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**LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN ZIMBABWE.
THE CASE OF MAGASO VILLAGE, MUTOKO DISTRICT IN ZIMBABWE**

BY

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

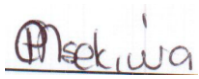
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DECLARATION

I, Pamela Musekiwa do hereby declare that this work with the exception of quotations or references which have been attributed to their authors, is entirely my own and has never been submitted elsewhere.

Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. Musekiwa', is written over a horizontal line.

Date

10 April 2013

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Research Project to my mother, Mrs E. Nyashanu for the endless support she has offered to me during the entire study period. Despite all the ups and downs since the death of my father in 1995, she has been by my side to see me progress in my academic career. I love you mum, thank you for bringing me up.

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Special thanks also go to my family members who provided physical, social and emotional support to rejuvenate my energy for the study. Distinction goes to my mother Mrs. E. Nyashanu with her everlasting love, my siblings Godwin, Privilege and Matthew and also to my uncle Mr. C. Chimwanda, for his guidance. I also wish to express my gratitude to my friends Ngoni, Gail, Rejoice, Fungai and Serbia for their emotional support.

ABSTRACT

This research study explored livelihood strategies that female headed households adopt in Magaso village of Mutoko district in Zimbabwe. The study intended to achieve the following objectives: (i) examine the existing livelihood strategies of female headed households (ii) explore the various challenges faced by female headed households and (iii) establish the support mechanisms in place for female headed households to cope with life challenges .The literature reviewed in the study was drawn from several researchers, and the study was shaped by the strengths perspectives and the liberal feminism perspective.

The study was qualitative in nature and used interviews to collect data from fifteen (15) female headed households. The data collection process used an interview guide. The research employed a qualitative research design in the form of a case study cum a phenomenological study design. Data was analysed qualitatively using the content thematic data analysis which used interpretive approaches and presentation is textual rather than statistical.

The study findings were the following: engaging in subsistence farming was found to be the main livelihood activity of the female heads; engaging in home gardens; exchanging labour for food; involvement in business; reliance on temporary employment from different agencies ;reliance on handouts from government and other bodies; and household heads sanctioning child labour that compromises school attendance. Moreover, these female heads faced numerous difficulties ranging from emotional, social to financial problems that resulted in worsening the condition of women, and hence validating feminization of poverty

among them. Several support mechanisms were discovered to be available for the female heads but they fail to produce to fruitful results to the lives of the female heads.

The study made the following recommendations: mainstreaming gender education from childhood stage; efforts aimed at job creation; financial empowerment through setting up of micro schemes for rural women amongst; seeking the services of agricultural extension services to the female head farmers; improving the social services delivery in Zimbabwe equitably across genders and strengthening informal strategies to improve women's social capital.

Lastly, the study concluded that little is being done in terms of policy formulation to make the support structures responsive to the female headed households especially in rural areas, hence the need for sustainable development through empowerment.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

'A' Level	Advanced Level
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AMTO	Assisted Medical Treatment Orders
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CSO	Central Statistics Office
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GOZ	Government of Zimbabwe
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Office
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
MDG	Millennium Development goals
MWAG-CD	Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
'O' Level	Ordinary Level
PASS	Poverty Assessment Study Survey
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
WARD	Women in Agriculture and Rural Development

WFP	World Food Programme
ZHDR	Zimbabwe Human Development Report
ZIMVAC	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

Gender issues including female headed households have become the concern of the international community, rational governments and NGO's. In many parts of the world, including the developing countries, there has been a steady increase in number of female headed households (Schatz, Madhavana and Williams, 2011) due to HIV/AIDS, migration, amongst other reasons. Even though reasons for this trend are geographically and historically determined, much of the concern surrounding the female headed households assumes a link between growing numbers and the feminization of poverty. This discourse suggests that female headed households are the "poorest of the poor" and in various forms of intervention (Chant, 2003). Female heads in developing economies face a triple misfortune; difficulties in generating income, difficulties in child-rearing and vulnerability to economic, political, social and environmental crises (Winston, 2007). Increasing social problems of the female heads have become an ever-present reality to the public and private welfare organisations (Chiripanhura, 2010).

A high proportion of these households are found to suffer immense poverty whose impact on the social and economic aspects to a country is real (Chant, 1997). A reduced capacity for income generation and growing risk of serious illnesses are likely to increase the vulnerability of the female heads to fall into poverty, regardless of their original economic status, unless comprehensive and effective social policies are in place (Chant, 2003). In Zimbabwe, the loss of employment and the unstable

economic situation has left female-heads vulnerable to poverty (Horrell and Krishnan, 2007) especially those in the rural areas due to marginalization.

The concern about the impact of poverty and the persistence in the deterioration of the female headed households in rural areas led the researcher to focus on this study. Although lots of work has been undertaken to investigate the impact of poverty on women in general (Hunter et al 2003), very few have explored female headed households' survival strategies in their everyday experiences and lives (Mate, 2001) in rural areas. Horrell and Krishnan (2007) conducted a research on female headed households in Zimbabwe and focused more on poverty embedded in the female headed households. Chiripanhura (2010) focused on poverty trap and livelihoods options in rural Zimbabwe.

According to Central Statistics Office (C.S.O, 2002), women in Zimbabwe constitute about 51% of the population, with women in female headed households constituting 33 % of the Zimbabwean population. It is generally hypothesized that female headed households are more likely to be economically deprived and to lack the proper emotional environment for psychosocial development in children hence feminization of poverty. Feminization of poverty in female headed households in Zimbabwe is due to the fact that the country faced an economic liberalisation and Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) during the period of 1990-1997 and the crisis period of 1997-2008 (GOZ and UNICEF, 2011). During this era, Zimbabwe experienced economic collapse, political instability, and a near-collapse of public services. The welfare of women suffered as households were pushed into poverty (Muzondidyaq, 2009). The economic situation was further worsened by an unprecedented drought in 1992-1993 (Bracking and Sachikonye, 2007). A gender analysis conducted in 2005 of

Poverty Assessment Study Survey (PASS, 2005) showed that at the national level, poverty incidence was higher among female headed households (68 per cent) than male-headed (60 per cent) (GOZ and UNICEF, 2011). Female headed households were the least able to deal with the protracted crisis and some are still adjusting (UNDP, 2010).

It is therefore critical that a study like this one unearths all the prevalent factors that continue to make the life of many rural based female-heads in Zimbabwe appalling. The information will help the policy makers and other development practitioners in the fight against feminization of poverty and also to make inroads in the new fight against feminization of HIV/AIDS (UNDP, 1995; Kang'ethe, 2009, 2011a) and other factors that dehumanize the female heads. This would also be a welcome gesture and a score for the government of Zimbabwe. It may also be a process of bridging the economic gap between men and women as espoused by many national and international policy environments on gender empowerment, equality and equity (Kang'ethe, 2011b).

1.2. The Research Problem

Zimbabwe like other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa is affected by the problem of female-headed households. Female heads are living in a rapidly changing environment that present them with many problems and pressures ranging from domestic work to the difficulties arising from the changing structure of the family and the community (Horrell and Krishnan, 2007) as well as the ever changing economy of Zimbabwe. They are bound together by the facts of their tremendous work burdens. They perform physically heavier work and work longer hours, hence less accessibility to development (Kiwanuka, 1991:12; UNDP, 1995). According to the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP, 1995), this worsening status of women has created the concept known as the "feminization" of poverty (UNDP, 1995; Kang'ethe, 2009) and those in the remote rural areas are the most vulnerable (Baden and Milward, 2000). The state of the feminization of poverty among the rural women needs to be addressed and a study like this whose objective is to find out how these women adopt survival strategies is topical, timeous and urgent.

1.3. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The main goal of this study was to explore what the female-heads in Magaso village of Mutoko District in Zimbabwe are doing for the survival of their households. The objectives of the research were to:

- (i) Describe the existing livelihood strategies of female headed households
- (ii) Explore the various challenges faced by female headed households
- (iii) Establish the support mechanisms for female headed households to cope with life challenges

1.4. Research Questions

The paper answered the questions: what are the livelihood strategies used by female headed households in Magaso village. The following were sub questions geared towards answering the main question:

- What are the livelihoods strategies implemented by female headed households for their survival?
- What challenges do female headed households face?
- What support mechanisms are to be put in place for female headed households to cope with life challenges?

1.5. Significance of Study

The major aim of this study was to investigate the livelihood strategies female headed households use as well as explaining out challenges that they face in life. Establishing the strategies that female headed households use is vital as it can prompt the government, NGOs and the community to work towards helping them ameliorate their economic hardships. Highlighting the livelihood problems is critical as it sensitizes the government, NGO's, Social Workers, development workers and the community at large to understand the female headed households' problems and challenges, and possibly work towards addressing them. The policy makers can also benefit as this research can help them come up with strategies to curb poverty in female headed households as well as address other effects that are dehumanizing to the female headed households.

1.6. Defining concepts

The concepts that need to be defined include female headed household, de-jure, de-facto and feminization of poverty. The aim of clarifying these concepts is to have conceptual meaning as well as operational meaning in the study.

1.6.1. Female headed households

Katz (1991) referred to a female head as a woman who is raising a child on her own without a husband or partner. Meanwhile, Chant (2003), refers to female head as "situations where an adult woman (usually with children) resides without a male partner (or, in some cases, in the absence of another adult male such as a father or brother)". This study has adopted the definition by Chant (2003).

1.6.2. De-jure female headed households

Female heads in the de-jure category are those who never got married and those that are legally or permanently separated from their partners or husbands (Tiruwork, 1998; Zarhani, 2011). This study adopts this definition.

1.6.3. De-facto female headed households

De-facto female heads are those whose partners or spouses are temporarily absent or women that play dominant economic roles in the family though their partners reside with them (Tiruwork, 1998; Zarhani, 2011). This research adopts the definition by Tiruwork (1998) and Zarhani (2011).

1.6.4. Feminization of poverty

This is a concept that indicates the preponderance of poverty by women relative to their male partners. It is a gap in poverty between men and women. Feminization of poverty has been used to mean three distinct things: that women have a higher incidence of poverty than men; that their poverty is more severe than that of men and that there is a trend to greater poverty among women particularly associated with rising rates of female headed households (SIDA ,2001 ,2010). This research adopts this definition.

1.6.5. Livelihoods

Livelihood activities fall within a broader framework of sustainable livelihoods. They are what the rural poor do to survive and make a living when they do not have jobs (Helmore and Singh 2001:4). Activities can be divided into on-farm and off-farm livelihood activities. On-farm activities for livelihoods include cultivation of crops such as maize and vegetables, herding, hunting and gathering, while off-farm activities

involve wage labour, trading and hawking, fetching and carrying, begging, theft, selling firewood and craftwork (Turton 2000:19). These activities differ across households depending on access to resources, location, status, wealth and type of household headship.

1.7. Chapter Conclusion

The problem of female headed households has been noted to be a worldwide escalating problem. Different literature shows the background, prevalence and consequences of this social ill. This problem of female headed households however resulted in this research. The main aim of this study was to explore what the female-heads in Magaso village of Mutoko District in Zimbabwe are doing for the survival of their households. This research is important as it unearths all the livelihood strategies that female heads implement, the challenges they experience as well as the support mechanisms available for them.

1.8. Chapter organization

Chapter one: Introduction

The chapter introduces the study and outline its background, aims, objectives, problem statement and the significance of the study.

Chapter two: Literature review

The chapter evaluates previous studies and the literature related to the study. It also describes the theoretical frameworks used in the study.

Chapter three: Methodology

This section explains the methods that were used for the research. It explains the research design, sampling methods to be used, data collection methods and instruments, research ethics to be used, population and also the data analysis.

Chapter four: Data analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings

This chapter discusses data analysis, presentation and the findings

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter focuses on discussions of the findings, conclusions and on recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature review chapter evaluates previous studies and the literature related to the causes of female headed households, their livelihoods strategies in rural areas and also on the challenges that they face as household heads. It evaluates previous studies and relate them to the main objective of the study which was to assess the livelihood strategies of female headed households; and also the specific objectives. Besides, it also describes the two theoretical frameworks that were used in this study, namely the strengths perspectives and the feminization of poverty theory.

2. 2. Defining Female Headed households

There have been many definitions of female-headed households. In order to understand the term adequately, it is crucial to first define the term household. A household can be referred to as a social unit sharing consumption and production (Bryceson, 2002). The headship of the household is usually identified with the person who has the greater authority in the family or household. Power and authority in turn may be vested in the member who has control over the general affairs of the family unit, including decision-making concerning its economic, social and political interactions (Sanni, 2006). Meanwhile, Muthwa (1994) define a female head as a woman who legally becomes the head of the household when there is no permanent male partner, due to death, desertion, divorce, separation or single motherhood. For the purpose of this study, female headed households were defined as women whose husbands have passed away (widower), divorced them, or whose husbands have

been absent for a long period (for example, incarcerated or in rehabilitation), or those who had left or abandoned the family, or went missing without legally divorcing them, those who migrated to work far away from their families and also those that are present but not the main decision makers since they are not providing for the livelihood of the family (Aliabad and Nazoktabar , 2011).

2.2.1. Livelihood Definition

The concept of livelihood is widely used on poverty as well as in rural development, but its meaning may appear to be elusive either due to vagueness or to different definitions being encountered in different sources. According to Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC, 2005), a livelihood is the sum of ways in which households make ends meet from year to year, and how they survive (or fail to survive) through difficult times. However, livelihood entails more than consumption and income (Ellis, 2000). Livelihood comprises of assets (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital) (Serrat, 2008). It is the activities and the access to these resources (mediated by institutions and social relations) that determine the living gained by the individual or households (Ellis, 2000). A livelihood can be deemed sustainable when it can cope and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities, assets and activities and both now and in the future (Serrat, 2008). For the purpose of the study, the researcher adopts the definition of livelihood by the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (2005).

2.3. Types of Female headed households

Literature distinguishes two types of female headed households, de facto and de jure (Tiruwork, 1998) .These two households differ depending on the presence of a man

counterpart or not and how much income the male contributes to the family. The first is de facto female heads, it refers to those women whose partners or spouses are temporarily absent or women that play dominant economic roles in the family though their partners reside with them (Tiruwork, 1998; Zarhani, 2011). In the de facto female-headed households, headship can be influenced by alcoholism, mental unfitness, physical disability or unemployment of the husbands (Ruwanpura, 2003). De facto households are also due to male partners migrating to the cities and staying there for a protracted period of time, or where husbands refuse to support the family, or are polygamous (Mencher and Okongwu, 1993; Sanni, 2006). It is a strong borne fact that men lose their headship if they fail to perform their financial obligation of providing for their families. When a man provides less than his female partner, he can lose his function as an economic provider and in most instances he consequently loses his status in the household (Ruwanpura, 2006).

The second type of female headed household is de jure where the female head belongs to one of these categories: single or never married but with children, widowed, divorced or separated. Female heads in the de jure category are those who never got married and those that are legally or permanently separated from their partners or husbands (Tiruwork, 1998). De jure female heads maintain their households alone, while de facto female heads may include men who are unable or unwilling to work.

Researchers such as Aliabad and Nazoktabar (2011) have divided the female headed households into groups: First group, families that do not have a man primarily and female heads because of the husband's death or divorce have been widowed or the

girls who did not marry and live alone and undertake the responsibility of the family singly without the help of the putative father. Second group, families that the man primarily for these reasons is absent: emigration, imprisonment, and being a soldier and always is away from home due to work responsibility. In these families, the females are forced to prepare livelihoods for themselves and their children. Third group, the families where the man is in the family, but because of being unemployed, disabled, chemically addicted, has no rule for providing the livelihood of the family and essentially the female undertakes the responsibility of the family (Aliabad and Nazoktabar, 2011).

Female-headed households may consist of elderly women (widowed or divorced) with no dependents, or younger women (divorced or never-married) with dependent children. However, female headed households may be permanent or transitory or embedded in a wider kin network of support (Tiruwork, 1998). They may represent family breakdown or a conscious lifestyle choice. Perhaps because of flexible definitions of female headship, as well as inadequate data, estimates on the extent of female headed households tend to vary. For the sake of this study, the researcher used the two female headships that is the de-jure and the de-facto so as to compare if the female heads engage in the same livelihood approaches.

2.4. Causes of Female Headed Households

Female headed households are one of the impaired groups in society. Women attain female headship easily in the households where the husband is present but is not the main decision maker; nor the breadwinner. The husband might be present but unemployed and the female would contribute more to the survival of the family.

Sometimes the factors like divorce, the husband's death, his disablement, being abandoned by emigrant or careless men, makes this wide range of the society more impaired. Migration, urbanisation, road carnage and death of male partners due to HIV/AIDS pandemic are factors that also add to the worsening of female headship. Patterson (1994: 4) observed that these factors have led to an increase in female headed households. For example, in South Africa as a whole 41,9 % are female headed (Everatt and Smith, 2008) and in Zimbabwe female headed households constitutes 33 % of the population of which most female heads are widowed (80 per cent), while 18 per cent are divorced (CSO, 2002). The female's life in the absence of a male partner often confronts with some problems and dangers; some of them are heading children alone and sometimes with difficulty, economic problems, living alone coupled with depression and disappointment. The following serve as possible causes of female headed households.

2.4.1. Migration

Migration from rural areas is increasingly becoming an important livelihood strategy. It often occurs because of lack of economic opportunities, land shortages and poor infrastructure in rural areas, perceived better employment prospects elsewhere and improved communication (FAO, 2010). Although data is sparse and trends are not well documented, migration patterns seem to have gender characteristics, with men migrating more frequently than women, especially internationally. A few countries in Asia provide exceptions to this pattern. In Sri Lanka and in the Philippines, female migrants are about 74 percent and 55 percent of total outflows, respectively (Foster, 2005). It appears that the number of women migrating as independent workers is steadily increasing in other countries as well. Adjustments to migration are among the

strategies by which humans attempt to alleviate livelihood problems and hence sustain their livelihoods.

The effect of migration on the employment opportunities and well-being of those who stay behind is ambiguous. Out-migration of labour from agriculture might reduce crop production and undermine food security. On the other hand, remittances may facilitate on-farm investment or relieve credit constraints that prevented farmers from purchasing key inputs (FAO, 2010). For instance, does out-migration increase the incidence of female-headed households? And, as some evidence from Africa seems to suggest (Adams, 1991 for rural Zimbabwe, and Dolan, 2002 for Uganda), are these female headed households more able to engage in decent and productive work relative to other female-headed households with no migrants among their family members? Significant gaps in knowledge remain with relation to the effects of migration on rural employment opportunities and gender roles (FAO, 2010).

Migration is a long-term strategy which may result in the return of remittances to the rural family and is an entrenched feature in Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe, 2010). High mobility of the population from the rural areas create serious social, security, environmental, and political problems for the urban areas, and contributes to the high level of female-headed households in rural areas and temporary relationships in urban areas (CSO, 2010). Many male partners migrate to other areas especially urban areas and neighbouring countries in search of jobs. Usually the man returns every few months, and major decisions (marriage, land use and sale) are taken by him. But, the woman is likely to take household control on a daily basis as soon as the husband leaves. Apart from wealthier households, which are more likely to be joined,

the woman whose husband is a migrant worker is automatically the household head when her husband is away (Hossain and Huda, 1995; Zarhani, 2011).

However, migration results in the drain of both labour and human resources which could have contributed to rural livelihood. This could partly contribute to the accentuating poverty situation at household level. However, migrants often set up second households in urban areas or places they migrate to leaving rural wives to largely fend for themselves until the migrant needs to return (ZDHR, 2003).

2.4.2. HIV and AIDS

The incidence of female headed households has been observed to be on the rise especially in developing countries where HIV/AIDS is taking a great toll on the population (Tollfree, 2004). As the disease spreads unabatedly in many countries especially of Sub-Saharan Africa, it has negatively impinged on family structures (UNAIDS, 2005). When AIDS enters the household, it devastates the family, drains assets, plays havoc with education, escalates domestic violence, and pushes families into a downward spiral towards greater poverty (Urdang, 2006). Unlike most other epidemics or pervasive diseases, HIV and AIDS tend not to target the very young and the very old. It attacks young adults and those in the prime of their life, those who are healthiest and generally strongest (Urdang, 2006).

HIV and AIDS is one of the major threats to development and one of the major causes of the humanitarian crises in Zimbabwe. Besides the political crisis and mismanagement of the economy coupled with erratic droughts, HIV and AIDS severely affects social, economic and political perspectives for generations

(UNICEF, 2010) by increasing the vulnerability of poor households. HIV and AIDS epidemic substantially reduces households' resilience to other livelihood shocks, such as poverty-related malnutrition or disease, drought-induced food shortages or the economic consequences of policy reform (UNICEF, 2010).

