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**LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF THE AGED PEOPLE IN MUBAIRA
COMMUNITY, ZIMBABWE**

By

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DECLARATION

I, _____ the undersigned candidate, declare that the content of this dissertation is my original work and has not been previously submitted to any other University for an award of a degree either in part or in its entirety.

Signature.....

Date.....

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late younger Brother Caleb.

Abstract

In today's changing demographic, economic, political and environmental context the livelihood strategies developed by the rapidly growing older population deserve particular attention. Lack of support by the state coupled with economic crises and decreasing family availability has meant that older people are increasingly expected to find their own means of support into old age, develop their own strategies and rely on their own resources. Heterogeneity in old age means that while some older people are amongst the most vulnerable and socially down and out, others have accumulated resources that enable them to implement diverse and enterprising livelihood strategies to maintain their wellbeing in old age. This study uses an explorative approach in its quest to understand the various livelihood strategies of the elderly. In-depth interviews and life histories have been utilized as data collection instruments.

In addition to this inductive and qualitative research approach, the dissertation uses the sustainable livelihoods framework to examine the different kinds of livelihood strategies employed by the elderly in Mubaira to stave off poverty in old age in the absence of social security systems. A comparative analysis with other regional countries reveals that old age pensions have been able to reduce poverty at old age significantly. By engaging in different livelihood activities, in the absence of old age pensions, the elderly in Mubaira community in Zimbabwe have been able to make a living. Agriculture is the dominant activity the aged people engage in as they try to avert food insecurity. Besides agriculture, aged people diversify their livelihoods through self employments that add income value to their households. The impact of cash and non-cash remittances has seen aged people being able to buy basic goods and a few essentials. Although the state has been dysfunctional, civil society has stepped in to address the livelihood challenges faced by the aged population and in

particular to provide an alternative solution to the needs of the elderly people within the sustainable livelihoods framework which remains one of the most important models for the analysis of rural livelihoods. Through the livelihoods approach's vulnerability approach the study also analyses the various impacts affecting the attainment of sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Through the utilization of the livelihoods framework in addition to the qualitative research methodology as indicated above, the study found that livelihood activities of the aged require a stock of capital assets which include natural, human, physical, social and financial capital. The life histories of the aged in Mubaira revealed that through the years the aged did accumulate various assets that assist them even now. As the life course perspective suggests events in earlier life do have a bearing on later life, access to a range of capital assets helped old aged people in Mubaira to fully engage in livelihood strategies that ensured their survival and escape from poverty.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AGRITEX	Agricultural, Technical and Extension Service
CBO	Community Based Organization
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DFID	Department for International Development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HAI	Help Age International
HIV	Human Immuno Virus
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NELM	New Economics of Labour Migration
NGO	Non-government organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operative Development
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
RHBI	Rural Home Based Industries
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African Nation Union Patriotic Front

CHAPTER ONE

General introduction

1.1 Introduction

The concept of livelihoods has gained wide acceptance as a valuable means of understanding the factors that influence people's lives and well-being, particularly those of the poor in the developing world (Carney, 1998:33). Increasing social problems of the aged have long since ceased to be a matter primarily for academic discussion and have become an ever-present reality to the public and private welfare administrator. Old aged people living in low-income rural households in developing economies face a double misfortune; difficulties in generating income, and vulnerability to economic, political, social and environmental crises. Recession, inflation, drought, illness and civil unrest tend to hit hardest those households and individuals least well equipped to handle such shocks. According to HAI (2003:6), the number of people and percentage of our total population living to the age of 65 and beyond have made the problems of aging more widespread ,more visible and ultimately more widely known.

