies done in rural areas had found there was a high level of information needs on all agricultural related matters (Chambers 1983; Mchombu 1992)

An important precondition for successfully achieving poverty eradication is the participation of poor members of the community in the search for a solution in order to achieve not only information and knowledge support but also capacity building.

Other efforts to provide access to information to address poverty in Namibia include the recently established Regional Study and Resource Centres being set up by the Namibia Library and Archives Services. The functions of the Regional Study and Resource Centres are elaborated upon in the website of the Millennium Challenge Account- Namibia (MCA-N), the funding agency:

Ministry of Education (MoE) will provide a full-time adult education officer from the region to the RSRC, in order to provide relevant programmes based upon community needs and employment potential. This effort will complement the new information collections to be provided in areas such as legal resources, self-help skills development, and micro-enterprise development....([Http://www.mcanamibia.org/proj_activities.php?type=SubActivity&id=65&subactivityname=](http://www.mcanamibia.org/proj_activities.php?type=SubActivity&id=65&subactivityname=)).

The Regional Study Resource Centres which is a new initiative, therefore, has a strong developmental and poverty eradication orientation from the new generation of resource centres which have replaced the former public and community libraries.

A study conducted in Kenya by Odini, Otiike, and Kiplang'at (2012) found that women in Vihiga District constantly encountered or experienced varied information needs provoked by work activities in the area of agriculture, business, health, transport, and job / career information, among others. Unfortunately, women information needs could not be satisfied by existing information systems and services.

Women relied on oral channels or sources of information, for example neighbours, relatives, and friends. These preferred sources of information could not provide timely, accurate, relevant, and adequate information needed for socio- economic development. Available sources did not contain information on socio – economic development - therefore had no impact on poverty alleviation. Women, therefore, remained powerless in their daily endeavours to work effectively and alleviate the poverty that afflicted them.

5.3 Examples of application of knowledge on poverty eradication from different countries

There are many examples of the impact of information and knowledge on rural development and poverty alleviation from all over the world. Below we discuss three such case studies to highlight the impact of information and knowledge provision towards poverty eradication and human development. It is important to state however that these examples are by no means the only ones as there are plenty of such initiatives world-wide.

Case study 1: Knowledge transfer on from commercial farmers to communal farmers in Namibia. One of the challenges facing Namibia is to upgrade the communal livestock farming to make it as productive as commercial livestock farming. Commercial cattle farming in Namibia is renowned for the excellent meat it produces and has won many accolades internationally including the opportunity to export livestock products to the European Union and Asian market.

In contrast, communal livestock farming however has been struggling, with frequent outbreaks of livestock disease, poor quality livestock products and a strong cultural view of livestock which results in animals being kept for prestige, well past their prime, rather than for commercial value. The communal livestock keeping practices have led to overstocking, overgrazing, land degradation and low value to farmers who are mainly black farmers.

The Meat Corporation of Namibia (Meatco) company developed a project on knowledge sharing, supported by Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, entailing a selected group of commercial farmers providing mentorship to a selected group of communal farmers in order to gain skills, knowledge and change their attitudes and practices in livestock farming and adopt modern commercial farming practices. The main reason for choosing this form of knowledge transfer was that the best practices in commercial farming knowledge and skills are available in the country and will not cost much to organise knowledge transfer forums between commercial farmers, who are predominantly white and communal farmers who are predominantly black farmers.

The main instruments of knowledge sharing have been study visits by communal farmers to successful commercial farms, workshops and one-to-one mentorship. The outcomes have been positive and the government is looking at expanding these types of change oriented knowledge transfer activities to accelerate change over from communal farming to commercial farming (Gizaw, Mentorship Project coordinator, personal communication, March 2014)

Case study 2: Knowledge transfer from India to Tanzania on milk production. Tanzania has a large herd of cattle although poverty is high among rural dwellers including cattle

keepers. Tanzania also has a high child mortality rate mainly because of low nutrition. In order to address these twin problems, the Tanzanian government sought to improve nutrition and incomes in rural areas by restructuring its agriculture sector, particularly the struggling dairy industry.

Tanzania wanted to learn best practice on how to establish a dairy industry by transferring knowledge from India which was able to increase its milk production five times to become the world largest single milk producer. The World Bank funded a knowledge transfer project between Tanzania and India aimed at improving the performance of Tanzania's dairy sector. The complex knowledge transfer project aimed was aimed at promoting favourable policies, incentives and efficient dairy supply chains, as well as improving the operational efficiency of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDDB) and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA).