Most women are being infected with the HIV and AIDS pandemic, some have lost and some are still losing their male partners through HIV/AIDS. This general trend has led women to be bread winners in these families (Tollfree, 2004). This might be because testing for HIV and AIDS has a gender imbalance. A study conducted in Soweto, South Africa by Engender Health, Hope Worldwide and the FRONTIERS programme of the Population Council surveyed over 2,500 people and found that men are half as likely as women to have been tested for HIV (Urdang, 2006). The study argues that part of the problem is the socialisation of gender roles. Men are supposed to be the head of the households and do not want to admit their own weaknesses. It may be as hard for those wielding power to show vulnerability by HIV/AIDS testing, as it is for women to refuse to submit to that power (Urdang, 2005).

Zimbabwe as one of the countries affected by the scourge has an estimated 33% of its 15-49 year old population infected by the disease leaving grandmothers heading households for their grandchildren (ZNVAC 2002). According to the Zimbabwe demographic profile (2012), in 2009, there were about 1, 2 million people who were living with the infection and approximately 8 300 people died the same year because of HIV and AIDS. With about one-fourth of Zimbabwean adults infected with HIV and AIDS will continue to reduce life expectancy which is already down and increase female headed households' prevalence (Mutangadura, 2005). Coltart (2008:9) best

describes the situation in Zimbabwe when he says that never before has one country seen such a convergence of severe economic collapse, high levels of HIV and AIDS infection, and chronic malnutrition.

Over the years, the capacity of most household social support systems has been weakened and further eroded by the HIV and AIDS epidemic (Mutangadura, 2005). When AIDS enters the household it is women who overwhelmingly provide the care. This has heightened chances of these women being infected through contagion (Kang'ethe, 2008). Women are therefore not only disproportionately infected with HIV but are also disproportionately affected (Urdang, 2006).

2.4.3. Widowhood

Female headed households also result from the death of a male partner (Foster, 1997). The death of a husband usually negatively affects the family's social relationships. This sets social stress to women and reduces their confidence and well being in their societies. While the family lose the opportunity of man's contribution in form of labour or his earnings (Wabwire, 1997), this also contributes to poverty in these families because of fewer secondary earning members and more dependents (Patterson 1994). The phenomenon may also usher in a state of psychological loss and despondency to the widowed women. In some cases, the family members stigmatize the widow, harass her and sometimes try to seize family resources (Wabwire, 1997).

On the contrary, not all widows become household heads. In Bangladesh, in case of the death of a husband, the woman's in-laws would either take the widow if they were

not already living together, or the widow would return to the parental home (Hossain and Huda, 1995). It is often mentioned that women give up their inheritance rights over father's property in return for some kind of assurance that if they are widowed or abandoned they will be looked after by their brothers (Hossain and Huda, 1995). Some however do not return to the parental home because of the family that they will be taking care of hence becoming a female head. In Zimbabwe, the widows continue to stay in their marital homes whilst taking care of their households. Some of these widows are stripped off of their inheritance rights whereby the husband's families normally take over the inheritance (Dube, 2008).

2.4.4. Divorce and Separation

The separation of spouses leads to the feminization of poverty (Horrell and Krishnan, 2007). Divorce is a matter of shame to women especially rural women and often, it remains under-reported (Hossain and Huda, 1995). Divorce erodes the economic wellbeing of custodial parents and their children. There is considerable evidence that upon divorce women and children experience substantial financial declines, with income dropping; divorced men's relative income, on the other hand, remains stable or even increases (Chant, 2006). The circumstances under which older women are divorced are similar to those under which women are abandoned. Occasionally neglect and abuse cause women to leave their husbands with the result that they divorce them (Hossain and Huda, 1995). Also divorce can result from the migration of men and forming a new family where they will be staying and deserting the family in rural areas. The way in which rural people understands 'divorce' is somewhat different. Some women who have been abandoned may be viewed as divorced by the society in which they live, just as some women who claim to have been divorced may,

in fact, legally be no more than separated. Divorce or separation is considered to be an embarrassment as well as a financial burden on the family. If divorced, some women choose to live alone and head their own households rather than to tolerate abuse, neglect, or the presence of a co-wife (Hossain and Huda 1995).

The event of abandonment usually is preceded by the deterioration of marital relationship, accompanied by financial hardship and/or the husband being unable /unwilling to support the household (Hossain and Huda, 1995). Society feels less obligated to help an abandoned woman rather than to help a widow. The abandoned woman is expected to support herself. Sometimes it is believed that the abandoned woman was in some way at fault as is the case with divorced women (Hossain and Huda, 1995) especially the African culture.

Mostly the culture does not assess the reasons behind the family disintegration. This in turn worsens the situation of the woman who is struggling to head the family without a male partner. The woman will also be in distress because of the divorce, this however may accentuate the feminization of poverty because this woman does not have the strength to undertake livelihood strategies for the survival of the family (Mulugeta, 2009). Initially female heads are usually so caught up in dealing with their own emotions that they have little energy left to help their children cope with their feelings. Divorce is almost always traumatic. So the female head may focus of dealing with her feelings rather than building sustainable livelihoods for their families especially when they depended more on the male partner (Ambrosino, Emeritus and Emeritus, 2005). Separation and divorce signifies the loss of an intimate relationship that also brings security and support. It also signifies a loss of hope, and dreams as

well as feelings of failure, fear, anxiety, loneliness and guilt especially if there are children involved (Ambrosino et al, 2005).

2.4.4. Female preference

Modernisation has ushered in a paradigm shift in the way societies have held as norm that men and women upon attaining adulthood should look for opposite sex partners to make a family (Mulugeta, 2009). As women become formally educated, modernised or embrace a higher degree of globalization, they are choosing to stay on their own without getting married. But this is more pronounced in developed countries and is becoming increasingly common in the urban areas of developing countries. These females may have different partners but not married to them. This however is a threat to their health especially with the rampaging HIV/AIDS pandemic (Urdang, 2005). Some decide not to marry because of the fear of the childhood experiences that they may feel accredited to the failure of their parents' marriages. However with this attachment to the past, they might just feel to remain unmarried but with children, hence becoming female heads. Contrastingly in most rural areas of the developing world, people still value and treasure family making. The forces of modernization, westernization and globalization have not taken adequate toll to disrupt the family set ups (Everatt and Smith, 2008).

The increase of single parenthood is not a domain only of the western world. The phenomenon is on the increase in most African countries. For example, in 2002, 33 percent households in Zimbabwe were run by single parents specifically females (Chiripanhura, 2010). Many of these females are left living in households that are

already weakened by underdevelopment and miserable poverty. This leaves the evidence of feminization of poverty (UNDP, 1995).

However this group of women as female heads is marginalised in most communities despite the cause. Levels and trends in female headed households are important indicators of changes in family organization and in the process of family formation and survival (Mulugeta, 2009). Although the evidence is somewhat controversial on this score, it is widely supposed that female headed households are more vulnerable to risk, economically less viable, socially less connected and poorly integrated and, finally, enmeshed in a social and economic context that is less than optimum for the growth and development of mothers and children alike. The absentee of males to head households may have a threefold impact namely i) it strongly suggests that the absence of sustainable economic opportunities has forced men to seek employment outside different areas ii) much of the agricultural work which provides many households with means to survive is carried out by women and many households continue to suffer traumatic psychosocial effects of absent males (Everatt and Smith, 2008).

2.5. Female headship and poverty in rural areas of Zimbabwe

Poverty has many faces, changing from place to place and across time, and has been described in many ways. Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom. (The World Bank

Group, 2007). Poverty has been summarily defined by the UN as “the denial of opportunities and choices most basic to human development to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self esteem and respect from others (Hirschowitz; 2000). Indicators of poverty according to a study conducted in Umtata in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, are lack of access to land , lack of access to services including limited access to basics like water and electricity ,credits ,dependency on others and often exploitable , unlikely to find any solution to situations in the near future , living without hope and with no vision for the future , not able to have more than one basic daily meal , children not in school , family cannot afford fees or equipment and isolated sometimes living alone and female head (Everatt and Smith, 2008).

Poverty in developing countries is predominantly a rural phenomenon. The IFAD Rural Poverty Report (2001) states that of the 1.2 billion human beings who live in extreme poverty about three quarters live in rural areas. According to Khan (2001) the causes of rural poverty are complex, diverse and multi-dimensional. The absence of broad economic stability, competitive markets and public investment in physical and social infrastructure has been the major causes of rural poverty in developing countries. Aspects such as culture, climate, gender, markets and public policy are some of the things likely to cause rural poverty.

The choice to examine the feminization of poverty in Zimbabwe is based on the uniqueness of the country. It has been declining since 1999, and in less than ten years, it has become one of the poorest nations, worse than some countries in war situations. Worse still, the economic crisis and political violence have made it very

difficult for researchers to collect data, resulting in a significant decline in academic research in the country (Chiripanhura, 2010). In Zimbabwe, as in many sub-Saharan African countries, women are less likely than men to own land, with the result that female-headed households are likely to be poor. Their low involvement in wage employment also renders them more vulnerable (Kanji, 1994; Government of Zimbabwe, 1995).

Poverty levels are increasingly worse for female-headed households in rural areas. According to the Zimbabwean Gender Dimensions of Poverty Thematic Report (PASS 2003), poverty prevalence was highest in de-facto female headed (56 % very poor), followed by de-jure female headed (53%) and then male headed (46 %) And also highest for widows: Widowed (59%), Married (56%), Divorced (46 %), Never married (24%), Co-habiting (19%). This is because when a woman becomes the head of the household, she has a higher tendency to face financial difficulties as they have to play the dual roles of provider and caregiver on top of their low earning capacity, have lack of knowledge and skills, have low job opportunities in economically depressed areas, and public benefits. Thus, female headed households tend to experience lower upward economic mobility than male-headed households (Gindling and Oviedo, 2008).

In the Zimbabwe Human Development Report (ZHDR) (2003), defining human poverty as the measure of deprivation of a decent standard of living, long healthy life and knowledge, found that poverty was high in rural areas (31.1%) compared to urban areas (26.4%). Although there is no agreed poverty figure after 2000, it is apparent that the level of impoverishment consistently increased progressively in the latter

year's part of the decade due to the political and economic crises era that affected Zimbabwe. Some researchers and practitioners put it at over 70% during this period (ICG, 2007).

2.6. Livelihoods economic diversification of female headed households in rural areas

The impact of losing a male figure and a breadwinner in various households prompt many households to adopt specific survival strategies to cope with the socio-economic and cultural challenges the female headship ushers in their lives (Mulugeta, 2009). Identification of these coping strategies is useful for providing the framework for policy on improving the livelihood strategies. Since a major impact of losing breadwinner is in form of reduced household income, many affected households try to supplement their household income in various ways. Some households engage in diversification of their income sources in order to surmount their economic challenges and crises of their everyday life. Most of the survival strategies that female heads practice are mainly for immediate use than for the future thus the poverty levels within the female heads are eradicated once but in future resuscitate again. There is therefore an absolute necessity to strengthen and expand the income base of rural households.

2.6.1. Farming

Farming is the main source of food production in some regions of Africa especially Zimbabwe. Most people now depend on farming as a form of living (Chiripanhura, 2010). In Zimbabwe most people are into farming cash crops as well maize for family consumption. But since most female heads have not much income, they just end up

farming for the family consumption. A research conducted in Malawi indicated that female heads engage in a variety of farming activities that include fish farming (Chant, 2003).

In sub-Saharan Africa, roughly 50% of rural household incomes are generated from both non-farm activities and transfers in the form of remittances and pension payment, either from urban areas or abroad (FAO, 2004). In Ethiopia, this accounted for 36% (Reardon, 1997 cited in Degefa 2005). This figure was as much as 80–90% in South Africa. A study conducted in Malawi, observed that women are involved in casual, informal and unregulated labour in income generating activities due to lack of resources (land, labour and oxen) and services (credit) (FAO, 2004). In Zimbabwe, women are significantly attached to the land where they play a key role in subsistence farming. They reflect Davison's equation of the 'dual burden' as they provide 70% of the labour in farming as well as play a significant role as the primary managers of their homes where they spent about 49% of their time on agricultural activities for their families' subsistence and 25% of their time on domestic chores (Shumba, 2011). In rural China, as agriculture becomes less important than non-farming activities as a source of income and men increasingly migrate to urban areas, women undertake most of the farming activities, including management. However, they still have less decision making power than men within households and their community (Song, Zhang, Sun and Jiggins, 2009).

There seems to be little dispute over the fact that female headed households are usually disadvantaged in terms of access to land, livestock, other assets, credit, education, health care and extension services. For instance, in Zimbabwe, female

headed households have 30-50% smaller landholdings than male-headed households (FAO, 2010). There are similar findings on Malawi and Namibia. But there is disagreement as to whether or not they are poorer than male-headed households in terms of income poverty (Chiripanhura, 2010). On the one hand, the fact that female headed household are usually smaller in size means that they should be less poor, since the poor tend to be concentrated in larger households but this is not authentically proven. On the other hand, the fact that they have a higher number of dependents relative to the number of income earners, which is also correlated with poverty, would argue the reverse (Chiripanhura, 2010).

2.6.2. Indigenization

From independence, there have been moves to try and redress the inequities created by the colonial regimes and black economic empowerment has gained high esteem through, for example, the activities of such organisations as Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC). Affirmative Action Group (AAG), to mention but the two. Such a move has been referred to as 'indigenisation', and has been marked by the motive of raising the standards of the black African populace in the country, particularly in economic terms (Financial Gazette, 15 January 2004). On a broader plane, it can be said that: the encouragement of the small-to-medium-scale-enterprises (SME) by the government and the almost uncontrollable mushrooming of the informal sector in the urban sphere, are clear indications of the indigenisation thrust (Chirisa, 2004). Zimbabwe launched an indigenisation and economic act in 2007 that commenced to be used in April 2008 for the empowerment and indigenisation of the country's citizens. This act was meant to provide for support measures for the further indigenisation of the economy and also to provide for support

measures for the economic empowerment of indigenous Zimbabweans (Indigenisation and Economic Act of 2007, Chapter 14:33).

However indigenisation has been implemented to also empower women not only to depend on men but also to establish their businesses and also engage in different projects. Women in rural areas are trained in different farming projects like poultry, piggery, mushroom farming and bee keeping. These projects are meant to empower them so that they cannot depend on buying but however be the producers hence making a living.

2.6.3. Engaging in business

Women also engage in various businesses as a livelihood strategy. These women will be selling either agricultural products or buy and resell different products. Female heads are also involved in cross border trading. The success of their cross-border trade to Zimbabwean neighbouring countries, East African countries and some go as far as Dubai, Malaysia and China is largely a result of their social networks. These social networks are either based on family relationships, or on friendships that have been built as a result of continually meeting in buses, planes to South Africa and other countries, on the monthly journeys they undertake (Mutopo, 2010).

According to a study by Mutopo (2010) that was conducted in Merrivale farm in Mwenezi, Zimbabwe with 35 women, he concluded that, in spite of the danger and other challenges, these women have been able to improve their financial independence and household security as a result of trading. And, although their market may currently be small, there is potential to expand in beneficial ways that

support their entrepreneurial spirit as well as their communities. Increased income has contributed to their food security and community well-being (Mutopo, 2010).

2.6.4. Living on remittances

International remittances by migrant workers represent the second most important source of external funding in developing countries after foreign direct investment and are about double the level of official aid-related inflows to developing countries (Adams and Page, 2005). The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) pointed out that remittance flows have continuously increased in the last twenty years and have until recently remained largely unaffected by the woes affecting global financial markets and violent conflicts (although the effects of the most recent financial crisis on remittances are yet to be quantified). Therefore remittances have represented a more stable source of poverty reduction than other capital flows (Mukwede, 2009). Remittances sent by out-migrated members was discovered to be a tool for reducing household poverty and enhancing local development (Horrell and Krishnan, 2007; FAO, 2010).

Female-headed households are likely to have fewer income earners within the household compared with a male-headed household, but de facto headship may be associated with high levels of remittances returned from work in urban areas which may be crucial to lifting the family out of poverty (FAO, 2010). Thus, these households may be better off, at least in monetary terms, than the household where both partners remain engaged in rural agricultural pursuits. But this rural-urban division of labour has required women to undertake all the agricultural tasks, thus curtailing the extent to which they can participate in the labour market (Gwaunza, 1998). Migration may have constrained the ability of other family members to diversify their income-

generating activities thus offsetting some of the income gained from remittances (Mukwedeya, 2009). The remittances returned to families by labour migrant members of the household are also a crucial component of livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

Despite remittances obtained by women, women still suffer food inadequacies suggesting that either the money remitted is not enough, or it is used to meet other pressing family needs such as school fees, to hire draught power, or to pay health bills.

2.6.5. Sex Work

Sex work is a multi-billion dollar business that employs millions of women worldwide. It has an unusual feature: it is well paid despite being low-skilled, labour intensive and, one might add, female dominated (Edlund and Korn, 2001). Earnings even in the worst paid type, streetwalking, may be several multiples of full time earnings in profession with comparable skill requirements. Sex work is more common in less developed countries, but far from absent in developed ones (Philipson and Posner, 1993; Atchinson, Fraser and Lowman, 1999). It is considered a serious moral issue by communities and governments. It is therefore illegal in countries like Zimbabwe (Urdang, 2006). Many countries in the West and South Africa have recognised sex work but not legalized. However, deepening poverty among women in Zimbabwe is a contributing factor to the rise of prostitution. This is a worrying state of affairs because it is one of the factors contributing to feminization of HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe, 2010). There is increased global concern that it is women who are more vulnerable to the virus than men, although men are usually better drivers of the epidemic (Kang'ethe, 2009). Where poverty and gender inequality converge, many women are unable to provide for their families, and seeing their children hungry night after night, they have

little option but to engage in survival or transactional sex work. Presently they need to feed their families.

Lingam (2005) asserts that, with loss and decline in employment opportunities in general the physical body is becoming the site of 'work' for women and young girls. The loss of survival and livelihood in the rural areas has also led to migration to the cities, cross-border transfer of women resulting in increasing vulnerability to risky sexual life and contraction of HIV/AIDS. Prostitution of women for the sex industry forms the 'shadow economy' of globalization an indicator of 'feminization of survival' (Lingam, 2005). They can pay no attention to the possibility of getting sick years down the line, at some indeterminate date. There is no choice, no option in these circumstances, and when men offer to pay more for sex without a condom that can only be welcomed (Urdang, 2006).

Sex workers clearly identify what they are doing as work, or doing businesses, and distinguish this from their non-working lives as women who are girlfriends, mothers and providers. This is evident from the constant comment by sex workers that they perform a service, a job for men. The sex for money exchanges takes place in various domains such as townships, commercial farms, growth points and taverns in rural areas (Mutangadura, 2005). In Mutoko Town centre, for example, "KwaMadzeka" rural girls have affairs with truck drivers for cash and in Avenues area of Harare is also well known for such sex trade. However, though a reality of feminization of economic survival, sex work has generally not received much attention in Zimbabwe. This is because it is regarded as a social ill and a symbol of a society's moral degeneration. Therefore, sex workers are expediently ignored in public consciousness

or alternatively focused on as vendors of vice (Fraser, 2008: 1). Literature in Botswana, however, presents an interesting scenario of women living with HIV/AIDS who are usually heads of female headed households admitting doing sex work as a way of bringing food on the table in the evening for their families (Kang'ethe, 2010).

2.6.6. Home gardening

Home gardening's have been described as an important social and economic unit of rural households, from which a diverse and stable supply of economic products and benefits are derived (Shackleton, Paumgarten and Cocks, 2008). A home garden is, therefore, part of a household livelihood strategy and has gained prominence as a natural asset through which sustainable use of resources, particularly for the livelihoods of the poor, may be achieved. Home gardening's provide an important contribution to sustainable agricultural production because of their potential to meet economic, social, ecological, and institutional conditions for sustainable livelihoods (Nair 2006). The marketing of home gardening products by rural households and small-scale farmers has been identified as a potential means of poverty alleviation (Shackleton et al. 2008). The rural poor were described by Chambers (1997) as 'foxes' involved in many different enterprises through which they cobble together a livelihood, doing different things at different seasons (Maroyi, 2009).