The study explores the livelihood strategies of the aged people in Zimbabwe in conditions of threatening poverty. Research in both developed and developing countries shows that as one ages the socio-economic conditions change. Reduced capacity for income generation and growing risk of serious illness increase the likelihood of the elderly to fall into poverty, regardless of their original economic status, unless comprehensive and effective social policies are in place. In Zimbabwe loss of employment, absence of social security systems and worsening economic situation have left aged people vulnerable to poverty. Qualitative research has shown that although aged people in Mubaira have not been supported by the state they do use different livelihoods strategies to eke a living utilizing the available

resources. The main activity engaged in by aged people in Mubaira community is agriculture. The free availability of land as a natural resource has seen aged people being able to grow food crops for consumption and sale in case that they get a surplus harvest. Livestock rearing has also ensured that aged people get food and income as they are able to sell them in times of hardship. From the study it also emerged that besides agriculture aged people have diversified their livelihood activities into self employments like cloth making and tailoring, pottery, weaving, carpentry, metal work and brick making. These activities have helped aged people secure a decent living and be able to tackle the impacts of old age poverty because of the cash incomes they get. The study also noted that although aged people have advanced in age they are still able to engage into labour activities. This has seen aged people undertaking seasonal farm jobs as a way to increase their net income.

The study also noted that the livelihoods of the aged people have been enhanced by the support they get from social networks. Through access to cash and non cash remittances from their children and other relatives, the elderly people have been able to add to their own efforts and therefore ensuring a better living. It has always been long assumed that in Africa the family plays a central role in the well-being of aged people and this is true when we consider the outcomes from the study. Support services have also been advanced by organizations such as Non-governmental organizations and political parties. Although the support is short-lived it has proved to be vital for aged people as they have been able to get something to eat especially in times of hunger. The study adopted the Sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) as the theoretical framework that has been used to analyze the activities of the aged people. However it emerged that although aged people have been able to engage in different livelihood strategies these have been impacted by various factors. The context in which the aged people in Zimbabwe have been operating has been a difficult one as economic, political,

social and environmental factors have greatly affected the outcome of sustainable livelihoods of the aged people.

1.2 Background of the Study

As in any other country in sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of the population of Zimbabwe that is older is, and now stands at 15.5% of the total populations (Census of 2002; ZPS, 2004: 44). Zimbabwe is one country where the well being of older people has not emerged as a policy issue due to the belief that families still remain as the strongholds of support (Kimuna, 2005:158). Although traditionally believed, the family was the single most important source of livelihood support for older people in sub-Saharan Africa, the current demographic and social changes occurring in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa have disrupted some of the inbuilt safety nets that were in place for older people (HAI, 2003: 13). According to Sagner (2000), countries with formal pension systems have been successful in reducing, if not eliminating, poverty during old age. For example, in South Africa the old age grant is the primary source of income for older persons who would otherwise be living in abject poverty and it is estimated to have reduced the poverty gap for older people by 94 percent (Sagner, 2000). Pension systems ensure income security during old age for all and place recipients above the poverty line. Without such a security system the aged people are exposed to become vulnerable to various shocks, risks and above all to poverty. This is the case for the elderly in Zimbabwe as a result of the economic and political crisis facing the country.

1.2.1 The Crisis in Zimbabwe

According to Paradza (2009:417), since 2005 the Zimbabwean economy has been characterised by a high inflation rate, shortage of foreign currency, inadequate investment, budget deficit and stagnating employment. The inflation rate in Zimbabwe was 2,200 percent in March 2007 (USAID, 2007) and as such it threatened both urban and rural livelihoods. The

economy that Zimbabwe inherited on Independence in 1980, though advanced, was underpinned by agriculture heavily subsidised by South Africa, and was marked by a fiscal deficit, high unemployment, price controls and a foreign currency deficit (Rakodi, 1995; Tibaijuka, 2005:66). In the 1990s, Zimbabwe's Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs) resulted in the loss of jobs in agriculture, the civil service, and the textile, clothing, leather, and construction industries (Bratton and Masunungure, 2006:5). As a result of the loss of jobs, rural livelihoods that were historically subsidised by urban wages have become increasingly vulnerable. This has affected many elderly women and men. Children who were urban migrants sending remittances home to ageing parents are no longer able to do this, even though the crisis in agriculture means that remittances are an increasingly important source of livelihood finance for the elderly in the rural areas. Young unemployed people typically remain dependent on their elderly and ageing parents for shelter and livelihoods.