The knowledge exchange instruments included video conferencing between Indian and Tanzanian officials to plan the exchange, 10 day expert visit to Tanzania by Indian officials from the National Development Dairy Board which was followed by a study tour to India by Tanzanian officials from Ministry of Agriculture, National Dairy Board, dairy producers and processors and distributors to learn how India had transformed her dairy industry. A follow up video conference was held to consolidate on what was learnt and a report was written on lessons learnt.

The main outcomes were: i) Enhanced knowledge and skills ii) Improved consensus and teamwork iii) implementation know-how. Based on lessons learnt from India and knowledge transfer, Tanzania has started to make progress in revamping and improving its dairy industry sector and addressing both child malnutrition and poverty eradication (World Bank Institute 2013).

Case study 3: Poor people benefitting from information received from cell phones.

Another example of the application of information to poverty eradication can be found in the story of poor illiterate women in Bangladesh (Halima Khartuun) who obtained market information through cell phone technology which empowered her to get a higher price for her eggs:

I always sell eggs to middlemen. In the past, whatever prices they offered, I accepted because I had no idea about going prices of the eggs....last week, the middle man came and desired to pay me 12 takka per hali (four units).. keeping him waiting, I rushed to check the price through the village phone. The price was 14 takka per hali of eggs in nearby markets. I came back and refused to sell to him at the lower price... After a brief haggling, we agreed to buy and sell at 13 takka per hali (World Bank 2001, p 73).

5.4 Implementing knowledge provision for poverty eradication

Started in the 1990s, Knowledge management to date has matured and has developed a wide range of tools and instruments which can be utilized to create and deliver knowledge for poverty eradication. The World Bank Institute for, example, has developed an excellent manual to share their practical experience and know how on the area of knowledge exchange for development. The India - Tanzania knowledge exchange project is part of this laudable international effort. In their online publication titled *The Art of Knowledge Exchange*, the World Bank Institute (2013 p. 43) has proposed a wide range of instruments for knowledge sharing and exchange. Among the instruments are the following: i) Community of Practice –

group of people who interact regularly to learn from each other ii) Knowledge Jam – conversation between doers and knowers to bring to the surface required knowledge iii) Competition challenge – a contest to support creation of new ideas and innovation iv) Conference – formal event involving big number of participants to share ideas around a topic v) Multi-stakeholder dialogue and consolation – a facilitated conversation bringing together multiple stakeholders to share different perspectives to a problem leading to deeper understanding and consensus vi) Study tour – a visit by an individual or group to a site where they can learn new ideas vii) Expert visit – sending an expert from a knowledge providing country to a knowledge seeking country to assess current situation and viii) Twinning – bringing together two institutions, one of which is more advanced for the less advanced one to derive a positive learning experience ix) Knowledge fair – an event which provides a face to face opportunity for participants to learn and share experiences and innovations x) Workshops – an opportunity for participants to attend a learning event where they solve problems together.

In addition to the broad knowledge sharing strategies discussed above, when targeting groups of poor people with low levels of education, many governments and Non-government organisations have applied behaviour change communication (BCC) strategies of information and knowledge delivery. The behaviour change communication of information strategies has been used successfully by organisations such as UNICEF, FAO and Red Cross to mention a few. Many African governments have also used behaviour change communication to deal with agriculture and health matters, for example, to prevent the spread of Malaria, spread of cholera and infectious diseases. A good example is found in Namibia's Ministry of Health and Social Services stop cholera campaign leaflets to deal with a cholera outbreak which occurred early in 2014 (Ministry of Health and Social Services, n.d)

In its simplified form, behaviour change communication follows a sequence of step which involve supply of new knowledge, approval of the new way of doing things, expression of intention to act on the new ideas and knowledge, and practicing or adopting the new way of doing things. The final element consists of advocacy to maintain the new behaviour (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009).

6. Concluding remarks

Africa is a continent which is developing rapidly. However besides the rapidly developing sectors, are sector which are socially and economically stagnant where some of the poorest people in the world still earn a meagre livelihood. These sharp contrasts encounter at continental level are mirrored at individual African country level. Namibia, the case study country of this presentation, is unfortunately not an exception to this dual development model. She is on the one hand, rated as a middle income country, with an average per capital income of US\$ 5,610 per year, yet almost 60% of the population live in some form of poverty.

The use of information and knowledge for poverty eradication is not a new undertaking, but it requires to be done systematically and in a strategically planned way if poverty is to be rolled back and eliminated from the African continent. Part of the systematization of information and knowledge support to eradicate poverty should include a clear understanding of poverty as complex, multidimensional phenomenon involving many stakeholders along the economic production value chain. The information and knowledge needs of all stakeholders found in the value chain has to be fully addressed if the required outcome in fighting poverty and deprivation are to be achieved. Ultimately successful information and knowledge support has to be carried out within a broad framework of sustainable development and multi-stakeholder in scope.

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