Although home gardening production provides a small source of income, it is particularly important for poor households to overcome adversity and meet basic needs (Maroyi, 2009). Properly managed home gardening's can improve people's livelihoods and quality of life, reduce poverty, and foster economic growth into the future on a sustainable basis (Maroyi, 2009).

2.6.7. Food for work programmes

Food for work is a process of exchanging labour for food. Samson, Van Nierkerk and Mac Quene (2006) defines food for work as ‘...the regular payment of money or in-kind benefits by government or NGOs to individuals in exchange for work with the objective of decreasing chronic or shock induced poverty, providing social protection, addressing social risk or reducing economic vulnerability...’ . Governments in some developing countries especially in Zimbabwe, introduced food for works programmes to enable families to work for the betterment of their communities for example building schools and clinics and they get food parcels in return (Gumbo, 2009). Zimbabwe like any other developing country in the world has vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals, households and communities who cannot meet their basic livelihoods. These groups and individuals (55%) live below the country’s poverty datum line, some of which continue to live in chronic and transitory poverty. Even where and when overall food supplies are adequate, poverty impedes access by populations living in chronic and transitory poverty to the quantity and variety of foods required to meet their needs (Gumbo, 2009).

Food for work programmes is not suitable to any person but the hard labour tasks are suited to the young and the physically strong and only those above 18 years and those under 60 years are eligible. They are focused on able-bodied (Wallace-Karenga, 2009). The able bodied are those people who are fit or active to engage in some productive activity to help oneself or the society (Gumbo, 2009). This however disadvantages the weak and ill because they will not be able to provide the labour needed hence not employed on this programme. Because of free handouts food for work programmes are not generally associated with labour constrained households

(such as the very old, those with disabilities, and those coping with chronic illnesses) (Gumbo, 2009). All programmes under strain to include more vulnerable groups because of widespread poverty especially in rural areas.

Some female headed households also join in this programme for the survival of their families in the rural areas and they also get food in return (*maricho in Shona*). In most cases, these female labourers would be allocated a parchment of the farm to cultivate or harvest and they are paid daily depending on the work done for that particular day. The labour can also take the form of herding cattle for the better- off families and they will be paid for the services provided. This results in children helping in the survival strategies since some of the female headed households in rural areas are old grandmothers and no longer have much energy to work for the family to have adequate food. Although this goes counter the rights of children to access school and against child labour, since these children usually do not attend school and they could still be minors, it becomes a feasible economic survival for the female headed families to use them (UNCRC, 1989; OAU, 1990; Kang'ethe, 2010).

Conclusively, the nature of diversification differs with the economic status of households and gender. Those who are better off tend to diversify in the form of non-farm business activities (trade, transport, shop keeping, brick market, etc.), while the poor tend to diversify in the form of casual wage work. With regard to gender, diversification is more of an alternative for rural men than for women. Therefore, as a survival strategy and as a means of improving their livelihood, the rural communities in general and women in particular either engage in various non-farm and/or off-farm activities or migrate to the other better developed areas, and they control fertility by

limiting the number of children they have (FAO and UNICEF, 2007). However, some of the strategies do not bring any considerable change to their lives.

2.7. Challenges of female heads in rural areas

Female heads in rural areas are faced with many challenges that include being a woman, and on the other hand being a head of the house. This worsens their situation and they become more vulnerable and marginalised in the society because of their status. This is also worsened by the fact the most of them in rural areas are deeply immersed in poverty. These situations make their life so unbearable because of the responsibilities to look after their families. However, there are challenges to being a female head and possible challenges faced by women has been pointed out by the Secretary-General of the United Nations-Kofi Annan in Mutangadura (2005),

“ . . . today, as AIDS is eroding the health of Africa’s women, it is eroding the skills, experience and networks that keep their families and communities going. Even before falling ill, a woman will often have to care for a sick husband, thereby reducing the time she can devote to planting, harvesting and marketing crops. When her husband dies, she is often deprived of credit, distribution networks or land rights. When she dies, the household will risk collapsing completely, leaving children to fend for themselves. The older ones, especially girls, will be taken out of school to work in the home or the farm. These girls, deprived of education and opportunities, will be even less able to protect themselves against AIDS. . . . If we want to save Africa from two catastrophes (HIV/AIDS and famine), we would do well to focus on saving Africa’s women.”

Female-headed households encounter diverse problems which are collectively related to survival. However, there are better off female-headed households especially where the heads have better education or have progressed through businesses. This is usually the case in the urban areas or better infrastructural rural areas, whereas in poor remote rural areas the situation is different.

2.7.1. *Feminization of HIV/AIDS*

The feminisation of HIV AIDS is being fuelled by the fact that more women are more susceptible to HIV for biological reasons (Haugaard 2010: 142). The feminization of HIV/AIDS is a phenomenon in which women more than men are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Women are weakened in negotiating for safer prevention methodologies by gender power differentials, patriarchy and traditions that disempowered them in many social-economic domains (Urdang, 2006). HIV/AIDS pandemic has brought wide ranging socio-economic impacts on all aspects of rural livelihoods that include erosion of food security and the livelihood asset base, decreased access to education and other productive assets thereby exacerbating poverty (Chapman, White and Shafer, 2010). Coupled with the fact that women's biological reproductive system makes them more prone to contracting the virus more than men, this makes them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe, 2012).

Females are at greater risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and opportunistic infections due to their biology, roles, resources and cultural norms (Chapman, White and Shafer, 2010). Women are both physiologically and socially more vulnerable to infection than men. In recent years, there has been a growing understanding that social factors, a mix of gender inequality, poverty and stigma fuel the AIDS epidemic. Cultural norms

and societal expectations circumscribe the ability of women, young women and girls to take charge of their bodies and exercise their reproductive and sexual rights (Urdang, 2006). Too many women do not have the power to negotiate safe sex, or find it difficult to say no to unwanted sex. When poverty is endemic, it can mean that women may have little option but to engage in risky sexual practices in order to ensure their survival as well as that of their family (Urdang, 2006). When AIDS enters the household it is women who overwhelmingly provide the care. Women are therefore not only disproportionately infected with HIV in southern Africa; women are also disproportionately affected (Urdang, 2006).

Women traditionally play a major role in the care economy, and this means that caring for the sick, as well as for orphans' falls squarely within their domain. For African women, taking care of the orphans, therefore, increase the already overwhelmed burden of care (UNICEF, 2004). Female-headed households are not only more likely to be poor; they are also more likely to take in orphans than male-headed households. Female-headed households affected by HIV/AIDS are therefore more likely to enter into an irreversible downward spiral of increasing expenses contributing to the present feminisation of poverty. The process is thus insidious, as poverty is considered one of the main factors fuelling the epidemic.

With the worsening economic crisis, the commercialisation of sex has also pervaded the rural economy resulting in fast spreading of the disease, especially on commercial farms, mines, and at and around growth points. On commercial farms, the 'compound system' where all workers and their families are housed in shack-like structures may be to blame for the high prevalence of the disease (ZHDR, 2003). In consequence,

commercial farms and mines are increasingly suffering from lost work days due to illness. Furthermore, there is also an increase in the number of orphaned children as some orphans moved from towns, farms and mines to rural homes where the cost of living is lower. This process raises dependency rates and hence impoverishment.

Women also continue to bear disproportionate responsibility for caring for sick family members those ill with AIDS (UNAIDS, 2005). The role of primary care giver is an undertow that pulls women out of regular employment (whether formal or informal), extracts girls from school to assist in the care giving, prevents women from seeking medical treatment when they have no one to care for children and their homes in their absence, escalates household tension into violence when women cannot provide food on time or adequately perform other aspects of their expected domestic roles. The burden on women and girls to look after the ill can create time poverty so severe that households implode under the strain (Sambisa, 2010). Although this reality undermines virtually every step taken to stem a pandemic of global proportions, most governments' quintessential patriarchal structures do not, or believe they cannot, provide the social protection measures needed to deflect a crisis that is rapidly spinning out of control. In southern Africa, where the epidemic is at its most intense, the impact of AIDS on women's work in the household is most acute and is threatening the survival of family, household and community in dire and multi-faceted ways (UNAIDS 2008). Women, for the most part, perform this work, which is done alongside the day-to-day roles and responsibilities within the household. Such labour is reflected in terms such as 'care economy' or 'unpaid care work', and involves a wide range of caring roles and responsibilities that are performed in the household and community (Urdang, 2006). These roles and responsibilities are intertwined with

inequitable gender relations, which serve to prescribe who undertakes this work, and under what conditions.

In 2007, 33 million people were estimated to be living with HIV in the whole world. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 67 percent of people with HIV and for 75 percent of AIDS related deaths. Countries especially affected include: South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Women account for nearly 60 percent of HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2008). HIV infection rates in rural areas are hard to measure and likely to go unreported. While early outbreaks of the disease occurred predominantly in urban areas, the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS are now in rural areas, as a result of many male migrant workers with AIDS symptoms returning to their villages (FAO, 2004; ODI, 2005). HIV/AIDS affects rural households and rural employment in multiple ways. Many rural households appear to experience labour shortages for farm work, with serious implications for agricultural production and food security. The extent to which HIV/AIDS-affected households may diversify into non-farm jobs is not known. HIV/AIDS also has significant indirect effects on rural employment through restrictions on female labour availability, as women's productive time is diverted to taking care of the sick. All these changes appear to be markedly gender-differentiated. Adult men may often be the first to be affected in a household and the first to die (UNAIDS, 2008; Rugalema, 1999).

The HIV/AIDS epidemic also significantly affects children's work. Some plantations in Zimbabwe hired children in place of their dead parents to help them survive (ILO, 2003).

2.7.2. Child Poverty

Child poverty is a situation where children do not have enough resources to grow strong and healthy, to get education, to live in good and safe environment and to fulfil their potential (Meintjes, Leatt, & Berry, 2006). Child poverty is a phenomenon that United Nations and World Health Organizations as well as many individual countries are endeavouring to address. Facilitating Millennium Development goals (MDGs) is just one of the many goals of reducing poverty among children and adults of especially the developing world (Urdang, 2006). This is because child poverty is associated with higher prevalence of diseases such as malnutrition, hygiene related diseases such as cholera, typhoid and others. The children are also likely to suffer stunted growth. It is also associated with reduced chances of accessing education and tends to complete the vicious cycle of poverty (UNDP, 2008).

The presence of a large number of children in a household may reduce the family's per capita income. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, large numbers of children in households traditionally has been regarded as enhancing labour supplies and access to land resources and hence contributing positively to families' incomes (Worku, 2007).

The high level of the fertility rate is usually assumed to have emanated from parents' demands for a larger labour force, social respect and economic support in their old age (Assefa, 1994). However, large numbers of children raise the need for more subsistence (food), clothing, schooling, and medical treatment. In summary, having large numbers of children per family adversely affects the livelihood conditions of women, households and the community at large (FAO, 2010).

2.7.3. Family incarceration from the in - laws

Because of the fact that most communities in Africa including Zimbabwe are patriarchal in nature, issues of inheritance do not consider gender equity and equality (UNDP, 1995). Patriarchy is a system in which men control women and children, hold immense powers over virtually all the factors of production (UNDP, 1995; Kang'ethe, 2009). Usually after the death of their male counterparts, their in-laws want to inherit everything together with the widow herself. This concept is referred to "Kugara nhaka", meaning inheriting the wealth of the deceased relative in Shona. However, some relatives may also want to make the female head their wife after the death of the relative of which some may end up abusing that wife either sexually or emotionally (Chipaziwa, 2011). This makes the widowed females in dilemma as they may not have any societal system to protect them or consider their rights to their husband's wealth. They have to follow the whims and the dictates of the culture. The practice is more prevalent in remote rural areas in contrast to urban areas. Besides the widows being inherited, some relatives go to an extent of chasing them away from their matrimonial home.

2.7.4. Wage labour discrimination

Many developing countries of the world display skewed gender differentials in treating between men and women (UNDP, 1995; Kang'ethe, 2011). For example in different parts of the world, women are paid lower than men for the task done and this represents inequality in wages. Economic independence is one of the most crucial factors in the transformation of gender inequality and the achievement of women's empowerment in general (Barret-Grant, Fine, Heywood and Strode, 2001). But when the ability to seek employment and income is corroded by the epidemic, the fall-out is

vicious. This affects not only income and women's capacity to feed their families. It robs the caregiver of the education needed to gain employment in the first place, increases dependence on men, and prevents women from leaving violent relationships (UNDP, 1995).

2.7.5. Gender inequality/ Patriarchy

Female headed households are commonly understood to be vulnerable to extend shocks because of the unequal position of women in society and in the economy hence resulting in the feminization of poverty (Everatt and Smith, 2008) .This gender-related economic gap contributes to the economic vulnerability of female-headed families. In Brazil, female-headed households have a 30% to 50% greater chance of being in poverty than do male-headed ones. Zimbabwe is also a patriarchal society (Malaba, 2006). This is gender- based discrimination that has greatly contributed to feminization of poverty of the females in female headed households (UNDP, 2008). It has been shown clearly that the largest proportion of formal sector jobs in developing countries, 85%, are dominated by men, while female-dominated occupations account for 5% (Ellis, 2000). As a consequence, much of women's exclusion from mainstream economic opportunities has led to their participation in casual, informal and unregulated labour at rates of pay that exceed those earned by men (Oberhauser ,1998).

Engaging in the informal economy, female headed households do not reap as anticipated and as a result they become impoverished and live in hunger. It has been argued that there has been a gradual feminization of work that is, available employment and labour options tend to increasingly characterize activities associated,

rightly or wrongly, with women (Standing, 1999). Because of being desperate they end up accepting paid work at any price to put food on the table. The feminist approach to poverty focuses on the gender implications and social costs of poverty. They include the growing involvement of women and children in the informal economy; differential treatment of girls and boys in households; pressure to get girls married off quickly; higher school drop-out rates for girls; less control over fertility; and recourse to prostitution.

Gender inequality may be due to the fact that men and women have different assets, access to resources and opportunities. Women rarely own land, they may have lower levels of education due to discriminatory access as children, and their access to productive resources as well as decision making tends to take place through the mediation of men. Furthermore, women are typically faced with a narrower range of labour markets than men. This is reflected more in occupational segregation and wage differentials. In this sense, diversification can improve household livelihood security while at the same time trapping women in customary roles (Ellis, 1999).

In addition to farming on poor soils, women become the sole farmers, but without decision making powers to dispose of the produce and to spend money without consulting their absentee husbands. Migrant men, though still generally poor, nevertheless, yield financial power in relation to poor and disempowered women in the rural areas (ZHDR, 2003). This is happening in Zimbabwe because of the patriarchal status in the society in which men are regarded as powerful, decision makers and leaders irrespective of their capacities to prove the case. According to Kang'ethe (2010:161), patriarchy constitutes traditional customs and beliefs that give

men domination over women. Since in many countries especially of the developing nations gender power relationships between men and women has been skewed, with men wielding immense powers, and sometimes using this power to oppress and suppress women and children, many people associate patriarchy with male dominance. Patriarchy takes women, children and the youth as subordinate to their adult males (Kang'ethe, 2010:161).

2.7.6. Social discrimination

Single women heading households encounter some challenges as they endeavour to make ends for their families meet due to the patriarchal nature of African communities. Single women face social difficulties and discrimination in various social settings on account of their gender. These women may find it hard to access jobs or other available resources. This makes their attempt to raise their families an arduous and uphill task. The state of their unemployment and its subsequent poverty may complete various cycles of poverty and despondency in life. Diseases could also follow without much solution to surmount them. Some households may not participate in wage employment because of poor health and lack of access to health services (Marquette, 1997; Lennox, 1994).

Individual women have no place in the political institutions of the village, and this is most clearly manifested in the need for male representation of female interests. Hossain and Huda 1995, notes that although women-headed households are called upon to discharge all the social and economic functions of their male counterparts, their social status remains marginal and peripheral.

2.7.7. Inaccessibility to credit

Women's lack of access to credit is also a widespread phenomenon in African societies. This is further exacerbated by patriarchal legal traditions that relegate married women to the position of minors who fall under the marital power of their husbands. Married women in Botswana, for example still face difficulties when opening bank accounts, or securing loans without their husbands' assistance. These issues are often ignored within the context of gender mainstreaming and national budgets (Chiripanhura, 2010). The feminization of poverty in a way indirectly forces female heads to be in credits. These credits are either from banks, NGO's or from the government. In some parts of the world especially in Asia, rural poor people have been able to change their lives due to access to credit, that is usually paid back without any interest charged (UNDP, 1995). The unavailability or lack of access to credit in countries like Zimbabwe especially to the females in female headed households means it is difficult for them to easily change their economic position because of the current economic conditions. While women are reputed as efficient in paying loans, ironically they have the hardest time in securing loans without collaterals, male consent, security against the loan (Fortmann, 2001). Women's uncertain access to land, credit and education denies them exposure to and control of new technologies that might help them out of the mire of poverty. In many Sub-Saharan countries female-headed households are usually poorer and fewer rural female-headed households own agricultural productive resources (Mutangadura, 2005). Women do not have collateral security to qualify for bank loans but men have because they own property which is a prerequisite. In countries like Botswana, for example, the rural people especially women and youth are accessed some grants or

credits to undertake projects through poverty alleviation goals of the government. This can be a way to emancipate the poor people of Africa (Mulinge & Mufune, 2003).

The existence of poverty on such a large scale affects the functioning of the labour households that suffer from poor health due to disease and malnutrition because they are poor, hence they may withdraw from the labour market. Hungry households are unable to put maximum effort in labour market participation (FAO and UNICEF, 2007). There is likely to be a glut of poor people seeking employment, which drives down rural wages, making the labour market a weak instrument to fight poverty.

2.8. Support mechanisms for female headed households

Female headed households face difficulties in recovering from shocks that operate at an aggregate level, affecting the entire community, country and region, as risks cannot be shared (Bird and Prowse, 2008). A household's initial conditions (household assets, household characteristics, including dependence ratio and educational status of household members) influence the household's vulnerability to shocks and other forms of available coping strategies. Female-headed households are less able to deal with shocks than the male-headed ones, as are households headed by orphans, the elderly and the chronically ill (Munaku and Chigora, 2010). All families have strengths as well as diverse ways of coping to survive and stay together. However, no matter how much strength a family have, the impact of the broader environment may make it difficult, if not possible for families to cope with crisis without additional support. In fact all families need support beyond the family to survive and to reinforce their internal strengths (Ambrosino, Emeritus, Emeritus and Ambrosino, 2005).

2.8.1. The family and communal structures

A family is any group of individuals who live together, who have blood ties (or at least have regular contact) and who are expected to perform specific functions especially in reference to the children involved (Crosson-Tower, 2002). The family is probably the most significant social system within which all individuals function (Ambrosino, Emeritus, Emeritus and Ambrosino, 2005). It is the closest, most intense, most durable, and influential part of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1990). According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, the family can affect the community through its needs for services (Berk, 2000). The family can also act as a support mechanism but most female heads are deserted by extended family members due to their statuses. A family that functions within an unsupportive environment is much more susceptible to family problems than one that functions within a supportive environment (Ambrosino, Emeritus, Emeritus and Ambrosino, 2005). However, those in the de jure female headship might get physical support better than those in the de facto. De jure female heads get better support being that they will still have a male counterpart in the family though he might be dysfunctional. They are therefore well placed in families than the latter.

The extended families can also provide emotional support. However on the other hand ever since the migration and urbanisation procedures there has been the erosion of the extended families and hence not providing much support unless for those families who are still staying together in the communal areas. And also considering the land resettlement procedure that has been going on in Zimbabwe for the past decade, families are displaced and are staying far away from each other. All in all this will result in families staying apart hence less support.

2.8.2. Faith based organizations as support systems

Foster (2004) argues that at community level, faith-based organizations are increasingly establishing support initiatives to assist needy households in abject poverty. Faith based organizations are increasingly being recognized as key strategy for rapidly expanding support to many people in Southern Africa. They play a major role in supporting those who are extremely poor. The role of faith based organizations in supporting dysfunctional and maladaptive families in any society of the world cannot be overemphasized (Byamugisha, Steinitz, Williams & Zondi, 2002). Some households rely on faith based organisations such as churches as a support system. Faith based organisations are increasingly establishing support initiatives to assist households. Some faith based organisation helps vulnerable female heads in areas pertaining to money, clothes for the children paying school fees for the vulnerable children as well as providing food parcels to the female headed households. The churches also form groups of female heads where they not only provide material support but also emotional and spiritual support. It is more of a support group for this group of women whereby they share their problems and experiences of their lives (Kang'ethe, 2011). In almost every church activity to support orphans, female heads are established (Byamugisha et. al, 2002). However, although the church support system assists the vulnerable, the temporary nature of its activities makes the church support unreliable.