Elderly people's livelihoods and security have also been affected by HIV and AIDS. This has caused a reduction in the flow of remittances to families in rural areas, as the most vulnerable were the economically active members of the population. An estimated 34 per cent of the Zimbabwean population were infected with HIV at the end of 2002 (UNDP, 2004:11). HIV and AIDS have also increased economic and social dependence on the elderly, as they are often left to care for orphaned grandchildren. In general, rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe have been threatened by the loss of farm employment opportunities, which formed an important source of communal farmers' off-farm income (Hartnack, 2005). In 2000, the Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme was initiated, resulting in the transfer of land from large-scale white commercial farmers to black smallholders (Hartnack, 2005). The process of transfer, which was sometimes violent, has had a negative impact on agricultural productivity, and has resulted in the loss of permanent and casual commercial farm employment opportunities

(Tibaijuka 2005:46). All these factors have had an adverse effect on the rural livelihoods of the aged people.

The notion of a livelihood has proven to be a useful concept since it helps to draw a picture of the ways in which people construct a living. Chambers & Conway (1992) stated that a livelihood comprises of the capabilities, assets (including tangible and intangible resources) and activities required for living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

The concept of livelihoods is not new to Zimbabwe. Various academics, development agencies, government institutions, NGOs, etc. have used the sustainable livelihoods framework as an approach to poverty reduction and alleviation. According to Ellis (2000), the framework starts with assets owned, controlled, claimed or accessed by the household. Assets are important elements in the livelihood framework which enables an individual's family to survive, engage in labour markets and participate in reciprocal exchanges with other households (Moser, 1998:162). Therefore, for the elderly people to avoid the poverty trap, various assets such as human capital, physical capital, financial capital, social capital and natural capital are necessary.

There is no single accepted definition of poverty. However, the study's definition is based upon May's (1998:72) idea that poverty is a multi-dimensional process which entails the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption needs or the income required to satisfy them. Poverty has many dimensions; among them is consumption which is, linked to others, such as, malnutrition, illiteracy, low life expectancy,

insecurity, powerlessness and low self-esteem (IFAD, 2001). Sen (2001) also proposes another shift in argument that broadens the understanding of poverty. He argued that poverty must be studied both from the causation of poverty and effects of poverty which affects the well being. The studying of the causes and effects of poverty is indeed a priority of the SLA which seeks to highlight the main factors that affect people's livelihoods and need to be addressed (Chambers and Conway, 1992:48).

Much of the research on livelihoods and poverty alleviation has focused on populations without a specific focus on age groups. In fact, much of the attention has been focused on how poverty affects groups such as women, orphans and vulnerable children, the disabled and unemployed youths. However, there have also been some efforts to focus particularly on the plight of the aged people. Chaumba (2003:66) carried out a qualitative study on how agrarian reform in Zimbabwe transformed the livelihoods of poor rural people. The outcomes show that this reform had greatly helped poor people to reduce the levels of poverty in their lives. Although Chaumba's study cuts across age boundaries it did not really capture how the livelihoods of the aged had been transformed and how they were doing in maintaining them. Nyagura et al (1994:127) explored the well being of the elderly in three different communities and the findings suggested that once a critical decline in fitness occurs, elderly people die as a result of diminished medical and physical support. These findings were relevant to future plans for elderly care in Zimbabwe. This study builds upon such studies and seeks to determine what can be done to help old aged people sustain a living. Also, research in rural Zimbabwe that is affected by AIDS and knows no old age pension shows that older persons assuming the dual roles of career and breadwinner for the family by; care for their adult children and contributing to their expenses while they are sick in addition to providing financial support to a great percentage of the AIDS orphans (Agyarko, 2002:71).

The current dearth of studies of old the elderly in Zimbabwe foretells the need for the design of effective policies on how old age poverty can be tackled and the livelihoods of this group of people enhanced. In Zimbabwe, the majority of older people, especially in rural areas, belong to the poorest and most vulnerable groups. Their capacity to satisfy their basic needs decreases as age increases. It is often taken for granted that older people in developing countries, Zimbabwe in particular, are protected and looked after by their families, and given respect by young people. However, experience in Zimbabwe indicates that stress and strain of poverty, market forces and changing cultural norms means that family care and respect are often being undermined (HAI, 2002:36).

