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Response scenarios of households to drought-driven food shortage in a semi-arid area in South Africa

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Abstract

The goal of this research report was to profile the coping strategies of households in Thorndale to the effects and impacts of the 2002/2003 drought. Thorndale, the study site is prone to drought and thus experiences severe drought almost every year. The rationale behind the selection of Thorndale for the study was based on this fact, in addition to the fact that the study area is relatively unstudied. The study's major findings included inadequate agricultural extension service delivery in the community, while the drought's impacts were economic, social, nutritional and health, food shortage, environmental and wildlife. The most significant and largest impact was water shortage. These impacts led to increased household dependency on the natural capital component of livelihoods in addition to prostitution and the community's institutional arrangements. The main constraints households encountered in response to the drought's impacts included the lack of employment opportunities, financial and infrastructural problems among others. It is recommended that with respect to food security, efforts should be made to ensure the trickle down effect of national level assessment of vulnerability on annual basis to rural households in South Africa's drought-prone areas including Thorndale, in order to improve timely and practical solutions to issues of food insecurity. Furthermore, it should be ensured that the national level benefits of early warning systems trickle down to the local and community levels including Thorndale. Additionally, agricultural extension service delivery in the community needs to be improved.

Keywords: drought, rural people, perception, food shortage, vulnerability, responses, livelihoods, institutional arrangements, adaptation, resilience