In Zimbabwe in some churches for example Anglican Church, Roman Catholic Church, ZAOGA and Apostolic Faith Mission, this support group of women is advanced to the extent of having income generating projects. For example they train

skills such as farming, sewing, pottery, poultry and others. They then start projects that will help women sustain their families (Kang'ethe, 2010; UNAIDS, 1999)

2.8.3. NGOs and other developmental organizations

According to Economic for Africa report (2010), outside assistance is likely to be essential, or at least be an option for communities to access. There are some well-studied programmes that offer credible and effective models for working with communities. In cases where sensitive programmes, often led by NGOs with long-lasting community presence, have implemented flexible responses, the results reflect support that serves people's needs. Families, Orphans and Children Under Stress (FOCUS) is a programme of FACT, a Zimbabwean AIDS service organization established in 1987 (FAO, 2010). It is centred in eastern Zimbabwe and uses churches as a basis for its outreach to affected families and communities. Its purpose is to provide care and support to orphaned children. The programme relies on community volunteers, usually women. The programme emphasizes identification and monitoring of vulnerable children through visiting households regularly, providing community ownership, keeping children in school, establishing income-generating activities, and training and motivating volunteers. Volunteers identify unmet basic household needs and provide essential material support, including maize seed, fertilizer, food, clothing, blankets, and school fees. The visiting volunteers also offer emotional and spiritual support to the children and their caregivers. In 2000, over 2,700 orphaned children were registered and supported by nearly 180 active volunteers.

"Agriculture is the vehicle for women given the necessary support and resources women can drive the process of development to a higher level." Linda Nghatsane,

Farmers Union of South Africa and member of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development (WARD) led by the Congress of Rural Women in Durban, speaking at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW-17) meeting on May 10, 2009 (Cisse, 2011). Fertilizers, seeds, diesel for farming but accessible to all, some are informed when all is finished.

2.8.4. Government of Zimbabwe

To support poor families to cope with the risks and shocks outlined above, the Government of Zimbabwe has become well-regarded in the region for its sophisticated social protection strategies (GOZ and UNICEF, 2011). In the 1980s and 90s, the Government established and updated a number of government-run social protection mechanisms, the most well-known being the Drought Relief, Child Supplementary Feeding and Agricultural Recovery Programs and the Social Development Fund (GOZ and UNICEF, 2011). These safety nets were designed to support those in transitional poverty, rather than the chronically poor, and are considered to have been relatively successful. The chronically poor were supported through Public Assistance, although today the program receives a relatively low budget allocation. Other social protection efforts included primary and secondary school assistance (Basic Education Assistance Module, BEAM) for the poorest children and health insurance (Assisted Medical Treatment Orders, AMTO) for vulnerable families (GOZ and UNICEF, 2011).

2.8.5. Food Security

According to a report by World Food Programme (WFP), poverty and hunger act selectively and affect different strata of the population by different degrees even within

the same community (WFP, 1998). Food security is deemed to exist when all people, at all times, have the food needed for an active and healthy life. Food security is a complex phenomenon attributable to a range of factors that vary in importance across geographic and social boundaries, as well as over time (FIVIMS, IAWG, 1998). Female heads in Magaso village are amongst the vulnerable and marginalised households experiencing food insecurity due to climatic changes, shortage of labour and inadequate agricultural inputs. It was noted during the course of the study that these households receive food aid from the Government of Zimbabwe through the grain marketing board (GMB). The main aim is to reach hungry people living in poverty in rural marginalized areas who can be helped through the provision of food. It was reported through interviews that households in Magaso village pay transport money for the transportation of the food aids and each household receives a 50kg sack of the maize cereal. It was reported that for the past few years, the community of Magaso village used to receive food aids from several NGO's but mostly Catholic Relief Services (CRS) but they stated that it has been long since they last received these food parcels.

In times of crisis, two options regarding food are available: protecting consumption or modifying consumption. Protecting consumption means that the household either purchases food or receives it from relatives, the community or outside sources. Modifying consumption implies a reduction in the household's consumption, a diversification of its consumption, or a reduction in the number of consumers in the family. Reducing a household's consumption can range from limiting the size of an individual's portion to skipping whole meals. Diversifying consumption usually means eating foods that are less preferred and less expensive.

The concept of food security is multi-dimensional and provides valuable insights into the nature and extent of a population's food situation. Additionally, food security can be looked at from many different levels: global, national, local and family. However, ultimately, it is about individuals (WFP, 1998). Household food security has three main components: availability, access and usage. Available, stable supplies of food are a prerequisite for household food security. However, households must also have physical and economic access to food. In addition, they must have the knowledge to use such food appropriately and have a health or sanitation environment that allows for adequate absorption of food by the body.

2.9. Theoretical framework

This section will discuss some theoretical frameworks attempting to explain the challenges that female-headed households may face when implementing the livelihood strategies for their survival and that of their families. This study will utilize two frames: the strengths perspective and the feminist theory.

2.9.1. *Strengths perspective*

The strengths perspective is built on the idea that client groups (female headed households) are untapped resources of energy and momentum in their own lives (Gray, 2010; Saleebey, 1997). The strengths perspective primarily assumes (Saleebey, 2002) that all clients and environments possess strengths that can be marshalled to improve on quality of life. This perspective according to Saleebey (2005) is a social work approach that values families. Families are described as the primary social service agency in meeting the social, educational, and health care needs of members. Sometimes life changing challenges produce distress and there is

a need to recognise and build on their strengths so as to assist them improve their lives.

The strengths perspective arises from the profession of social work's commitment to social justice, the dignity of every human being, and building on people's strengths and capacities rather than exclusively focusing on their deficits, disabilities or problems. As an orientation to practice, emphasis is placed on uncovering, reaffirming, and enhancing the abilities, interests, knowledge, resources, aspirations and hopes of individuals, families, groups, and communities. This approach assumes that the articulation and extension of strengths and resources increases likelihood that people will reach the goals and realize the possibilities they have set for themselves (University of Kansas, 2004).

The female head's goals must be small, important to the client, and specific. These goals should also emphasize the presence of something positive in their lives, rather than the absence of their male counterparts. However the social workers and the community developers will conceptualize goals (hopes and dreams) as a process rather than solely an end and it assists the practitioners in aiding the female heads in forming attainable client's dignity (Saleebey, 1996) .

The strengths perspective theory also uses concepts such as respecting, engaging client motivation for change through strengths, being a collaborator with the client in therapeutic work, avoiding victim mindsets, and seeing the environment as full of resources (Saleebey, 1992). For example female heads can be realised as a marginalized or stigmatised group of women with some households deeply in poverty

failing to recognize and mobilize the capacities they bring for change and growth in becoming potential resources to their communities (GlenMaye, 1998). The social workers and community developers will assess the strengths that the female heads have for their sustainable development and also for them to deal with emotional distresses, poverty and other dehumanizing effects that come with the title of being a female head. However this approach can be used to help those female heads that are deeply in need of help by assessing their strengths and the goals that they want to achieve if they have any. This can be a stepping stone in helping them create better livelihoods for their families thereby reducing poverty in these households.

2.9.2. Feminist perspectives

Liberal feminism points out that liberal, supposedly universal standard of humanity, equality and reason are not in fact universal because women are denied full social participation, public life and education (Freedman, 2001). Liberal feminism focuses upon overcoming discrimination against women as a class or group (Hickey and Moore, 2001). It aims to fit women into existing society and to remove obstacles to their public advancement and development (Ackerly, 2000). Liberal feminism points out that full social participation and public life has been denied women. The aim and advocacy embedded in this theory is for women to be given access to education, economic opportunities, support, and be given an environment devoid of gender based discrimination. According to Wollstonecraft (1978) cited in Ackerly (2000) states that women have potential as good as men so they should be given the same opportunities as men. In the case of Zimbabwe, it was discovered that most women are not fully empowered when it comes to formal education, economic empowered

and their social participation is limited as compared to that of women (GOVZIM and UNICEF, 2011).

2.10. Conclusion

The phenomenon of female headed households in Magaso village of Zimbabwe demonstrates the pain and anguish of women in developing world. Faced with the task of taking care of their children and possibly other elderly members of their families, they have not escaped facing poverty and therefore validating the concept of feminization of poverty. However, they have taken advantages of available support mechanisms such as family and community; faith based organisations as well as civil organisations. However these females also work extra hard for the survival by implementing several livelihood strategies of which some are a danger to their health.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this study for the purpose of collecting data required to understand the livelihoods of female headed households in Magaso village of Mutoko district, Zimbabwe. It describes and justifies the qualitative research methodology used to provide answers to the livelihood strategies of female headed households in Magaso village. It also looks at issues of access and entry to the research setting in Magaso village. It further describes how data was collected from the female headed households. Finally, it describes the data analysis procedures employed in this study.

3.2. Methodology

Research methodology refers to a technique for collecting data or a procedure that a researcher uses to condense, organise and analyze data in the process of undertaking scientific research in social science (Bryman, 2001). It is therefore the method or the strategy the researcher used to conduct and pursue the study on the livelihoods strategies of female heads in Magaso village.

3.3. Qualitative paradigm in the study

A qualitative research design in form of a case cum a phenomenological study was used in this study. Qualitative research involves 'systematic investigations that include inductive, in-depth, non-quantitative studies of individuals, groups, organisations, or communities' (Thyer 2001). Creswell (2009) defined qualitative research as a means

of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human process. Boeije (2010) further adds that, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe and understand social phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. It is aimed at 'describing, making sense of, interpreting or reconstructing in terms of the meanings that the subjects attach to it' (Schurink 1998). A qualitative research approach was suitable for this study because the researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of the female headed households. In this case female heads in Magaso village were interviewed and the researcher elucidated what these female headed households mentioned with regards to how they survive in rural areas. It is a research approach that privileges the lived experience of the subject, and the meaning the subjects attaches to the phenomena being investigated (Smith, 1995).

According to Creswell (2009), some of the characteristics of the qualitative approach are as follows:

- Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the natural setting at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. Consequently, this study was done Magaso village of Mutoko District in Zimbabwe. In this case data was collected from female heads in their natural setting where they were conducting their livelihoods strategies. This is defined as the interpretive or naturalist paradigm which seeks to understand a phenomenon in specific settings, such as real world setting where the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon; interest meanings, perspective and understanding (Patton, 2001).

- The qualitative researcher is the key instrument in the process of data collection. Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data such as interviews and observations. Then the researchers review all the data, make sense of it and organize it into categories or themes that cut across all the data sources. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews for the process of data collection; analyze the data obtained from all participants to come up with a report.
- Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning. In the entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the households hold about the problem or issue not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research. In this research project, the researcher was interested in the perspectives attached to and experiences of female heads, how they survive without male counterparts, their needs as well as the problems they encounter in implementing livelihood duties for their households in Magaso village of Mutoko. Thus, qualitative research seeks to explain the meaning of social phenomena through exploring the ways in which individuals understand their social worlds (Boeije 2010) In this research project , female headed households were allowed to talk about their social reality, problems and need, express their opinions on what they think occurs as well as express their emotions .

Qualitative research is advantageous to this study because it aims to comprehend phenomena of livelihoods in this case and uses an inductive form of reasoning by originating concepts, insights and understanding within the female headed households .This research method was suitable rather than the quantitative research

methodology because it derives the interpretation from the households' perspective. Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding of human responses to a situation (Hoepfl, 1997). Qualitative research is ideographic in the sense that it contains and gives meaning to the practicality of day to day people's lives, driving the investigation to become naturalistic (De Vos, 2000). A qualitative research method is significant for investigation of livelihood strategies of female headed households as it concentrates on qualities of human behavior (De Vos, 2000) which is intentional and creative, easily explained and not predicted. In view of the aforementioned characteristics and uses of qualitative research, the researcher concludes that this approach was suitable to realize the objectives of this study

3.4. Case study cum a phenomenological study designs

In this research project, case study cum phenomenological designs was adopted to enable the researcher to get an in-depth and detailed understanding of the livelihoods of female headed households and afford the researcher an opportunity to provide recommendations that helps to improve the livelihoods of the female headed households in villages of Mutoko District. A case study is a form of qualitative design where a limited number of units of analysis are studied intensively within a specified time frame, using a combination of appropriate data collection devices (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2005:193; Creswell, 1994). A case study is not intended as a study of the entire organization. Rather it is intended to focus on a particular issue, feature or unit of analysis (Mohd Noor, 2008). In this study only 15 female heads were selected from Magaso village of Mutoko as part of the investigations. The researcher

did not collect information from all female heads in Mutoko neither from all female heads in Magaso but only from a few households. The researcher chose a case study because the population is too big and less manageable in a short time frame. A case study also provides face-value credibility that is; it provides evidence or illustrations with which the researchers can readily identify (Bachor, 2000). The study also utilized phenomenological design because it is interested in lived experiences of the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2008) and it is powerful for understanding subjective experience, gaining insights into people's motivations and actions (Stanley and Wise, 1999). In this case information was gained only from female heads and not all women in general. Female heads were the subjects and were encountering problems in taking care of their households thereby being in better position to explain how they feel about being female headship and the livelihood strategies they are practising. The study was cross sectional meaning that it was conducted once in November 2012.

3.5. Data collection methods

The data collection process was exploratory since the researcher explored through asking questions, listening attentively and expressing empathy (Creswell, 2008; Babbie, 2007). The researcher used in-depth interviews to collect information from female headed households and the interviews were recorded. In-depth interviews are important in that they provide the researcher with more detailed information about the respondents' personal experiences, views and behaviour. The researcher talked face to face with the female headed households and was able to probe for more information. Babbie (2007) explains that interviews are conversations with a purpose and the purpose is not to get answers of questions, but understanding the experience

of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. A key informant who is the Member of Parliament in the study area was also interviewed. The researchers also observed the livelihood activities engaged by the household heads during the interviews. Secondary data methods were also used to gather information about the survival strategies of female heads. Information was collected from previous studies conducted as well other literature.

3.6. Research instrument

An instrument is any tool that is used in data collection. Babbie, (2001) defines a research instrument as a tool that is used for collecting data needed to find solutions to the problem under investigation. The study used an interview guide to administer in-depth interviews. The interview guide consisted of unstructured and non- directive questions. This was just to guide the research respondents. The researcher also used an audio recorder to record the interviews.

3.7. Research domain

The Mutoko district, in the north eastern corner of Zimbabwe, was initially established as an administrative outpost for the British Empire in 1911. It is chiefly inhabited by the Buja people, who have settled in Mutoko from part of what is now Mozambique (Moyo, Sill & O'Keefe, 1993).The region's primary language is Shona, although English literacy is relatively high and also there are other inhabitants from Mozambique. Mutoko is known for its exceptional tomato and mango farming which, along with granite, is its main industry. The population of Mutoko is about 132 268 with approximately 68 877 and within the boundaries of the Mutoko district, there are nearly 30,000 families, 17 clinics, and 4 hospitals (CSO, 2002). Magaso village fall

under ward 13 of Mutoko District and there are about 1510 females that is 53 % in comparison to 1385 males (CSO, 2002). It is a mountainous region, known for its rugged beauty. The mountains and its rural nature make it difficult to travel in Mutoko. Of it is nearly 1100 km of roads, only 70 km are tarred. Mutoko District is situated 160 kilometres to the north east of the capital, Harare and about 90 kilometres away from Nyamapanda Border post (Zimbabwe Parliament, 2004).

Mutoko District lays within the Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe specifically the middle-veld. Most parts of Mutoko District lie within Region Four, with 450-650 mm of rainfall characterized by periodic seasonal droughts and severe dry spells during the rainy season. Some few patches of the district, particularly in the south, lie within agro-ecological Region Three (500-750 mm), characterized by mid-season dry spells suitable for drought resistant crops, livestock, and semi-intensive farming (Moyo, Sill & O'Keefe, 1993; Chenje, Sola and Paleczny, 1998). Mutoko District falls within the Granite/Gneiss rocks, which cover approximately 53 percent of the country's land surface mainly in the eastern half of the country. Primary porosity in these rocks is so minute that it is assumed not to contribute to groundwater movement and storage. Groundwater, therefore, occurs in the weathered zone where the rocks are buried deeper underground (Chenje, Sola and Paleczny, 1998). Mutoko District is dominated by Paraferallitic soils derived in situ from igneous and metamorphosized igneous parent rock. These are sandy soils which are naturally infertile due to low nutrient reserves and little capacity to retain the nutrients due to low levels of clay and organic matter (Biriwasha, 2010). The major economic activity in Mutoko District is peasant farming.

3.8. Population

Population is the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements from which the sample is actually selected (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). Powers et al. (1985) in De Vos (2005), defines a population as a set of entities where all the measurements of interest to the researcher are represented. Gray (2005) also defines a population as 'the total number of possible units or elements that are included in the study'. According to Strydom (2005), a population is the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned. Robson (2002) provides a summary definition when he defines a population as referring to 'all the cases'. It would be difficult for the researcher to study all the people from which the researcher wants to draw conclusions. The researcher would find it difficult to interview every member of the studied population; hence the researcher may select a sample. In this study, the population constituted of all female headed households of Magaso village of Mutoko district. Cohen et al (2006:93) observes that "too large a sample might become unwieldy and too small a sample might be unrepresentative". The sample used was 15 female headed households.

3.9. Sampling frame

The sampling frame for this study comprised of all female headed households on the list from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the department of Social Welfare in Mutoko residing in Magaso village. Sampling, for Kerlinger, in De Vos (2000), is viewed as a subset of measurements drawn from the population which we are curious to study. Sampling refers to abandoning certainty in favour of probability (Bless and Smith, 2000).

3.10. Unit of analysis (sample size)

A sample is a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons which together comprise the subject of our study (De Vos, 2000). It assists researchers in explaining some facet of the population. A sample consists of cases (units or elements) that were examined and selected from a defined research population (Boeijs, 2010). Strydom (2005) defines sample as 'elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or it can be viewed as a subsequent of measurements drawn from a population in which we are interested'. Kerlinger (2005) states that a sample means taking any portion of a population as a representative of that population. This study was only limited to female headed households in Magaso village of Mutoko district in Zimbabwe. This research used of 15 female headed households. The choice for the sample size was mainly based on the need for accuracy required by the researcher and the degree of variation in the sample (Babbie, 2007).

3.11. Sampling procedure

The study utilised a purposive non-probability sampling procedure. Strydom and Venter (1996) describe sampling as the process of taking a portion of a population as a representatives of that population. The process of sampling is necessary due to large size of a population and the consequent impracticality and prohibitive cost of testing each member of any population (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Whittaker (1999) concurs by saying that, "sampling refers to the process of selecting the participants that will be involved in the study". Thus the sample is chosen from total possible data sources known as the population. It has been argued that, in qualitative research, the sample is intentionally selected according to the needs of the study, commonly

referred to as "purposive sampling" or "purposeful selection" (Boeije, 2010). Purposive sampling is based on the 'judgement of the researcher that a sample has typical elements which contain the most typical attributes of the population' (Alston and Bowles 2003). According to Babbie (2001), purposive sampling is when a researcher selects the sample on the basis of his/her own knowledge of the population, its elements and the nature of the research aims, in short, based on the judgement and the purpose of the study. The inclusion criteria were all female heads of Magaso village whether they stay with or without a male partner.

An advantage of purposive sampling based on the inclusion criteria is that people who do not fit the requirements are eliminated. It therefore narrows sample size and lessen search costs. A limitation of purposive sampling is that, it is the responsibility of the researcher to choose participants. There is a possibility that the researcher could be wrong in choosing suitable participants for the study (Gillham, 2000). To take care of such challenges, the researcher also approach the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the department of social welfare in Mutoko to provide samples of female headed households in Magaso village.