1.3 Problem statement

Living standards often decline for older people. Reduced economic opportunities and deteriorating health frequently increase vulnerability to poverty as people age (Gorman, 2002). Barrientos et al (2003) argue that the strong decline in economic opportunity with age is a key factor in explaining the high incidence of poverty and vulnerability among older people and their households. The high incidence of old age poverty and vulnerability makes a strong case for public policy responses to support living standards in old age and ensure adequate protection against contingencies. However this has not been the case in Zimbabwe. Ramji (1999:48) reports that in post-colonial Zimbabwe there is no national social security scheme for the elderly. The 1989 National Social Security Authority Act provided for the establishment of social security schemes for employees but there is no provision for the self-employed for the unemployed elderly peasant women and men living in the urban, let alone rural areas. This has left old aged people exposed and vulnerable to risks, shocks and severe poverty. A closer look at Zimbabwe's regional counterparts indicates that countries like South Africa, Lesotho and Botswana have formal social security policies in the form of old age pensions to provide security in old age and to minimize the effects of poverty. The failure

of the government to provide social security systems to the aged people dates back to the pre-independence period. According to Paradza (2009:421), in colonial Zimbabwe, social security schemes, including pensions and occupational compensation were provided only for the elderly of European origin. The schemes, targeted at people who were employed in the formal sector, provided protection against retirement, disability and invalidity. By contrast, elderly Africans who had migrated to urban areas for work were expected to retire to the rural areas, where it was assumed by the colonial administration that they would be cared for by the extended family and the community (Nyaguru, 1994). For Africans, old-age security lay in remittances which were supposed to come from their children. The colonial administration viewed rural areas as a social safety net for urban migrants.

Also as a result of economic adjustments brought about by the process of globalisation, changes in labour market conditions, the failure of the economy and recently the global economic meltdown, the livelihoods of the aged have been greatly affected. In order to assess the desirability of implementing policies to cushion old age poverty and the adverse shocks and risks the aged face, it is critical to understand what old people do to sustain a living. It is therefore a key concern of this study to investigate the livelihood strategies of the aged people in Mubaira Community, Zimbabwe, who live in conditions of threatening poverty. The factors responsible for old age poverty in developing countries, and the appropriate framework for old age support, are to date under-researched (Lloyd-Sherlock, 2000). The current research seeks to address this lack.

1.4 Research Objectives

- 1) To examine the existing livelihood strategies of the rural elderly in Mubaira community.*

Taking into consideration this objective, the study is underpinned by the sustainable livelihoods approach that recognizes that for rural people to overcome poverty they employ, or engage in different activities dependent on their access to different types of resources which include natural, physical, social and financial capital. Combined, these resources or form livelihood strategies that help them achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes. So it is of vital importance to note the various assets or resources at the disposal of the elderly.

2) To analyse who support older people to achieve better livelihoods and cope with life's challenges.

Although older people employ different livelihood strategies to stave off poverty, it is noted that there are various support groups that work with them to attain a better living. In most developed countries the role of the state has been dominant in ensuring livelihoods for the aged. However, in developing countries the role of families, NGOs, CBOs, churches and governments too has been seen as one of assisting the aged in their pursuit of livelihood activities. Therefore, this study also aims to investigate the support given to the aged in Mubaira to attain livelihoods. Scoones (2000:13) convincingly argues that the analysis of the range of formal and informal organisational and institutional factors that influence sustainable livelihood outcomes is central to the SLA framework.

3) To explore the various challenges or problems faced by the elderly in the rural areas.

Older people face different challenges caused by different factors. SLA allows us to trace the vulnerability context in which aged people pursue their livelihoods. Exogenous and endogenous factors have a bearing on the outcomes of livelihood strategies and it is the aim of this study to reveal the different factors that affect aged people in their livelihood activities.

4) To identify the key issues and possible interventions or positive actions required at various levels to improve the quality of life of older people.

By stating this objective, the study seeks to present policy recommendations on how aged people can be assisted both at micro and macro levels.

