

Social Capital and Agriculture Intervention Programmes: The Transformative Potential of Pfumvudza in Ward 24, Masvingo South, Zimbabwe

Changa, M.

Abstract

Agricultural interventions are increasingly sought for in a world devastated by climate change. Such interventions help to cushion farmers from the adverse impacts of climate change and thus, improving and transforming their livelihoods. Successful adaptation to, and implementation of new approaches to farming such as Pfumvudza/Intwasa, however, requires interaction and engagement with the social capital endowments of the local farmers in order to avoid duplicating failed, top-down rural development paradigms. Deploying social capital theory and based on a qualitative methodology, this study examines the role of social capital in agricultural innovation with particular reference to the Pfumvudza/Intwasa farming model implemented in Zimbabwe. Through unstructured interviews, focus group discussions and quasi-participant observation, the study found that social capital and agricultural innovation are inextricably linked. The article demonstrates that Pfumvudza benefited a lot from grassroots networks, organisations and interactions with far-reaching positive effects on rural development. Bonding capital at village level played a key role in reducing the costs and labour associated with the agricultural intervention. At the same time, linking social capital in the form of government agencies and non-governmental organisations provided the much-needed technical know-how. The study also shows the 'dark side' of social capital which relates to norms that are conservative and resistant to change. It recommends interfacing as a solution to negative social capital where the views and interests of various stakeholders are counterpoised.

Keywords: Agricultural Innovation, Climate Change, Social Capital, Pfumvudza/Intwasa, Zimbabwe