3.12. Data analysis

The data was analyzed by qualitative data analysis methods. De Vos et al (2005) explain data analysis as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to a mass of data collected. This involved reducing volumes of raw information collected from female heads, sifting the significant from trivial, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of that being revealed by the data. Qualitative data collected was therefore analyzed through content

thematic analysis and this gave structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Content thematic analysis is the compressing of many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Stemler, 2001). Once the data reaches a point of saturation the process of data collection could be ended. The researcher followed eight steps as proposed by Tesch (Creswell, 2009: 186) to analyse data. This consists of the following:

- Planning to get a sense of the whole by reading all the transcriptions carefully, whilst jotting down some ideas that come to mind which are related to the topic.
- Picking one document or interview transcript on the top of the pile and reading it, asking questions about it and writing thoughts on the margin. Creswell (2009), emphasize that, not to think of the substance of the information but the underlying meaning.
- This task was done on all transcripts whilst making a list of topics. Similar topics were clustered together and then the topics were put into columns arrayed as "major topics", "unique topics" and "left over's".
- With the list at hand, the data was looked at it again. This time, abbreviating each topic as a code and writing them next to the appropriate segments of the texts. Preliminary organizing scheme were employed to see if the new categories and codes emerge.
- The researcher found the most descriptive wording for the topic and turned them into categories. The total list of categories was reduced by grouping related topics together and lines drawn between categories to show interrelationships. The coding strategy involving generating categories, themes and patterns was used to aid analysis through the lens of existing literature and theoretical frameworks. It involves organizing text data into categories and

labelling those categories with a term, a term often based in the actual language of the participant called an in vivo term (Creswell, 2003). The researcher made a final decision on abbreviation for each category and alphabetizes the codes. The researcher used the coding to generate a number of themes. These themes are the ones that constituted major findings in the study and formed separate headings in the findings section. According to Smith (1995), there is no one correct way to employ qualitative thematic analysis. Smith (1995) asserts that each project creates the appropriate manner for the employment of thematic analysis. Researchers should give meaning to the participant's interview and engage in an 'interpretative relationship with the transcription' (Smith, 1995).

- Data material belonging to each category was assembled in one place and a preliminary analysis was performed.
- The researcher reported the results of research.

The qualitative researcher acknowledges that there may be bias in interpretation and takes steps to correct this by ensuring that evidence for the analytical findings exists in the data, and that different interpretations of the data can be reconciled. In this way, the research conclusions were grounded in the real-world patterns that emerged from the research findings. It was therefore crucial for the researcher to document the process of analysis thoroughly so that the logic of the analysis can be tracked.

3.13. Method of Data verification

Qualitative validity has been referred to the process whereby the researcher checks the accuracy of findings by employing certain procedures (Creswell 2009). Guba's

model of ensuring the trustworthiness of qualitative data as espoused (in Krefting, 1991) was applied. Guba argues that the worth of any research endeavour, regardless of the approach, is evaluated by peers, grant reviewers and readers. The characteristics to ensure trustworthiness are truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

3.13.1. Truth-value

Truth-value asks whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of findings for the subjects of informants and the context in which the study was undertaken Guba (in Krefting 1991). Truth-value also establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of findings asked on the research design, informants and context. In qualitative research, truth value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by informants. The researcher's job is said to be one of representing those multiple realities revealed by informants as adequately as possible. It has been suggested that, a qualitative study is credible when it represents such accurate descriptions or interpretations of human experience that people who also share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions. Truth value is established by the strategy of credibility and for the purpose of this reason; the researcher used of the various interviewing techniques during the interviews as mentioned earlier in this proposal. The researcher also engaged with the research participants for prolonged period of time which is thirty minutes per interview session. Use of prolonged engagement assisted the researcher to detect response sets where informants consistently either agreed or disagreed with the questions. Furthermore, the researcher made sure that the truth value of the study was not affected by closeness of the relationship with participants.

3.13.2. Applicability

According Krefting (1991), “applicability refers to the degree to which findings can be applied to other context and setting or with other groups. It is the ability to generalize from the findings to larger populations.” Applicability is established through the strategy of transferability. Guba's model (in Krefting 1991) highlights that; transferability is more the responsibility of the person wanting to transfer the findings to another situation or population than of the researcher of the original study. Hence, the researcher presented sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison by other researchers.

3.13.3. Consistency

The third criterion of trustworthiness considers the consistency of the data, that is, whether the finding would be consistent if the inquiry were replicated with the same subjects or in similar context (Krefting, 1991). Consistency is defined in terms of dependability. The researcher described the exact methods of data gathering, analysis and interpretation used in the study. Such dense description of methods provides information as to how repeatable the study was or how unique the situation was.

3.13.4. Neutrality

This is the last criterion of trustworthiness. It refers to the degree to which findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives (Krefting 1991). Guba in Krefting (1991), shifted the emphasis of neutrality in qualitative research from the researcher to the data, so that rather than looking at neutrality of the investigator, the neutrality of the data is

considered. It is also suggested that, conformability be the criteria of neutrality. The researcher was involved intensely in the whole research process as this enhances research findings through intimate familiarity and discovery of hidden fact (Krefting 1991).

3.14. Envisaged ethical issues

‘Ethical guidelines serve as standards and as the basis on which each researcher ought to evaluate his own conduct’ (Strydom 2002). Strydom (1998) defines ethics as a set of moral principles which are suggested by an individual or group, are subsequently widely accepted, and offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents. Consistent with the ethical requirements of research, the researcher respected and observed the following ethical protocols: Consulted the relevant authorities to facilitate gaining access to data setting, sought research respondents’ informed consent and adhered to the principles of confidentiality and anonymity.

In line with the ethical requirements of research, the researcher consulted with relevant authorities to gain access to research components. In order to gain access to the participants, the researcher gained permission from the University in form of a clearance letter, Mutoko District Council, chiefs, councillors and the village heads to conduct the interviews.

According to De Vos (2000), obtaining informed consent means that all information on the aim of the investigation, the procedures, advantages, disadvantages, dangers will be rendered to their legal representatives. The most fundamental principle for ethical

acceptability is informed consent. The involved participants had to be informed of the nature and purpose of the research, its risks and benefits and must consent to participate without coercion. The participants were given a consent form to sign and they were legible to withdraw from the research when they felt like.

To observe the principles of confidentiality and anonymity means handling information about subjects in a confidential manner. It places strong obligation on the researcher to guard jealously against information that he/she is confided in by the respondents (Strydom, 2005). The researcher ensured the participants that the information they share was not be disclosed to anyone for whatsoever reasons. Strategies to sustain confidentiality eliminate the risk of harm and embarrassment to those studied. The researcher's promise to protect the research participants' rights and decisions was to be upheld in an effort to research others (Bless and Smith, 2000).

3.15. Limitations

Due to the purpose of the research, households had a tendency of giving socially acceptable answers in order to hide their situation and this distorts the collected data. The researcher then used probing to get more information. The time frame of the research was also a limitation. Current statistics for Zimbabwe were not available since Zimbabwe conduct censuses after every 10 years and the last census was in 2002. However another census was conducted in September 2012 and the statistics results were not yet available.

3.16. Delimitations

The problem of getting insufficient information was dealt with by having open ended questions that probes for more answers so that informants provided more rich information. The issue of sensitivity was overcome by ensuring confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis and interpretations of the findings of the study on the livelihood strategies of female headed households in Magaso village of Mutoko District in Zimbabwe. The discussion is presented in sections, first, the demographic information of the female heads, and second, the discussion of themes and sub-themes that were extracted from the research interviews. The discussions are supported by extracts from the households' stories. The data presented was collected through interviews from 15 female headed household from Magaso village.

4.2. Demographic Data

Table 1: Demographic information of the female heads interviewed

FEMALE HEAD	AGE	EDUCATION	MARITAL STATUS	NO. OF DEPENDANTS	RELATIONSHIPS
Rangarirai	34	Form 4	Widowed	7	mother younger sister 3 children 2 nieces
Mufaro	50	Standard 3 (Grade 5)	Widowed	4	2 children 2 grandchildren
Nyaradzai	61	Grade 7	Widowed	8	3 children Daughter in law 4 grandchildren
Ropafadzo	72	None	Widowed	5	Grandchildren
Mazvita	47	Form 2	Widowed	5	3 children 2 grandchildren
Hazvinei	40	Form 4	Separated	2	Child and younger brother
Tinashe	49	Grade 7	Widowed	6	1 child 5 grandchildren
Tapfuma	50	Grade 7	Married	7	3 children 4 grandchildren husband stays and

					works in urban areas
Zvanyadza	32	Grade 7	Married	5	Husband (but she is the main decision maker and 4 children
Rudo	Late 60's	None	Widowed	5	Children
Nhamo	30	Form 4	Separated	1	Child
Shamiso	62	Grade 4	Widowed	2	Children
Muchaneta	33	Form 1	Separated	3	Children
Nyasha	59	Grade 5	Widowed	8	3 children 5 grandchildren
Tawona	66	Grade 3	Widowed	4	Grandchildren

The fifteen female heads gave their personal details which are presented in table 1. The real names of the household heads were replaced with pseudonyms. The demographic information helped to create a picture of the household heads. The information includes age, level of education, marital status, number of dependants and the relationships between the female heads and the dependants.

4.2.1. Age

The ages of the female heads ranged from thirty to seventy-two years and many of them are between forty to seventy-two years. According to the interviews, it was realised that the younger they were, the physically stronger they were to take care of the households. It was also realised that the elderly female heads were increasingly becoming weaker due to aging, while some were increasingly falling sick. This means they needed to be cared for by their dependents.

4.2.2. Education

A fundamental aspect in the demographic information of the female heads is their education level. 88% of the interviewed female heads indicated that they had received minimal formal education as elaborated in figure 1 with 54% of the female heads having attended school at primary education level.

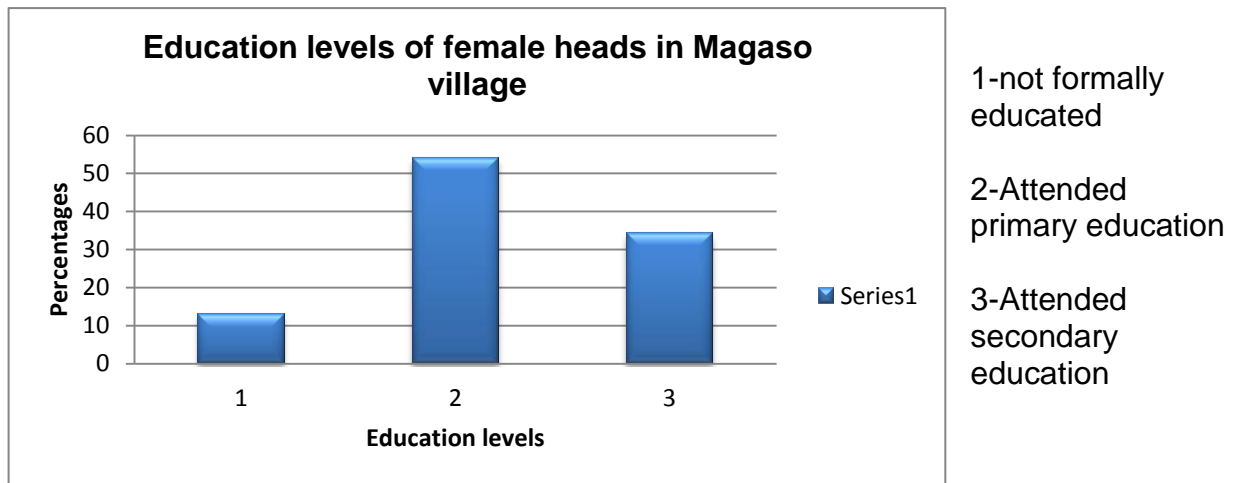


Figure 1: Education levels of female heads in Magaso village

The graph above reveals that the literacy rate in Magaso village declined with increasing age, confirming that the elderly female headed households were relatively disadvantaged with regard to formal education. Since literacy can be defined as attending school up to grade three, in this research 88 percent of the female heads can be regarded to be literate.

At least three female heads of the five who attended high school had finished their ordinary level (form four). Also twelve percent of the interviewed female heads stated that they never attended school. The main reason the female heads gave for not furthering their education was due to lack of financial resources, social problems and cultural beliefs that discouraged the parents from educating the girl children. The following sentiments support the revelation.

"I never went school because my parents did not have money to send me to school."
(Ropafadzo)

“My parents regarded educating a female child as a waste of money since the child will get married and will be part of another family. One would rather educate male children.”(Rudo)

“I grew up as the only girl child in our family. Since my mother was epileptic, I was the only option to take care of her .Therefore; my father forced me to leave school.” Tawona

The responses of the female heads above indicate that most of them were raised in poverty infested families that discouraged sending children to school.

4.2.3. Marital status

The results drawn from table 1 shows that most female headed households in Magaso village are caused by the death of husbands, although the reasons of most deaths were not revealed. Sixty seven percent of the female heads are widowed. Some female heads stated that their husbands died of HIV/AIDS related diseases and road carnage, while some believed it was due to witchcraft. The other cause for female headship that was mentioned was due to separation or divorce.

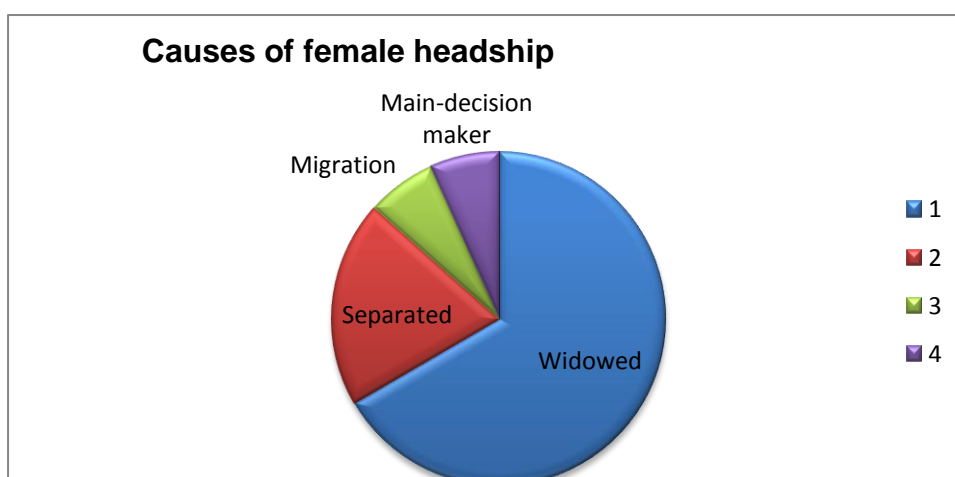


Figure 2 -Marital Status and causes of female headship

The above pie chart indicates that 20% of the female heads had separated from their partners or husbands. It was revealed from the interviews that under circumstances of separation, most husbands/partners give up on contributing to financial needs of their families leaving the female heads to single headedly take care of their households. Findings also revealed that although 6, 7% of the female heads were staying with their husbands, the female heads still took the main responsibility of running the households. This did not mean that husbands were purely passive, but their role as husbands in both provision and decision making was handled by their female spouses. Also 6, 7% of the interviewed females stated that rural–urban migration resulted in female headship in their households. It was stated that the husbands migrated to urban areas where there are more economic activities and hence higher chances of getting jobs. It was also revealed during the interviews that most rural areas are agro-based and in the event of erratic rainfalls, this would force men to migrate to urban areas to look for jobs to substitute their agricultural income. Findings also stated that in case of the husband migrating to urban areas, the female head and the family members could not relocate to follow the husband/father of the children. They had to serve the role of household custodian as well as tend the animals such as cattle and goats. For example one female head stated that,

“My husband told me that urban women do not have traditional norms and values like us. So he told me that I will be corrupted if I relocated with him.”

(Tapfuma)

4.2.4. Dependants

Study findings revealed that the more dependants a female headed household had amid little or no income, the more poverty stricken the household was. Statistics on

dependants revealed that most female heads in Magaso village had more than two dependants that included children, grandchildren, parents, and at times siblings. It was also revealed that more dependants in female headed households provided labour in the agricultural fields. Findings also revealed that some female heads were taking care of their sisters' children whose parents were dead. All the fifteen female heads indicated that they lived with their children and grandchildren. It was also noted that some households could barely take care of the needs of the dependants. This resulted in the dependents becoming malnourished. In the same vein, some households could not afford the school fees for both their children and other dependants. This compromised the future of such children and dependants and many had to resort to menial jobs for their economical survival. At some point in the interviews, it was also revealed that in Magaso village, some male children who were not attending school were encouraged by their parents and community members to look for work at the granite sites near Lot shopping centre so that they can contribute to the households' income. The poverty situation, however, condoned child labour. This was also a way of passing poverty across generations.

Findings also revealed that the state of the relatively elderly children becoming the providers of households and taking care of their younger siblings caused conflict in the household, with the provider children viewing the beneficiaries as the ones responsible for their fate. For example, Nyaradzai said,

“At times my bigger children fight my grandchildren blaming them for the poverty that the family is facing. They state that if it was not for them, may be their life (bigger children's) would be better than it is now”

Research findings also revealed that most household heads are grandmothers taking care of their grandchildren. These grandmothers happen to be the breadwinners of the households and the main decision makers of these households. They were forced to take care of their orphaned grandchildren. However, some grandchildren had parents living in urban areas. The state of grandmothers shouldering such heavy load drove them into deeper poverty and according to this researcher could drive them fast into the graves before their time.

4.3. Livelihood Strategies of Female Heads in Magaso Village

Female headed households in Magaso village of Mutoko District in Zimbabwe reported that they engage in a diversity of livelihood strategies for their households' survival. The households were asked about their livelihood strategies and the responses were as shown in Figure 3. Several themes were made from the livelihood approaches.

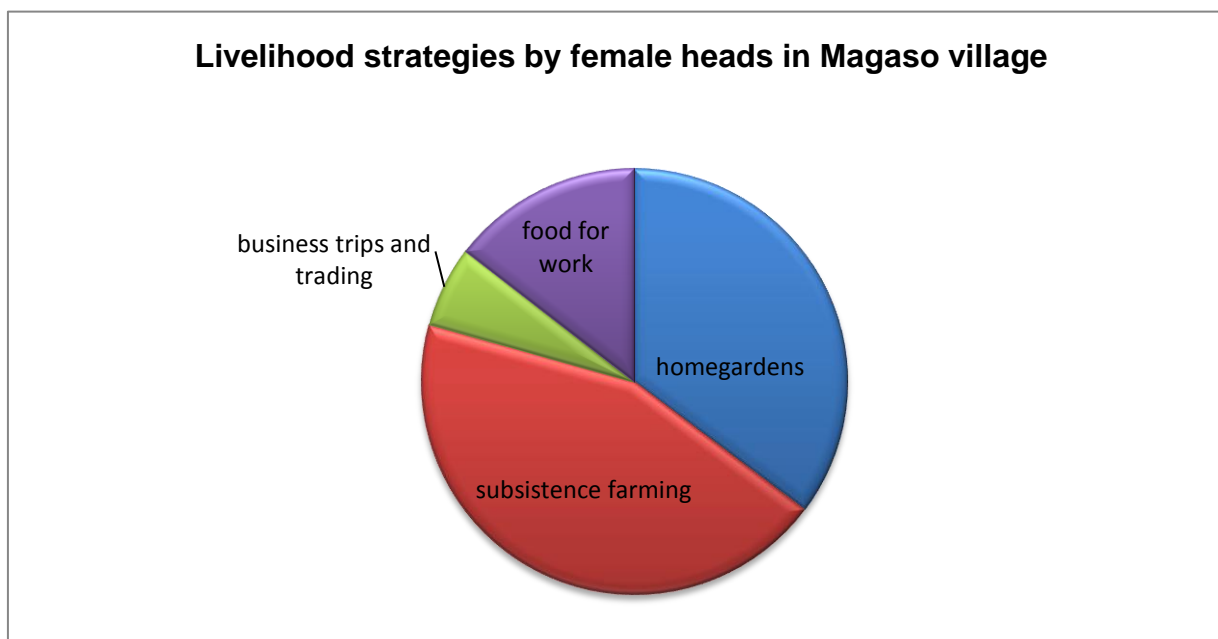


Figure 3: Livelihood strategies by female heads in Magaso village

4.3.1. Engagement in agricultural activities as the main livelihood activity

Study findings indicated that engagement in agriculture was a central livelihood strategy amongst the female heads in Magaso village. The study participants engaged in both in subsistence farming and in home gardening.

4.3.1.1. Engagement in subsistence farming

The interviews conducted showed that subsistence farming was the main survival strategy engaged by the female heads who remain the main providers of labour for farming in Magaso village. It was noted that 44% of the female heads engaged in subsistence farming for the survival of their households. It was realised that the main source of food come from subsistence farming despite the fact of land ownership. The female heads also indicated that they also sell excess products. During interviews some female heads made the following sentiments:

We grow cereals and pulses (maize, groundnut, round nut, cowpea, and rapoko). Around our homes, we plant fruit trees, shade trees, and hedging. We also have small gardens near the homestead that are specifically for vegetable production. (Tapfuma)

“As a family, we farm maize, groundnuts and vegetables mostly for family consumption. At times, we sell vegetables in the Nyamapanda highway especially when we are in need of cash for the grinding mill. I usually ask my daughters and granddaughters to go and sell.”(Nyaradzai)

“As a household, we farm cereal products so that we can have enough to eat. I spent most of the time in the field from around 5am in the morning. Otherwise, sleeping could result in hunger for the household.” (Mazvita)

The sentiments above revealed that female heads in Magaso village depend on subsistence farming as a survival strategy though it is not sustainable to the households due to erratic rainfalls, inadequate agricultural inputs and shortage of labour. However, in the event that the above mentioned reasons are present, farming can sustain the lives of the female heads in Magaso village.