1.5 Study Area

The study was conducted in rural Mubaira district which is situated 80km south west of the capital city of Harare, Zimbabwe. Mubaira community falls under the Mhondoro constituency in Mashonaland West Province where the main economic activity is agriculture. It has a mean annual rainfall of 819 mm, concentrated in the rainy season from November to March. In the hottest month, October, the mean temperature is 30.8C and in the coldest month, July, the mean temperature is 8.5C. The study area is 30 km from the nearest tarred road, the Harare – Beitbridge highway. The population density in Mubaira Communal Area ranges from 25 to 50 people per km² (Central Statistics Office, unpublished data). The mean number of people per household in the study area is 5.8, of whom 2.9 are children. Local people rely mainly on agriculture to make their living, cultivating subsistence and cash crops, chiefly maize, groundnuts, and cotton, and keeping cattle. About 1 ½ ha of arable land is available to each household (Department of Agricultural Technical and Extension Services, unpublished data).

Mubaira Community is one of the poorest and most remote areas in the country where people rely on natural resources for their living. The choice of this area is because it is an under researched area where a high number of the aged in Mashonaland West province reside. Less government activity in areas of rural development has prompted the researcher to try and see how aged people as a vulnerable group are doing in attaining a basic living. Comparison with the situation of aged people in urban areas such as Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare and Gweru

shows that they have been able to engage more informal services to make a living. Urban livelihoods are greatly based on access to the free market economy and the elderly have engaged in selling vegetables in local markets, selling consumption products in schools, tailoring, etc. Also, the evidence from urban areas shows that elderly people who live close to their families there are cared for, some of them even live with their children (HAI,2003). The presence of numerous home-based care services is high in urban areas unlike in the rural areas. Hence, this study seeks to examine how aged people have been operating in an environment characterized by the lack of a social security system.

1.6 Brief preview of Research Design and Methodology

The study explores the livelihood strategies of poor elderly people in Mubaira Community in Zimbabwe. The overall research method for the study in the collection of empirical data is qualitative. According to Babbie (2007), the utility of using an interpretive (understanding) qualitative approach in the study is in enabling social scientists to learn how individuals experience and interact with their social world (Merriam, 2002:97). Qualitative research allows in –depth exploration of the deeper lived experiences of elderly people and provides a deeper understanding of the ways and means they employ to make a living and avoid poverty. It provides contextual descriptions of individuals and thick descriptions of aspects of the livelihood strategies of the elderly people.

By making use of a qualitative study the researcher aimed to capture the lived experiences of the aged people by providing them with the opportunity to voice their beliefs, feelings and worldviews pertaining to livelihood construction. The study also engaged organizations which provide services to the elderly in the community. These included Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), community based organizations (CBOs) such as political parties and relatives of the elderly. Information pertaining to the organizations that work with the aged

was accessed at the local district office, since, under Zimbabwe law, no organization can carry on any community work to assist people before being permitted to do so by the local authority. The best instrument to extract this information were in-depth interviews which allowed probing the experiences as they are lived, felt and undergone by the elderly (Merriam, 2002). Life narratives which give an overview of trends of change over time with regard to diverse livelihood activities and the old people's judgment as to whether life had improved or worsened over the period were also utilized (Murray, 2002). Research results, according to Merriam (2002:198), are considered trustworthy depending on the validity and reliability of the study. This requires ethical conduct by the researcher during the inquiry. In this study the researcher was the primary instrument of data-collection and analysis, which implies that reality was accessed through the researcher's interviews with the aged people. The population of the research was aged people (60 years and older) drawn from this population.

1.6.1 Sampling

The method of sampling that was used is purposive sampling. Purposive sampling increases the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon will be represented in the data, whereas random sampling tries to achieve variation through the use of random selection and large sample size. From the population of elderly persons in Mubaira about 15 elderly people were interviewed for in-depth interviews and 10 for the life narratives. Two representatives of support organizations that provide services for the care for the aged people emerged and their representatives were interviewed about how they support the elderly people.

1.6.2 Data Analysis

Data analysis entails the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (De Vos, 2005). By means of content analysis qualitative data was post-coded

and sorted in order to determine common themes, shared by the elderly pertaining to their lived experiences in constructing livelihoods. Leedy et al (2002:153) state that the central task during data analysis is to identify common themes in people's descriptions of their experiences in order to ultimately provide a general description of the phenomenon as seen through the eyes of people with firsthand experience. The researcher used the sustainable livelihoods approach to analyse the emerging themes from the study. This framework has been important in this study as it has contributed much in the designing of the qualitative questions.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Discussion of sustainable livelihoods is a central issue in dealing with poverty. The study helps to analyze the causes of and the experience of poverty in the livelihoods of poor old people in Mubaira community, Zimbabwe. This study sets out to contribute to the debate on livelihoods and to provide evidence on how best the elderly people approach poverty in old age. It gives a basis for understanding how the elderly people are doing in sustaining their livelihoods in the absence of formal social security mechanisms. The study also reflects on the role of various institutions and organisations that are working with the elderly to ensure the achievement of sustainable livelihoods.

1.8 Ethical Issues

The researcher notified the responsible authorities in Mubaira district council about the reasons and aims of the study in accordance with the national law of information and communication retrieval. The researcher also notified the subjects about the aims and objectives of the study and made sure that the environment for the study was secure, conducive and appropriate. The researcher ensured confidentiality of the information collected and that the anonymity of the respondents would be maintained and respected.

1.9 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has introduced the main issues of this research. It outlines the core objective of the research which is to explore the livelihoods strategies of the aged people in Mubaira district in Zimbabwe. The elderly in developing countries are vulnerable to risks, shocks and poverty. This is due to multiple factors including the reduced capacity to earn income as a result of retirement from wage employment, economic collapse, lack of old age pensions, lack of access to assets, the impact of HIV/AIDS, etc. Unlike in other countries like, South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania and Lesotho, where national policies are in place to cater for the ageing, the situation in Zimbabwe is different in that the elderly have been left to fend for themselves and be cared for by their families. The chapter has briefly outlined the methodology used to gather empirical evidence on the livelihoods of the aged people. This will be discussed at length in chapter six. Using a qualitative approach, it was noted that emerging themes in the study included reliance on agriculture as the main livelihood strategy and diversification to different self-employments which bring income to the aged people. Support services by the family through remittances and also help from the civil society have also ensured that aged people attain a minimum standard of living. The chapter also introduced the sustainable livelihoods approach as the theoretical framework that has been used in the study. Having discussed the core issues of the study the following chapter focuses on defining and elaborating on the concepts of livelihoods and poverty and also to outline the nexus between them.

CHAPTER TWO

Livelihoods and Poverty

2.1 Introduction

Livelihood problems and poverty have become global concerns. Livelihood perspectives have been central to rural development thinking and practice in the past decade. They have been developed to address the issue of poverty and were conceptualized by the World Commission on Environment and Development. Their goal and objective is to maintain or enhance natural resource productivity, secure ownership of access to assets and income-earning activities as well as ensure adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs (United Nations, 1992:37). According to Cain and McNicoll (1988:105), the concept of ‘livelihood’ is widely used in contemporary writings on poverty and rural development, but its meaning is often elusive either due to vagueness or to differing definitions being used in different sources.

The concept of livelihood varies in response to different circumstances and aspiration. The term is both a mobile and flexible term such that it can be attached to all sorts of other words to construct whole fields of development enquiry and practice. These relate to locales (rural or urban livelihoods), occupations (farming, pastoral or fishing livelihoods), social difference (gendered, age-defined livelihoods), directions (livelihood pathways, trajectories), dynamic patterns (sustainable or resilient livelihoods) and many more (Scoones, 2009: 2). The core argument of this chapter is that the attainment of better livelihoods depends upon the availability of different assets or resources which if fully utilized will be able to eradicate or minimise poverty. It is also understood that poverty in itself is a hindrance to the attainment of sustainable livelihoods. Therefore debates in this chapter will discuss the connection

between livelihoods and poverty and how they influence each other. The concept of livelihoods has been tackled by different theorists from different angles and in the following section the focus will be on outlining the views that have been put forward concerning the concept.