4.3.1.2. Engagement in home gardening

Study findings also revealed that engagement in home gardens was the second important agricultural livelihood strategy employed by the female heads as it provided them with more income especially when they sell in Harare for a better profit. It was recorded that 35% of the interviewed female headed households in Magaso village use home-gardens as a survival strategy. The participants stated that vegetables and fruit trees are the most important plants for the home gardens. Plants that were present in most of the home gardens included tomatoes, green beans, cabbages, onions and many others. Also present were fruit trees such as mango, lemon and guava trees. The following sentiments were made pertaining to the home gardens:

“Most female heads here in Magaso village produce vegetables and fruits especially mangoes. We sell in the highway from Nyamapanda and some even travel as far as Harare to sell at the Mbare market place.” (Tapfuma)

“Selling garden products provides income to buy groceries and also to afford us to grind the maize.”(Nyaradzai)

Study participants confirmed that products harvested from home gardens were found to improve the family’s nutritional status, health, and food security and provide female headed households with income and animal feed. This helps the Magaso community

to achieve self-sufficiency. However, some of the plant products are sold in local and regional markets, and thus improving the household's financial status. Engagement in home gardens in Magaso village can be said to be a sustainable livelihood strategy because the female heads are able to take care of a larger part of the needs of the households. This is because home gardening is carried out throughout the year.

4.3.1.3. Gender allocation of tasks in agricultural activities

Study findings indicated little gender differentiation and allocation of tasks in both genders, with all equally participating in various tasks. For example, all the members of the household irrespective of gender got involved in activities such as preparing the field for planting, weeding as well as harvesting. However, it was observed that one gender was well suited to some tasks than the other. For example women and the girl children did well in planting than men while men were more suitable to tasks that required physical strengths such as fencing the farms to protect animals such as goats and cattle from destroying the crops, digging compost and livestock manure and building houses. However, it was revealed that in households where there are no male dependants, females end up conducting those tasks. For example women and girl children would take the responsibility of looking after animals especially cattle and goats away from their homes.

In contrast to subsistence farming, engagement in home gardening was viewed as the responsibility of women more than men. The activities included going to the market to sell vegetables and fruits.

4.3.1.4. Age allocation of tasks in agricultural activities

Data analysis confirmed that in subsistence farming, tasks and duties were allocated depending on age. Children were supposed to help their parents/grandparents before and after attending school. Children of ages between 9 and 12, for example, were expected to assist in planting, gathering the weeds during weeding or applying fertilizers and manure to the fields. Children were also expected to engage in household chores such as cleaning the houses, cooking, as well as fetching firewood and water from the community well, whilst the other older household members are in the field. When they are done doing those household chores, they would then join the rest of the household in the field.

In the event that irrigation was practised, children were expected to help in watering the crops. This also entailed carrying irrigation water from dug wells. According to the female heads in Magaso village, carrying irrigation water is one of the most time-consuming and challenging tasks in home gardening. Besides irrigating the land using well water, kitchen waste water was also in use. However, for the household that used or afforded labour for this type of irrigation, it afforded the household adequate food supply. This to some contributed to such household's sustainability.

4.3.2. Exchanging labour for food supplies

Research findings after data analysis indicated that the female heads in the study area sought manual labour engagements from wealthier or better off farmers in exchange for food supplies. This was especially important during times of crisis and droughts. It was also confirmed that when the female heads secure such engagements, they are helped by their dependants to finish the assignments fast.

However, such engagements were not assured and only served as temporary safety valves. The opportunities also came to the physically stronger women and therefore disadvantaged the relatively frailled and elderly household heads. The following sentiment supported the above finding.

“At times when we do not have enough food, we will go to work for other families who are better off. We make arrangements with them and they will allocate a piece of land for us to work and we will be paid with food. I work with my grandchildren. (Tinashe)

“At times we work as a family so that we finish the job quickly. When we have this food for work, my children do not have to attend school. They have to help as well because on my own, I will not be able to finish on time due to aging.” (Rudo)

“When we experience hunger in the households, we work for better families for a bucket of maize to be able to feed the household.”(Ropafadzo)

4.3.2.1. Reliance on temporary employments from different agencies

Data analysis indicated that the female heads also sought temporary employments from agencies such as NGOs or construction firms involved in activities such as building schools, clinics or roads. Although such opportunities are rare and discriminative in that favoured are the relatively younger and stronger and therefore disadvantaging the elderly female heads, they only serve as economic safety valves for the household. They therefore cannot be counted as for sustaining households.

4.3.2.2. Reliance on handouts from governments and other bodies

Study findings confirmed that some the female heads relied on food handouts from the government, NGO's and also from middle class families. Reliance on food handouts is not a sustainable livelihood to the female heads as it creates dependency syndromes. While the bureaucracy to get the food handouts was cumbersome, it is also not always available.

4.3.2.3. Household heads sanctions child labour that compromises school attendance

Study findings revealed that the female heads involved children as important agents of labour, both in their farms and also in helping them finish off assignments they get in exchange for food from other landlords/farms. In most of these activities, sometimes the children missed attending school. This, according to this researcher denies the children an opportunity to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty of their parents/grandparents. It poses a big blow to their future.

4.3.3. Involvement in business

Study findings revealed that involvement in business among the female heads was not a common livelihood strategy. Findings also noted that business ventures were mostly practised by younger and energetic female heads rather than those over 50 years of age. When interviewed, a few female heads stated that they make business trips to Mozambique and some as far as South Africa. These female traders buy groceries, clothes; kitchenware or even blankets for resell in their village and the surrounding communities. The traders stated that they target teachers in Mutoko

schools, better off households or established farmers. The following statements support the finding.

“Trading is the most income generating strategy in our family. I make trips to South Africa where I buy kitchenware, blankets and clothes that I sell in this village. Trading makes me able to pay fees for my children and provide most of their needs.” (Muchaneta)

“If I have more income from farming, I sometimes travel to Mozambique to buy groceries especially cooking oil and washing soap to resell some of the products to households in this village. I cannot go and work there because I have a big household to look after.” (Rangarirai)

For the few female heads who engaged in businesses, it was realised it was a sustaining the households. However most female heads could not involve themselves in businesses since it needed more determination and time of which they did not have. It was also realised that business trips also results in social problems, for example, the disintegration of the households, or may result in child headed households.

Table 2: Challenges faced by female heads in Magaso village

Theme 2 :Challenges faced by female heads
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care giving for the ill dependants • Financial problems • Social discrimination • Inadequate agricultural inputs • Shortage of labour

4.4.1. Care giving for the ill dependents

The study realised that female heads in Magaso village encountered the challenge of care giving during the same time they are expected to provide for the family. The females stated that they spent time taking care of ill members, the time that could be used for engaging in livelihood strategies. The female heads worried of the state of inadequate food, clothing, the high cost of medical fees, and inability to pay school fees for dependent children and grandchildren. It was revealed during the interviews that the health of some of the female heads had deteriorated as a result of the physical and emotional stress due to care giving of the ill dependants in their households. Below are some of the responses of the female heads:

“I spent more time caring for my deceased husband and relatives blame me for his death after all the hard work. Now I have to take care of my HIV child since it is my duty and I am having a challenge in allocating time to engage in livelihood strategies. My health is also at stake” (Rangarirai)

“I am taking care of my child who is suffering from HIV/AIDS. She is not able to do anything on her own and she needs me. I have a household to look after which needs food and on the other hand have grandchildren to take care of.” (Tinashe)

The responses from the interviews conducted clearly shows that care giving is a burden to female heads especially if they do not have strong support systems. It was realised during the study that care giving affects livelihood strategies especially in form of time spent on care giving. Care giving affected food production and hence raised chances of the households drifting to poverty. It was also realised that these

female heads are at risk of contracting the virus when caring for the HIV/AIDS ill members because they are not informed about the universal precaution and nutrition measures that goes with HIV status. They hardly visit hospitals and there are no community health care workers who assess and educate them on caring for HIV/AIDS infected members.

4.4.2. Lack of access to credit

Study findings revealed that female households faced dire financial constraints and had limited access to credit. They stated that most of their livelihood strategies were barely sustaining them making them to increasingly be in poverty. They stated that they do not have access to loans or any other financial assistance from financial lending organizations, NGO's or the government. The following sentiments support the findings above:

"I would appreciate if maybe we could have somewhere we can get loans to start other self sustaining projects."

"I need money so that at least I can add to the little income that I get from selling the home garden produce. It is hardly enough to cater for the needs of my dependants".

Many female heads revealed interest that if they could get access to loans, they would like to start developmental projects which can sustain their livelihoods. Another worsening situation is that most female heads in Magaso village are not aware of any lending financial organizations which can come to their aid.

4.4.3. Social discrimination

Data analysis revealed that household heads faced stigma and social discrimination from the community members. They were discriminated based on their gender and marital status. During the interviews, some female heads responded as follows:

“Some women who have husbands do not want to befriend us. They regard us as husband snatchers since our husbands are deceased.”(Tawona)

“We separated women are looked down upon by those with husbands. They see us as useless people and they invoke that as the reason why our husbands left us. They do not know how it hurts us.” (Muchaneta)

“Some actually blame me for my husbands’ death and regard me as a witch who killed their son/relative because they want to stay on their own.”(Rangarirai)

Besides being blamed by their late husbands’ relatives, findings indicated that the larger community members also stigmatized them. The widowed especially were blamed for the deaths of their husbands. This added stress making them socially and emotionally weak to tackle the challenges of sustaining their families.

4.4.4. Inadequate agricultural inputs as a challenge to farming productivity

Study findings indicated that the household heads faced the challenge of inadequate agricultural inputs to strengthen their farming activities. The household heads during the interviews decried the inadequacy of agricultural inputs especially the fertilizers. The following sentiments support the finding above.

“Surprisingly, the government sends seeds and fertilizers to be distributed to the community and we hardly get enough. Some community members get the

inputs several times when we get little or none. Strangely enough, nobody ever explains why this happens” (Mufaro)

“We have the land to farm, but we need chemicals for the vegetables and fertilizers most importantly. We cannot afford to buy them.” (Nyasha)

“We need farm inputs to improve our agricultural produce. We do not produce well because we do not have fertilizers.”(Zvanyadza)

This researcher thinks that being a widow especially a household head attracts community stigma and social discrimination. This could be associated with patriarchal cultures that believe households need to be run by men .This stigma and social discrimination have led these households to drift into poverty. The state defines and embraces feminization of poverty.

4.4.5. Shortage of Labour

Data analysis revealed that female heads in the study area showed distress over the shortage of labour in their households. When interviewed, they stated that they lose labour through increased migration of the household dependants to urban areas, marriage of their children and through HIV related deaths. However, findings indicated that a number of female heads showed ignorance about the HIV/AIDS pandemic and instead blame witchcraft for the death of their household members. During the course of the study, some female heads declared that,

“As a household, I am experiencing labour shortage because I stay with only one of my children. Some are married and they hardly assist me. Now we cannot produce enough that can sustain us as a household.” Shamiso

“We have a large field but we cannot plough all of it because of shortage of manpower to help. If only we had cattle, we could yoke it, but we have no money to hire cattle for ploughing/yoking.” Muchaneta

“I do not stay with my husband and most of my children get married when they grew up. I have 12 children in all. At least when they get married, I will have some to help me with the farm and household work.” Tapfuma

The above scenario in the study area indicates that most household livelihoods are at stake and are worsened by shortage of labour. Labour availability was also worsened by care giving of the sick relatives/family members. This has the effect on the reduction of the cultivable land and hence the productivity. Labour shortage in female headed households worsens the situation of feminization of poverty. The female heads cannot produce more and do not own cattle to assist in farming activities. From the researcher’s perspective, the impacts of HIV/AIDS were negatively impacting on the productivity of the household heads and therefore livelihood strategies. However, the household heads, perhaps due to their illiteracy and a lack of HIV/AIDS campaign awareness in the rural areas such as Magaso village never recognized the impacts of the disease to shortage of labour.

Table 3: Support mechanisms in place for female heads

Theme 3: Support mechanisms
Subthemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance on families and community members for support • Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) assistance • Assisted Medical Treatment Order (AMTO) medical scheme

4.5.1. Reliance on families and community members for support

The responses from the interviews conducted revealed that most female heads were assisted by their own immediate families. It was discovered that rural households value families as a social system and whenever they experience a challenge, family comes first. The female heads also stated that they hardly visit organisations but rather resort to the family structure where they believe that all problems could be solved. The household heads also revealed that in the event that a problem cannot be solved within the family structures, they would go to the headman and other community members for possible intervention. The following sentiments support the finding above.

“My stronger support system is my siblings, I consult them when I need help and they always solve my problems accordingly.” Tapfuma

“I consult my in-laws in times of crisis because they stay in this community, but when they fail to help, I consult other community members or even the headman so that they can intervene.” Tawona

The above mentioned sentiments show that families intervene as a support system for the female heads. The researcher considers families members and relatives as a source of social capital that can help these female heads to reduce stresses and get energy to continue in life. However, this form of support can only be effective to a lesser extent as compared to consulting social service professionals.

4.5.1.1 Friends and neighbours as a source of support

Responses from the interviews also revealed that female heads consult with friends or neighbours in the event of a problem or challenge. During the course of the study, some female heads declared that,

“My friend is the only support system that I have because she understands my situation more and does not judge me unlike other people.”Nyasha

“I knew my neighbours ever since I got married and whenever I need support I just consult them because they are now more of a family to me. We have stayed together for more than thirty years.” Ropafadzo

However, the assistance from family and community members as well as from the neighbours may not be forthcoming as the helpers may be in the same situation and experiencing the same problems. This, therefore, means that the help systems from the above sources are not reliable.

4.5.2. Government safety nets as a support mechanism for female heads

4.5.2.1. Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) assistance

Research findings indicated that female heads in Magaso village stated that they were benefiting from the BEAM educational assistance programme from the government of Zimbabwe. For example when asked about the support mechanisms they knew, a number of female heads stated the following responses,

“I would like to thank the government for their great help in paying school fees for my 2 children through the BEAM project. Otherwise without that, my children would be not be attending school. I cannot afford to pay the fees. I am not working and I am a widow.” (Rangarirai)

“There is no where that I can get the money to pay for my children’s fees. The money that I get from selling my agricultural products is not enough to take care of the household ,worse still, paying the school fees. BEAM is helping a lot in my life and the future of my children will be better.” (Nyaradzai)

“I now have hope for a better future. I thank the government for paying my dependants fees through BEAM.” (Tinashe)

The responses from the interviews revealed that the government of Zimbabwe is assisting poor households especially the orphaned and vulnerable children by educating them through the BEAM programme. The BEAM programme is being appreciated by most female heads because it is helping with the payment of the children’s school fees. It was noted that such children from poor households were identified by community members especially the teachers and they are assessed for legibility into the BEAM programme. This helps to lessen the burden of school fees from household heads and also gives children a platform to make their future through schooling. The programme also addresses child poverty, child labour and also illiteracy amongst households.

4.5.2.2. Assisted Medical Treatment Order (AMTO) medical scheme

Research findings from the female heads in Magaso village also mentioned that they were privileged to access the AMTO medical assistance from the government. For example when asked about the support mechanisms they knew, a number of female heads stated the following responses,

“I receive medical help for free because of my age.” Rudo

“ There are NGO’s who assist us with medical help at All Souls Hospital but we are told to pay for the clinic card of which at times we will not have the money.” Hazvinei

“I know of the AMTO medical scheme, I was once seriously ill and was transferred and admitted to Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare where I received the help because I could not afford the medical expenses.” Nhamo

The above sentiments show the medical support systems that are known by the female heads in Magaso village. The female heads also stated that there are mission hospitals for example All Souls Mission, Nyamuzuwe Hospital and Mutoko hospital that work with different NGO’s that allow patients to pay about 5 dollars. However, this amount excludes children under the age of 6 and people over the age of 65 who receives free treatment from the government hospitals and clinics. The only disadvantage is that this AMTO service is only available in Harare, either at Parirenyatwa Hospital or Harare Hospital, and not in rural villages such as Magaso village.

Table 4: Assistance needed by female heads for their sustainable development

Theme 4: Assistance needed by female heads for their sustainable development	
Subtheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment for sustainable development of female heads • Co-operatives or developmental projects

4.6.1. Empowerment for sustainable development of female heads

Responses from all the participants indicated that the female heads were concerned about the lack of information especially on diversified farming and also on loans. These female heads stated that they need to be empowered in all sectors of

livelihoods especially economically so that their livelihoods can be sustainable. During interviews some female heads made the following sentiments:

“I wish the government would empower us in more farming projects especially poultry and piggery so that we can work on our own and provide for our households accordingly.” Rangarirai

“I need to be informed on the lending organizations that are available for us women especially when we need to start projects.” Shamiso

The interviewed female heads revealed that they needed to be trained in different farming projects that could qualify with the climatic conditions of the Magaso village as well as the soil nature. The interviewed female heads stated that they needed to be educated and trained on the several non-farming livelihoods so that they will be able to sustain their households.

4.6.2. Co-operatives or developmental projects

The study findings indicated that female heads in Magaso village were in need of cooperatives and developmental projects such as piggery, poultry and also starting other non-farming projects. They stated that they needed to be empowered on these projects as well as being assisted with the financial means to quick start these projects. The female heads also showed interest in starting their indigenization projects through soap and bread making, but they indicated they were hampered by inadequate knowledge and resources to quick start these projects. During interviews some female heads made the following sentiments:

“We need to start cooperatives like bread and soap making but we do not have adequate resources.” Tapfuma

“ We want to work on our own as females , so if the government can empower on other money making projects that we can do as women of Magaso village.” Nyasha

In order to diversify their farming, most female heads stated that they would like to start co-operatives so that they could sustain their impoverished livelihoods. They stated that they do not want to be dependant, but they wanted to work for themselves. They therefore critically needed financial credits to start their projects. The researcher observed and that there are no developmental projects active in Magaso village.

4.7. Conclusion

Information gathered from the interviewed female heads clearly shows most female heads engage in farming as a livelihood strategy. These survival strategies are not sustainable to their households. It was also realised that there is little gender allocation of tasks, but age allocation of tasks was common when the households engage in the livelihood strategies. The study clearly showed that feminization of poverty is a problem amongst the female headed households. It was also realised that care giving is a problem encountered by female heads amongst other reasons that leads to the deterioration of the livelihoods of the already impoverished households. It was realised that the present support mechanisms of the family, community, several government structures and NGO's are trying to intervene in the problems of the female heads, but are not holistically managing to eliminate the problem of the feminization of poverty in these marginalised and vulnerable female headed households.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter seeks to discuss the research findings and to bring to conclusion the study on the livelihood strategies of the female headed households in Magaso village. While the analysis in the previous chapter gave primacy to the lived experiences of female heads and highlighted the dynamic nature of managing hardships related to female heads, this chapter provides insights for policy development, the discussions, conclusions and recommendations emanating from the themes and the subthemes that emerged from the study. It is believed that the overall objectives of the study have been met and research questions have been answered based on the findings of the study discussed in chapter 4.

5.2. Demographic data

The following discussions were made in consistent with the demographic data of the interviewed households:

5.2.1. Age

Study findings revealed that the ages of the female heads ranged from thirty to seventy-two years and many of them were in the 40-72 age categories and that the younger they were, the stronger they were to take care of their households. Literature in many developing countries suggest that it is becoming a common feature for women to be left to head households as men die due to various circumstances (Everatt and Smith, 2008). Due to the fact that women are not as gifted as men in

masculinity to handle physically demanding jobs, female headed households have usually been preoccupied by poverty. Feminization of poverty, therefore, has been an increasing phenomenon among many female headed households especially in the developing part of the world (UNDP, 1995).