2.2 Concept and meaning of Livelihood

Scoones (2009) argues that livelihoods perspectives start with how different people in different places live. A variety of definitions are offered in the literature, including, for example, ‘the means of gaining a living’ (Chambers 1995:6) or ‘a combination of the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to live’. Taking a dictionary definition it means a living, which straightaway makes it more than merely ‘income’ because it directs attention to the way in which a living is obtained, not just to the net result in terms of income received or consumption attained. Various schools of thought, scholars and organizations have come up with different definitions of livelihood. According to Chambers and Conway (1992:7), a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities as means of living. It is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base. Sustainability comes if there is a long term perspective of the means for sustenance. Chambers and Conway’s (1992) definition tries to establish a relationship among different variables such as capabilities of person or household, various forms of assets and type of activities required for a living. This definition, with minor modifications, has been utilised by several researchers adopting a rural livelihoods approach (Carswell, 1997; Scoones, 1998). Ellis (2000:10) posits that there is a risk that attaches to Chambers and Conway’s definition of livelihoods. It fails to convey change over time and adaptation to evolving circumstances. Livelihoods are not static rather, they are subject to change and their construction has to be seen as an ongoing process in which it cannot be

assumed that the elements remain the same from one season, or from one year to the next. Assets can be built up, eroded, or instantaneously destroyed i.e. in a flood, and also activities fluctuate seasonally, and across years, especially in relation to larger economic trends in the national economy and beyond. For example, the current global recession has resulted in thousands of workers losing their jobs and hence their livelihood source such that it focuses them to diversify their strategies in order to make a living.

Satge (2002:48) gives a different definition of livelihoods placing people more central and showing less concern about with precise terminology for different kinds of assets. Satge (2002) argue that livelihoods are people's capacity to generate and maintain their means of living, enhance their well-being and that of future generations. These capacities are contingent upon the availability and accessibility of options in terms of ecological, economic and political resources which are predicated on equity, ownership of resources and participatory decision making. A descriptive analysis of livelihoods portrays a complex web of activities and interactions that emphasizes the diversity of ways in which people make a living. This may cut across the boundaries of more conventional approaches of looking at rural development and poverty reduction that focus on defined activities: agriculture, wage employment, farm labour, small-scale enterprise and so on (Scoones, 2000). But, in reality people combine different activities in a complex *bricolage* or portfolio of activities which bring about different outcomes. The issue of how different strategies affect livelihood pathways or trajectories is an important concern for livelihoods analysis. This dynamic longitudinal analysis emphasizes such terms as coping, adaptation, improvement, diversification and transformation. Analyses at the individual level can in turn aggregate up to complex livelihood strategies and pathways at household, village or even district and to national level (Scoones, 2009:3).

The term ‘capabilities’ in the foregoing definition of livelihoods is derived from Sen (1993) who refers to the ability of individuals to realise their potential as human beings, in the sense both of being (i.e. to be adequately nourished, free from illness and so on) and doing (i.e. to exercise choices, develop skills and experience, participate socially and so on). Strictly, capabilities can refer to the set of alternative beings and doings that a person can achieve with his or her economic, social and personal characteristics (Dreze and Sen, 1989: 7). Commonly, elderly people are perceived as people who are passive, unproductive and mostly dependent on the help of others. However, before people reached the later life stage, they were involved in many different activities that earned them a living and were also breadwinners for their families. Nothing indicates that when one reaches old age he or she loses his/her skill, potential, capacity to work or capabilities although the rate of work or activity may be reduced because of a frail or weakened body. Given adequate assets, aged people are able to utilize their capabilities to ensure sustained livelihoods and social well-being.

The construction of livelihoods is based upon the availability of resources combined with the different capabilities or skills people have (strategies) to form livelihood outcomes. In their attempts to make a living people use a variety of resources, such as social networks, labour, land, capital knowledge, employment, technology and markets to produce food, harvest natural resources and to generate income. Scoones (2009) also calls these assets poverty reducing factors simply because they have been used by individuals, households and communities as means to end rural poverty and attain better livelihoods. Livelihoods transcend sectoral economic boundaries (e.g. agriculture and industry, formal employment and informal activities) as well as geographical boundaries, particularly those between urban and rural environments. In rural and urban locales people engage in different livelihood strategies which are ways of combining and using assets that are open to people in pursuit of

beneficial livelihood outcomes that meet their own livelihood objectives. In constructing livelihoods people's behaviour is not simply determined by cultural and social structures; instead, they are actively engaged as social actors and constantly maneuvering to improve their lives (Long, 2001).