5.2.2. Education

Study findings indicated that most female heads were poorly educated. Education is a basic human right in the lives of females and the absence of education among the female heads might result in poverty amongst the dependants. This is because inadequate education in many life settings informs the level of returns, remuneration of tasks and assignments, as well as promotion in job settings (Campbell, 2008). The study findings showed that minimal education is also a contributing factor that results in the feminization of poverty in Magaso village. Lack of education could mean that women could not get involved in complicated and well paying businesses as well as afford them to know various aspects of life adequately (Bird ,Shepherd, Butaumocho and Scott, 2002). Steady (2006) argues that minimal education among women is a deficiency representing underdevelopment prevalent in many African countries. Steady also sees the gender gap in education closing in most parts of the world except for sub-Saharan Africa where it is argued to be widening (Dube, 2008). This researcher thinks that since education is a tool of empowerment and has a mentally liberating and emancipating effect to all, the government and NGOS should strive to avail opportunity for adult literacy education to women especially in the rural areas (Khan and Baillie, 2003).

Study findings also revealed that some of the household heads still had a discriminating mindset when it comes to the education of the female children. This, in the opinion of this researcher has been influenced by traditional and patriarchal cultures that view women as subordinate and only worthy serving in the hospitality based tasks such as household tasks (Everatt and Smith, 2008). Traditionally especially in many African societies, the girl children were expected to get married and therefore be assets of the families that they would get married to (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1992). This means that their development was dependent on the families they would get married to. However, with the current modernization and globalization trends, and the phenomenon of girl children not getting married as was happening before, the thinking is increasingly being challenged that girl children should be taken as important as boy children (GOVZIM and UNICEF, 2011; Nyati-Ramahobo, 1992).

5.2.3. Marital status

Study findings revealed that a number of female heads in Magaso village were widowed due to the death of their husbands, though some of the reasons behind their deaths were largely unknown. Other reasons that attributed to female headship include migration of men in search of greener pastures. Migration, however, results in the drain of both labour and human resources which could negatively affect the economy of the areas being migrated from. This could partly contribute to the accentuation of poverty at household level. However, migrants often set up second households in urban areas or places they migrate to, usually leaving rural wives to largely fend for themselves until the migrant needs to return (ZDHR, 2003). Study findings also revealed that although a few female heads (de facto female heads) had surviving husbands, they remained the main decision makers in the households

(Aliabad and Nazokta, 2011). This scenario is not only a feature of Zimbabwe. In Cambodia, for example, most female heads are de facto female heads or actual household heads in lieu of the permanent absence of their spouses /husbands or adult male members through death or divorce (Penh, 2010).

5.2.4. Dependants

The research findings revealed that that poverty greatly affected the households with more dependants, especially those with little or no stable income. It was revealed that most female heads in Magaso barely afforded to take care of their needs because of the burden of taking care of many children and their grandchildren. A larger family largely contributes to economic difficulties, low income levels, education costs, high costs of living, and immense household poverty (ZIMSTAT, 2010). Contrastingly, a larger family especially in rural traditional farming areas is also viewed in a positive way because of the virtue of labour to increase farming area (Penh, 2010). This is the same thinking that prevailed among many female headed households in Magaso village. This, according to this researcher's perspective, is a blank cheque of sanctioning child labour, child poverty and the passing of family poverty to other generations (OAU, 1990; Kang'ethe, 2010).

5.3. Engaging in subsistence farming as the main livelihood approach

The study revealed that subsistence farming was a common livelihood strategy amongst the female heads in Magaso village. This mirrors livelihood strategies for many societies in the African continent where agriculture is usually the main occupation of the females. For instance in Mozambique, 60% of the females are engaged in agriculture as the main occupation. This compares with 54 % in Tanzania.

However, the situation is different in Southern African region. For example only 34% of the females in South Africa are preoccupied with agriculture as their way of living (34 percent) (FAO, 2010). In Sub Saharan Africa, women tend to be the main producers of crops such as maize, rice, cassava and other tubers while men are more engaged in commercial farming of crops such as cotton, tobacco and coffee. However, there are several cases in Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Zambia where men and female farmers combine growing both subsistence and commercial crops. But in many cases, men only jointly grow food crops if they have become more productive or profitable (FAO, 2010).

Subsistence farming was not found to be a sustainable livelihood activity amongst the female heads in Magaso village due to erratic rainfall and other unfavourable climatic changes. Climatic changes and erratic rainfall results in low production as well as the prevalence of hunger and starvation. Literature abounds that climate change, recurrent droughts, deforestation, increases in disease incidences and energy crisis have continued to threaten farming communities in many parts of Zimbabwe (MWAG-CD, 2009). These factors also have had a greater impact upon women's farming life in Magaso village. This is because during droughts, most women spend more time searching for food and therefore failing to take part in meaningful income generating farming activities (MWAG-CD, 2009). However, subsistence farming in Magaso village only becomes a sustainable occupation in the years when rains are sufficient. But in the event that rains fail, then subsistence farming fails the litmus test of being sustainable. The situation of sustainability in Magaso was also exacerbated by shortages of agricultural inputs such as the fertilizers, shortage of labour and other climatic conditions. Sometimes the situation is so bad that food for survival within

households cannot be ensured. The scenario in Magaso mirrors many regions in Africa which experience poor and unreliable rains, with some situations bearing hunger and starvation. Ethiopia is one of the countries that experience persistent droughts and starvation of both people and animals (FAO and UNAIDS, 2003). With the unreliability of rains, many parts of Zimbabwe experienced serious droughts in 1992 and 2007-8 periods (Chiripanhura, 2010).

5.4. Engaging in home gardening as a livelihood approach

The research finding revealed that home gardening was the second important livelihood strategy in Magaso village. It was noted that almost every household had a vegetable garden and fruit trees in its farm. Female heads in Magaso village stated that home gardening was so labour demanding and time consuming though it provided a better income for the household. Home gardening can be said to be a sustainable livelihood approach amongst some households depending on the quality and quantity of the garden products. This is because the females are able to take care of some of the needs of the households and sell some products. Literature abounds that home gardening is important especially for rural families because it contributes to food for family consumption while the remainder is marketed for money (Nair 2006). This scenario in Magaso village compares with other geographical areas in Zimbabwe. For example, the marketing of home garden products by rural households and small-scale farmers has been identified as a potential means of poverty alleviation in Nhema, Zimbabwe (Shackleton et al. 2008). Although home garden production provides a small source of income, it is particularly important for poor households to afford food and meeting other basic needs (Maroyi, 2009). Notably, properly managed home gardens can improve people's livelihoods and quality of life,

reduce poverty, and foster economic growth into the future on a sustainable basis (Maroyi, 2009).

5.5. Exchanging labour for food supplies

Study findings revealed that 15 % of the female heads engaged in labour from other wealthier farmers in exchange of food. However, it was discovered that working for food parcels could only be engaged by the able-bodied female heads meaning that the weak and the frailled ones were disadvantaged. Engaging in temporary labour for one to be paid in food parcels is not a sustainable preoccupation, but only a safety valve to relieve poverty infested households for only a short period (Gumbo, 2009). Exchanging food for labour is a common strategy in most African countries especially in poverty infested countries (FAO, 2010) including Ethiopia, Somalia and Rwanda (Quisumbing and Yohannes, 2004). Exchanging labour for food was also practised in Haiti after the floods in 2010 and about 26 00 people benefited from this livelihood (Lambers, 2010).

5.5.1. Reliance on temporary employments from different agencies

Study findings revealed that the female heads also sought temporary employments from agencies such as NGOs or construction firms involved in activities such as building schools, clinics or roads. Although such opportunities are rare and discriminative in that they favour the relatively younger and stronger female heads and children, and therefore disadvantaging the elderly female heads, they only serve as economic safety valves to the households (Wallace-Karenga, 2009). This strategy works as a community development strategy as well as an empowerment of skills programme to the female heads (Gumbo, 2009). In South Africa, women are

employed mostly in the road construction and municipality parks on temporary basis (Everatt and Smith, 2008). This, however, is not a sustainable livelihood strategy since it is done on a temporary basis.

5.5.2. Reliance on handouts from governments and other bodies

Study findings confirmed that some the female heads relied on food handouts from the government, NGO's and also from middle class families. Reliance on food handouts is not a sustainable livelihood approach to the female heads as it creates dependency syndrome and can be regarded as an emergency assistance response phenomenon (Schubert, 2010). During the 2008 drought period in Zimbabwe, about 5 million received food handouts from emergency food organizations. Such assistance food handouts continue to be advanced to people who suffer various calamities. For instance many countries in Asia got the food handouts after the tsunami and floods disasters. Such assistance food handouts are also given to the hunger ravaged countries such as Somalia (FAO, 2010).

5.5.3. Household heads sanctioning child labour that compromises school attendance

Study findings revealed that the female heads involved children as important agents of labour, both in their farms and also in helping them finish off assignments they took in exchange for food from other wealthier landlords/farms. When children participate in labour, they forgo their school attendance and are in most cases exploited by those they work for (Kipp,Tindyebwa, Rubaale, Karamagi, and Bajenja ,2007 for rural Uganda; Grant and Palmiere, 2003 for rural Zimbabwe). Involving children in tasks that make them forego school going goes counter the rights of children to access

school and against international labour laws. With many countries having signed international labour conventions and instruments (ILO) to stop or discourage child labour, economic situations may obligate and demand that children get involved in working for their food and sometimes food for their other siblings. This is for example in the case of child headed households that result from their parents succumbing to HIV/AIDS (UNCRC, 1989; OAU, 1990; Kang'ethe, 2010; ILO, 2003).

Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty that forces children into child labour. Children get involved in child labour because of lack of familial support, being in a starving environment or in a situation of meagre resources for them to grow healthy and strong, to get an education, to live in a good and safe environment, and to fulfil their potential (Du Plessis and Conley, 2007). It has also been reported that bonded and forced labour of children is on the increase in South African farms, where children inherit family obligations when their parents die (ILO, 2003). This researcher fears that with the current labour unrests and agitation for fair wages, there are thousands of female headed households and children who suffer labour exploitation and therefore perpetuating feminization of poverty. This researcher thinks that despite South Africans getting independent in 1994, issues of labour exploitation and other injustices have not been given an adequate space to be addressed, policy wise and administrative wise. The government needs to seriously look into the issue of labourers to ensure they are paid fairly. This to a social worker like the researcher is one way of ensuring social justice. Social justice aims to make society less unjust and the focus is on 'what actually happens in the world', instead of on the justness of underlying institutions (Sen, 2008). Sen's approach to social justice focuses on assuring individual capacities to gain optimal wellbeing in their circumstances. He

defines poverty as the deprivation of these basic 'capabilities' (such as being literate, being active in the community) (Sen, 2009).

5.6. Involvement in business as a livelihood activity

Study findings indicated that female heads were engaging in both local and cross – border trading. Cross border trade involved the neighbouring East African countries while farther trading destinations include Dubai, Malaysia and China. The business strategy exploited and grew from family relationships, friendships that develop through meeting in buses and other travel means, especially to South Africa (Mutopo, 2010). In spite of the danger and other challenges that are associated with business engagements, some of the female heads have been able to improve their financial independence and household security. However, although their business operational horizon may be small and market unreliable, there is potential to expand in beneficial ways. One other virtue in business engagement is the development of one's entrepreneurial spirit that gives hope for one to become a stronger business individual (Mutopo, 2010). This livelihood strategy can be sustainable if there is a readily available and a large market that can pay handsomely. Literature abounds that business among women is growing around the globe especially in Africa and women are encouraged through different indigenization projects (Chiripanhura, 2010). Women entrepreneurs are also common in India and in Bangladesh where women are economically empowered through the Grameen Banks that advance them business and farming kick off soft loans. This is to promote both entrepreneurial spirit and also foster self employment (Chowdury, 2010).

5.7. Care giving for ill dependents

Most of the female heads interviewed in Magaso village complained that they spent a substantial part of their time care giving the grandchildren or other ill dependants. Care giving services should not to be taken for granted because it may have unforeseen costs in terms of deterioration of caregivers' health as well as their participation in social networks (Kang'ethe, 2011). The deterioration of both human capabilities and the social capital due to stresses and difficulties involved in care of especially people living with HIV/AIDS and other debilitating diseases is an issue most countries of the developing world are addressing through improving community home based care structures (Kang'ethe, 2011a). However, care giving still continues to face an uphill task in many countries of the developing world because they cannot afford external and professional assistance and therefore leaving women to shoulder care giving with little or no males' assistance (Kang'ethe, 2011b). These gender discrepancies in care giving needs to be addressed because of the enormous burden that women caregivers face (Kang'ethe, 2011b).

In Lesotho, for example, absentee rates among females working in a garment factory have been rising dramatically and ILO/UNIFEM sent a delegation to Lesotho to review the connection between the care economy and formal employment (Urdang, 2006).

Care giving is taking the time the female heads would have been using to pursue meaningful economic activities (UNICEF, 2004). Its consequences include the withdrawal of girls from school, as well as making it difficult for women to be active and productive in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy (Kipp et al., 2007 for rural Uganda; Grant and Palmiere, 2003 for rural Zimbabwe).

5.8. Lack of access to credit

Study findings revealed that female heads from Magaso lacked access to credit to finance or kick-start business projects. Credit programmes can empower women economically, socially and politically, as well as in the context of the family. Women cannot access credit as the banks consider them to be high-risk borrowers without collateral security, they are usually inexperienced on matters of borrowing and without cooperatives they are unable to access credit. Inaccessibility of credit lowers production levels for female farmers hence exacerbating female poverty. According to a report by UNICEF, the prevailing global economic conditions have made it difficult for banks to gain access to funds from international financial institutions, which would increase their capacity to extend funds to farmers at much lower interest rates. As a result, agriculture, which traditionally requires both short and long term financing, is facing stiff competition from other sectors for the few available resources (UNICEF and GovZim, 2010) contributing to food insecurity in Africa (Mpofu, 2011). However, credit is not a panacea for the poor as it can sometimes make their situation worse especially the non productive use of credit does not create income and can lead to problems in loan repayment. To improve the status of a poor woman borrower, the credit funds must be invested properly (IFAD, 1998).

This researcher is of the opinion that the female heads due to lack of education and exposure did not know various organizations that could advance them credit to strengthen their farming activities. For example there are various agricultural loans that can be available to female farmers like Kupfuma Ishungu Rural Micro-Finance Programme's (KI-RMFP) and its main goal is that of contributing to the "sustainable protection and promotion of the livelihood security of rural economically active

households". The project deliberately targets the rural poor households in areas that are susceptible to poor rainfall patterns and consequently poor harvests (Gandure, 2008).

Micro-finance groups may form the basis for collective action to address gender inequalities within the community, including issues like gender violence and access to resources and local decision-making (Dunford, 2006). Micro-finance has been strategically used by some NGOs and financial organizations as an entry point for wider social and political mobilisation of women around gender issues for example the outstanding Bolivia's Banco Solidario and famous the Grameen banks in Bangladesh (Chowdury, 2009).

5.9. Social discrimination

The study conducted in Magaso village revealed that most of the female heads especially the de-jure female heads experienced social discrimination. Single women heading households encountered some discrimination challenges as they endeavoured to make ends for their families meet. This was due to patriarchal nature of African communities that do not approve of households headed by women (FAO, 2010). According to the Marxist feminism theory, social discrimination includes class inequality causing female oppression, exploitation, discrimination and the patriarchal ideology which justifies economic exploitation of women (Freedman, 2001). Still implicit in Marxist ideology, Individual women have no place in the political institutions of the village, and therefore male presence is critical. Although women-headed households are called upon to discharge the entire social and economic functions of their male counterparts, their social status remains marginal and peripheral (Hossain

and Huda, 1995). This should change and this researcher uses this platform to call upon all the people to embrace the fact that in today's world, a woman needs a special place as a mother, head of a household, a business person, a bureaucrat, a leader as well a contributor to her country's Gross Domestic Product (UNDP, 1995).

Social discrimination is not exclusive feature of Africans. In the Indian society, for example, females are assumed to be weak and are not allowed to take part in meetings and in any decision making (De Kumar and Ghosh, 2007). In Brazil, social discrimination has exposed the female heads to a greater chance of being in poverty than male-headed ones (UNDP, 2008).

Globally, various initiatives have been initiated to address social discrimination in societies. In 1994, for example, the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo held consultative discussions on gender issues, stressing the empowerment of women for equitable development and the objective was to promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour, as well as their social and family roles (UN, 1995). The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, also took gender equity as the core strategy for social and economic development and environmental protection. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, reiterated the importance of these new options, drawing up an agenda to strengthen the status of women and adopting a declaration and platform for action aimed at overcoming the barriers to gender equity and guaranteeing women's active participation in all spheres of life (UN, 1995).

5.10. Inadequate agricultural inputs as a challenge to farming productivity

Study findings indicated that farming faced productive challenges due to lack of adequate farming inputs. According to a report by Food Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN), some farmers in many countries pursue farming amidst the challenge of requisite farm inputs. For example in Malawi, the smallholder farmers especially women have over decades pursued farming without fertilizers. This has had the challenge of lowering soil nutrients and therefore diminished crop production. This situation has also been responsible for starvation and hunger, both at household and national levels. However, the Government of Malawi responded in mid-2005 with a national scheme to subsidize farmers with improved seeds and fertilizer, reaching most of Malawi's smallholder farmers. Notably, the strategy has dramatically improved food security at both household and national levels especially in the period from 2006-2008 (Shumba, 2011).

This researcher needs to use this platform to expose the rural farmers in Zimbabwe to the information that there several Agrarian programmes to empower the farmers through agricultural inputs. Such inputs are distributed by different farming organisations including Grain Marketing Board (MWAG-CD, 2009). In South Africa, the Eastern Cape Department of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa and Eastern Cape Socio-Economic Consultative Council have engaged in a process of transforming agriculture production systems, livelihood patterns and human development of rural farmers in need of support The process, supported by donor organizations, is part of a broader effort to tackle poverty, create employment and build the capacity of local communities (FAO, 2010). The approaches are broadly referred to as Agrarian

Transformation and Food Security pillars of the Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP), which have created programmes such as Massive Food Production, Siyazondla Homestead Food Production, Comprehensive Nutrition Programme and Integrated Agricultural Infrastructure Programme (FAO, 2010).

5.11. Shortage of Labour

The study findings confirmed that female-headed households cultivated less land, produced fewer crops and owned less livestock than male-headed households. Female heads were also disadvantaged in agricultural production and food security, access to land and water, access to equal opportunities in income generation, access to credit, and to education. Recent research studies shows that labour shortage affects production in rural areas. For example, a study conducted in Ethiopia showed the reduction in agricultural labour time as a result of HIV/AIDS. The number of hours per week in agriculture was observed to fall from 33.6 hours in non-afflicted households to between 11 and 16 hours in afflicted households (Black-Michaud, 1997). In two villages in Burkina Faso, for example, revenues from agricultural production declined by 25-50 per cent as a result of AIDS. In the same vein, the Government of Swaziland reported a 54 per cent drop in agricultural production in AIDS-affected households (UNAIDS, 2005). This prompts this researcher to challenge African governments to take the HIV/AIDS campaign seriously especially in the rural areas. This is because most of the campaign structures in many countries of the developing world are concentrated in urban areas (Kang'ethe, 2013). With HIV/AIDS increasing unabatedly in rural areas where there is poverty and low levels of education, food security can seriously be compromised. This researcher thinks that

social workers should at the front line in advocating for equality in social services delivery between urban and rural areas. This is towards social justice.

5.12. Government safety nets as a support mechanism for female heads

Study findings indicated that although support strategies to help the women were inadequate, there were some varied and relatively reliable sources of assistance for the women headed households. These sources included the reliance on families and the community and the social protection measures. In Zimbabwe, two assistance government packages include Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) and Assisted Medical Treatment Orders (AMTO). Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is a social protection introduced by the government of Zimbabwe to assist orphaned and vulnerable children from poor households with education. This safety net only accommodates for primary and secondary school needs. Assisted Medical Treatment Order is also another safety net introduced by the government of Zimbabwe to cater for the healthy needs of the vulnerable poor families. In South Africa, safety nets for the needy children to get bursaries are important. For example the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and Social Development bursary packages have been alleviating poverty among the disadvantaged families. Most orphans and vulnerable children and other economically disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, those with debilitating sicknesses, largely benefiting from these programmes (Everatt and Smith, 2008).

But these safety valves in many resource constrained countries only assist a few people. In most of sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, government and NGO social protection mechanisms cover a minority of the population and rarely extend to

households facing severe poverty. In Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia, these help systems are rudimentary (Amuyunzu and Ezeh, 2005; Kasente, Asingwire, Banugire and Kyomuhendo, 2002; Mukuka, Kalikiti and Musenge, 2002). In Tanzania, formal social security systems have declined in the past decade as a result of structural adjustments that social protection mechanisms cover only 6 per cent of the population and focus only on a few risks. (Mchomvu et al., 2002)

5.13. Reliance on families and community members for support

Research findings also revealed the role and importance of families and communities members as source of support and hope to female headed households. In the absence of large-scale social welfare programs in sub-Saharan countries, most households rely on their own resources and assistance from relatives and neighbours to cope with the effects of female headship (Ainsworth and Over, 1992). In Zimbabwe, more than 60 per cent of households resort to seeking help from relatives, friends and neighbours, particularly during hard times. In urban slums in Kenya, friends provide more support to help households with sick members than relatives (Amuyunzu and Ezeh, 2005).

Even though the extended family helps with food and clothing, sometimes the help is not on a regular basis (Foster, 2005). Extended family breakdown and increased demands for support as a result of HIV/AIDS have reduced the extent to which the better off can help their relatives. Migration and splintering of families and, in some cases, the establishment of formal safety nets in developing countries have led to weakening of non formal inter-generational transfers, causing the elderly in particular to become extremely vulnerable (Morduch and Sharma, 2001). Whilst informal

transfers from families and community members occur on a continuous basis, family and community safety nets are of greatest value at times of crisis (Foster, 2005). Community help is less forthcoming because of inflation, lack of money, high unemployment, and too much commitment as everyone is being affected by the high morbidity and mortality being experienced due to the AIDS epidemic and female headship (Mutangadura, 2005).

5.14. Empowerment for sustainable development of the female heads

Research findings had female heads requesting for empowerment in terms of finances, education, socially and psychologically. The empowerment approach is a dramatic departure from traditional social work practice and concentrates on the strength of the victim towards liberation from his or her social problems (Saleeby, 2002). This enables the female heads to function holistically enabling them to have sustainable livelihoods as well as fighting poverty in their households. This however is a benefit to the households because empowering the female heads will be empowering the nation.

Worldwide, there are three organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Office (ILO), that are partnered to carry out an assessment of the latest thinking on the gender dimension of rural and agricultural employment. These organizations are committed to improving gender equality and women's empowerment in agriculture and rural areas, and strengthening women's leadership and decision-making participation with the aim of promoting gender equitable rural employment (FAO, IFAD and ILO, 2010). This also goes in line with

the MDG 3 which aims to promote gender equality and empower women. The global, so called Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Conference on Women held in 1995 laid a strong framework for women empowerment in terms of policies of many countries.

Most countries are empowering women in their states. For example, in South Africa, there is the Affirmative Action policy application that fights for women's empowerment issues. For example, women have been given at least 30% slots in both parliamentary and civic seats (South African Development Corporation (SADC, 2008). In Cameroon, Madagascar and Niger, they have identified women as a specific target group in their national poverty eradication programmes. In Senegal, they have conducted gender training for senior decision-makers to mainstream a gender perspective into sectoral development planning. In 1998, the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs devoted resources to special projects for the development of entrepreneurial skills among women. In Denmark, development assistance policy calls for the inclusion of a gender perspective in all programmes. In Singapore, the government has implemented the Small Families Improvement Scheme, the purpose of which is to help low-income families to get access to education and housing (UN, 2000).

5.15. Counselling and psychosocial support as a support mechanism

Study findings also revealed the need for women households to be supported psychosocially especially to help them cope with the state of widowhood. Counselling was found critical in helping them handle the sick members of their households. Several sources of literature suggests the importance of psychosocial support to caregivers in order to reduce the stress of care giving and poverty that is associated

especially with the care of people living with HIV/AIDS (Kang'ethe, 2010, 2011a,b). Miller (2003) found professional, spiritual, peer, counselling from traditional leaders would help to empower the female heads. According to Dube (2008), such psychosocial support can be provided by faith based organizations. Most interestingly, the study found that professional, spiritual, peer, counselling from traditional leaders would help to empower the widows (Miller 2003). Dube (2008) concurs with Miller by contending that emotional state of the female heads need attention in the form of counselling.

However the female heads in Magaso village need counselling so that they can be able to function fully in implementing their livelihood strategies.

5.16. CONCLUSIONS

This study explored the existing livelihood strategies of female headed households in Zimbabwe through a case study research of Magaso village in Mutoko District. The main aim of the study was to explore what the female-heads in Magaso village of Mutoko District in Zimbabwe are doing for the survival of their households. The study goal helped the researcher to investigate how female heads engage in survival strategies to sustain their households, the challenges they encounter and their needs. The study intended to achieve the following objectives: (i) examine the existing livelihood strategies of female headed households (ii) explore the various challenges faced by female headed households and (iii) establish the support mechanisms in place for female headed households to cope with life challenges .

The first objective was to examine the existing livelihood strategies of female headed households. This objective was meant to observe how the female heads survive without husbands. The female heads in Magaso village regarded farming as the most important livelihood strategy to engage in. The research study concluded that farming constitutes 77% of the livelihoods activities the female heads engaged in. Livelihoods approach such as the reliance on food handouts were concluded to be relief measures upon the female heads and can only result in dependency of the female heads on NGO's, the government, and other private stakeholders. However, livelihoods in Magaso village cannot be said to be sustainable since most of the female heads are still encountering poverty. There is therefore a great need of livelihood empowerment for them to achieve sustainable development.

The second objective of the study was to explore the various challenges faced by female headed households. The aim of this objective was to assess the challenges that contribute to the dysfunctions of female heads. These challenges also hinder sustainable development of the female headed households. According to the research study, the female heads in Magaso village faced numerous difficulties ranging from emotional, social to financial problems. The various concerns and difficulties surrounding the lives of female headed households in the study area result in worsening the condition of women, and hence validating feminization of poverty among them. The erosion of livelihoods, food insecurity, rising malnutrition and the possibility of disease outbreaks are putting the already vulnerable population especially female heads under further distress (MWAG-CD, 2009). It was concluded that some of these problems push the female heads to a crippling point impeding their holistic participation in other meaningful survival strategies.

Female heads in Magaso face strenuous lives because of unbearable workloads that can drive them to graves fast. The end result has been a vicious cycle of poverty and hence feminization of poverty (Sweetman, 2009). The study clearly showed that feminization of poverty is a problem amongst these female headed households. It was also realised that care giving is also problem encountered by female heads as they tend to their sick siblings. HIV/AIDS was found to take a serious toll on the lives of the household members. Awareness of the disease is still low within the environs of these households. This researcher calls upon the government, NGOS and other HIV/AIDS friendly bodies to strengthen information dissemination on HIV/AIDS to the rural areas (Kang'ethe, 2010, 2011a, b, 2013).

The third objective to the research study was to establish the support mechanisms in place for female headed households to cope with life challenges. This objective was meant to assess the support mechanisms that are available for the female heads that make their lives bearable. From the research, it was noted there are a few support systems that are available for the female heads in Magaso Village. The research study found that the entire households have strengths and diverse ways of coping to survive when experiencing challenges. Family members were a source of immense social capital that brought joy, hope, and an assurance that their members will float or sink together. The application of various social work and sociological theories implicit of solidarity such as systems and functional theories become critical.

Support mechanisms by the family, community, several government structures and NGO's have intervened in the problems of the female heads but have failed to produce adequate fruitful results for these marginalised and vulnerable females to earn sustainable livelihoods. In light of the above, this researcher thinks that this research has attempted to achieve the stated aims and objectives.

5.17. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.17.1 Introduction

Consistent with the study findings, analysis, conclusions and literature review, the following recommendations were made:

5.17.2. Mainstreaming gender education from childhood stage

Gender equalities must be promoted through mainstreaming gender education to children from when they are young. Such education will ensure gender equality and possibly equity in many spheres of people's lives. In fact redressing gender equality and equities is one of the goals of the constitutions of many countries such as Zimbabwe. The researcher also calls upon other bodies such as NGOs and private sector to contribute to the campaign in favour of gender education. There is a need to bring gender-sensitive indicators to the attention of policy-makers as a step towards changing policies that are biased against women and such moves, however, requires adequate political goodwill. The gender sensitive indicators can include the increase in women's levels of empowerment or in attitudinal changes to gender equality and changing the social participation status of women or the changing the poverty level that affects women through policies and programmes aimed at women.

5.17.3. Efforts aimed at job creation

Employment creation in Mutoko rural area can lessen the migration of males to look for better employment opportunities in urban areas. Rural household incomes can also be enhanced if government initiates poverty eradication projects in rural areas. Such poverty eradication projects can provide jobs and incomes to a large number of rural household members who are currently unemployed. Poverty eradication projects

can also be instrumental in enhancing rural infrastructures such as roads, primary health clinics and other community facilities. This will generate income for rural households and at the same time enhance a better quality of life for the rural people.

5.17.4. Financial empowerment through setting up of micro credit schemes for rural women

Empowering women to access credit to start or enhance existing projects can be a mitigation intervention to make women less vulnerable economic impacts.. As a means of strengthening the income base of rural households, there is a need for the government to set up micro-credit schemes for rural people to kick-start the small-scale enterprises in the rural areas. Such policies can be implemented by Provincial and National governments working in close collaboration with community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs that are experienced in mobilizing rural communities to engage in income generation projects in the rural areas.

5.17.5. Seek the services of agricultural extensions services to female headed farmers

There is a great need to strengthen and increase agricultural extension services to play an active role in mobilizing vulnerable farmers in skills acquisitions and adapt good farming practices and strategies that will ensure optimum production of crops. Such strategies include promoting labour saving technologies and low-input agriculture. Direct provision of inputs such as seeds and fertiliser for women will help to increase their returns in agricultural production and to improve their livelihood economic security. When women are targeted with resources, it is often assumed that the benefits they accrue trickle down to their children. This ensures children good nurturance and an avoidance of child poverty (Buvinic and Gupta, 1997).

5.17.6. Improving the social service delivery in Zimbabwe equitably across genders

Social services by government, NGOs and even private sector should be provided equitably across both male and female genders. This is because due to patriarchal life arrangements, females are always discriminated in distribution and acquisition of resources from various sources. This better explains the concept of feminization of poverty in Zimbabwe. The Department of Social Welfare should make sure that assessment for services to vulnerable population especially women are equally distributed or prioritized to women and children. Social workers should strengthen their counselling services especially to the female heads and other vulnerable groups in communities. This is to enhance their psychosocial functioning and linking them to requisite services (Zastrow, 2009). The role of social workers towards addressing the state of poverty in rural areas is critical. This researcher, who is a social worker, believes that with optimal application of social work skills and interventions, especially as it relates to community development, poverty among the vulnerable women in rural areas can be mitigated. Support and goodwill from government is also critical. This is because the government and NGOs have employed very few social workers to attend to the rural community in countries such as Zimbabwe.

5.17.7. Strengthening informal strategies to improve women's social capital

There is need also to facilitate the re-emergence of informal and traditional schemes that support the social capital and network support mechanisms for women such as labour-sharing clubs, women-only mutual-aid societies, benevolent groups in churches, draught power clubs, rotating and savings club, cooperatives and women's market groups.

5.17.8. Recommendations for Social Workers

Since social workers have a very important educational role in their practice where information is needed by their clients, it is recommended that the educational role of the social workers must be incorporated in the programmes that has to do with the empowerment of female headed households. There is a great need to empower and educate female heads on the HIV and AIDS pandemic so that they can be able to prevent themselves from being infected. There is also a need to educate all community members about the effects of HIV and AIDS infection for the interventions to be effective. It is also suggested that social workers should provide a counselling role to the females who are in distress especially in the rural areas since most of them hardly seek professional assistance.

5.17.9. Suggestions for further research

The study showed that there is a need to carry out further research on government's social service delivery system as a support mechanism to the women in rural areas. Furthermore, it is recommended that further research should investigate on indigenization as a livelihood in rural areas and to what extent it is practiced by women in rural areas.

5.18. Conclusion

The research study was meant to investigate the livelihoods of the female headed households in Magaso village and it accomplished this aim. The researcher also consulted different literature to investigate about the problem of the female headed households. The aims and objectives of the research study were achieved through qualitative research interviews. The lived experiences of the female heads in Magaso

were also assessed using qualitative research methods. Findings revealed various strategies that women adopt to sustain their households such as engagement in business and pursuing both subsistence and yard gardening. Reliance in agriculture was found to make them vulnerable especially due to rainfall unreliability and the fact that most of them lacked adequate farm inputs and infrastructure to assist in farming bigger portions of their farms. This made generally made farming an unsustainable activity. These female heads also faced social discrimination for taking the position of household heads. This is due to societies looking at them from patriarchal eyes. It is a painstaking revelation that most women faced dire poverty and hence validating the concept feminization of poverty in their lives. However, this research has acted as a platform to inform these female heads of available assistance schemes. It has also advocated and lobbied for assistance packages from the policy makers and other development practitioners such as NGOs and the government. It would be therefore be important that this information is shared between the researcher and the research participants. There is need to think of specific and targeted interventions to assist rural women so that they can sustain their households with ease, as well as be important instruments in contributing to the country's Gross Domestic Product.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE



University of Fort Hare
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INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

My name is Pamela Musekiwa and I am a Social Work Masters student at the University of Fort Hare in the Department of Social Work. I am carrying out a research which attempts to investigate the livelihood strategies of female headed households. Your participation in this study will be confidential, names and addresses will not be included for confidentiality purposes. The information you provide is highly confidential and will be used for academic purposes only.

Answering questions from this interview may be difficult and sometimes distressing and therefore apologize in advance for any inconvenience. Your cooperation in participation of this interview is greatly appreciated and would like to thank you for your careful and honest replies to the questions thus making the study more authentic.

Thank You.

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Age	
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2. Race/ethnicity	
3. Level of education	
4. Marital status also include cohabitation	
5. Number of dependants	
6. Relationship between the dependants and the female head	

Objective 2: To examine the existing livelihood strategies of female headed households

1. How are women generally living here?
2. What kind of activities do you engage in to survival? Amongst the activities that you do, how do you assess their sustainability.
3. Are you the only one who is involved in the task of sustaining your family?
4. If there are others how do you allocate tasks?

Objective 1: To explore the various challenges faced by female headed households

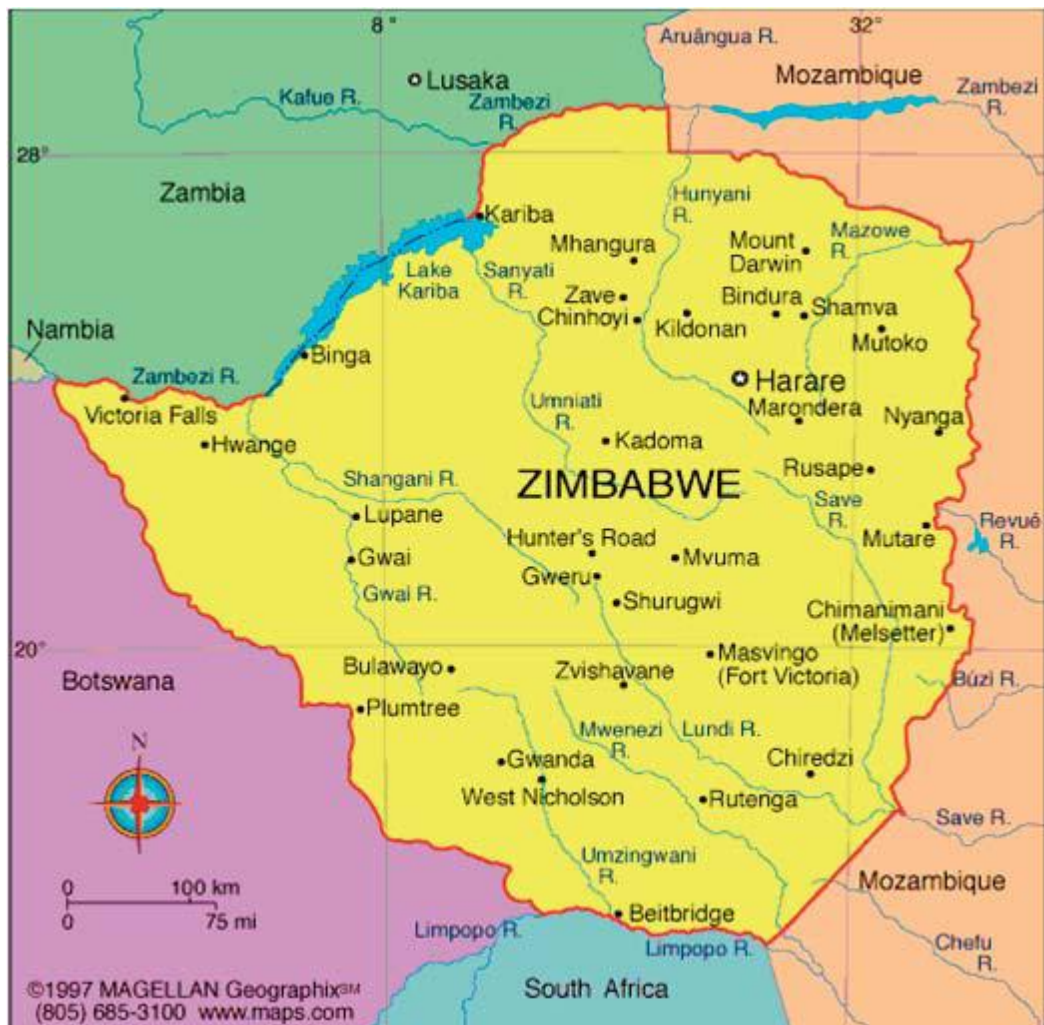
1. Generally, what are the problems that you face as a female household head?
2. What improvements would you want to the government, NGO's /private sectors do to improve your livelihood / life?
3. What needs to be done to make your livelihoods sustainable /economically feasible?

4. Do you get assistance from any financial organizations to fund your economic activities /projects if you have some/any?

Objective 3: To establish the support mechanisms in place for female headed households to cope with life challenges

1. Are you or the member of your household a member of any co-operatives or any developmental projects?
2. Do you have any assistance that you get from the other family members/community members? In the affirmative, what form of assistance is offered?
3. Do the government provide you with any form of assistance? If so how?
4. Do you have any economic assistance that you get from any other organization and if so how?
5. What do you suggest need to be done by the government /NGO/Civil Society /Private individual donors to improve the life of female headed households?

APPENDIX B - ZIMBABWEAN MAP SHOWING THE STUDY AREA LOCATION



APPENDIX C-CONSENT FORM



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Ethics Research Confidentiality and Informed Consent Form

Please note:

This form is to be completed by the researcher(s) as well as by the interviewee before the commencement of the research. Copies of the signed form must be filed and kept on record

(To be adapted for individual circumstances/needs)

Our University of Fort Hare / Department is asking people from your community / sample / group to answer some questions, which we hope will benefit your community and possibly other communities in the future.

The University of Fort Hare / Department/ organization is conducting research regarding We are interested in finding out more about We are carrying out this research to help (*adapt for individual projects*)

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not is yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way. Confidentiality will be observed professionally.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the questionnaire and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give. Only the researchers will have access to the unlinked information. The information will remain confidential and there will be no "come-backs" from the answers you give.

The interview will last around (X?) minutes (*this is to be tested through a pilot*). I will be asking you a questions and ask that you are as open and honest as possible in answering these questions. Some questions may be of a personal and/or sensitive nature. I will be asking some questions that you may not have thought about before, and which also involve thinking about the past or the future. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers. When we ask questions about the future we are not interested in what you think the best thing would be to do, but what you think would actually happen. (*adapt for individual circumstances*)

If possible, our organisation would like to come back to this area once we have completed our study to inform you and your community of what the results are and discuss our findings and proposals around the research and what this means for people in this area.

INFORMED CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research regarding I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop this interview at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my community on the results of the completed research.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

I hereby agree to the tape recording of my participation in the study

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

APPENDIX D-CLEARANCE LETTER

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR:
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

Private Bag X1314, Alice 5700
Tel: +27 (0) 40602 2403
Fax: +27 (0) 86 628 2944
tsnyders@ufh.ac.za



ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Certificate Reference Number: KAN01 1SMUS01

Project title: Livelihood strategies of female-headed households in Nyakudya village, Mutoko: Zimbabwe

Nature of Project: Master of Social Work

Principal Researcher: Pamela Musekiwa

Supervisor: Dr S Kangethe

Co-supervisor:

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby give ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). Should any other instruments be used, these require separate authorization. The Researcher may therefore commence with the research as from the date of this certificate, using the reference number indicated above.

Please note that the UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research

The Principal Research must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

The UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this Ethical Clearance Certificate if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require