Ellis (2000:10) presented the framework for analyzing livelihoods that he called the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA). SLA identifies entry points and critical processes and assists with prioritising catalysts for change that can improve people's livelihoods. In the analysis of livelihoods the notion of assets comes first; these can be controlled, owned, claimed or accessed by the household. According to Rakodi and Jones (2002:10), livelihood approaches propose that thinking in terms of strengths or assets is vital as an antidote to the view of poor people as passive or deprived. Central to the approach is the need to recognise that those who are poor may not have cash or other savings but they do have other material or non material assets such as health, labour, knowledge and skills, friends and family and the natural resources available. The elderly who were once formally employed receive pension benefits which help them in the later life stage. However, not all aged people are able to receive occupational pension benefits as some were not so employed. This has led poor older people to engage in different livelihood strategies as they utilize the different assets at their disposal. For those once employed, the assets accumulated during their working years serve to achieve more sustainable outcomes.

Livelihood approaches require a realistic understanding of these assets in order to identify what opportunities they may offer and where the constraints may lie. As Chambers and Conway (1992) indicate, the construction of livelihoods begins with the available resources, that is, assets including capabilities or skills to produce outcomes. It is central to this research

to explore the different assets at older people's disposal and how these help them to make a living. Proponents of the livelihood approach argue that it is conceptually appropriate, empirically sound and of more practical use to start with an analysis of assets. Assets comprise capital (natural, physical, human, financial and social capital), the activities, and the access gained to these that together determine the living gained by the household (Ellis, 2000:10). Assets form households' endowment of resources with which to gain their living. In this definition, the conventional meaning of assets is expanded to include, besides material and financial resources, household members' skills and experience (human capital), their relations within wider communities (social capital) and their natural environment (natural capital).

The important feature of the livelihood definition is to direct attention to the links between assets and the options people possess in practice to pursue alternative activities that can generate the income level required for survival (Ellis, 2010). As to assets, Scoones (2002:7) argues that the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies is dependent on the basic material and social, tangible and intangible, assets that people have in their possession. This means that fundamental to the construction of livelihoods is the availability of assets or resources that may be tangible or intangible.

Assets in Chambers and Conway's livelihood definition include a number of components, some of which belong to recognised economic categories or different types of capital, and some of which do not, namely claims and access. Ellis (2000:8) says there is no difficulty in accepting assets as crucial to any definition of livelihoods; however, there remains scope for disagreement as to what types of capital or stocks can legitimately be included in the overarching description of assets. In brief, natural capital refers to the natural resource base

(land, water, vegetation) that yield products utilised by human populations for their survival. Most rural dwellers access natural capital regularly as it is freely available. Livelihoods of rural dwellers have been centered on the utilization of assets such as land, woodlands, water bodies, etc.

Physical capital refers to assets brought into existence by economic production processes, for example, tools, machines, and land improvements like terraces or irrigation canals. Human capital refers to the education level and health status of individuals and population. Financial capital refers to reserves of cash that can be accessed in order to purchase either production or consumption goods and access to credit might be included in this category. Social capital refers to the social networks and associations in which people participate, and from which they can derive support that contributes to their livelihoods (Ellis, 2000).

Table 1: The Household Livelihood Assets Source: Carney (1998)

<p>Human capital</p> <p>This depicts the labour resources available to households. These have both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. The former refers to the number of household members and the time available to engage in income-earning activities. Qualitative aspects refer to the level of education and skills and the health status of household members.</p>
<p>Social and political capital</p> <p>The social resources (networks, membership of groups, relationship of trust and reciprocity, access to wider institutions of society) on which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods.</p>
<p>Physical capital</p> <p>Physical or produced capital is the basic infrastructure (transport, shelter, water, energy) and the production equipment and means which enable people to pursue their livelihoods.</p>
<p>Financial capital</p> <p>The financial resources available to people (including savings, credit, remittances and pension) which provide them with different livelihood options.</p>
<p>Natural capital</p> <p>The natural resources stocks from which livelihoods are derived, including land, water and other environmental resources, especially common pool resources.</p>

Notwithstanding the definitional and conceptual difficulties that surround some of these types of capital, all five types may be adopted as analytically useful components of assets that underpin individual and household livelihood strategies. An analysis of Carney's typology of assets reflects a lot of controversies pertaining to assets. When looking at financial capital as an asset, the term itself is somewhat ambiguously designated as an asset in the livelihood context because financial stocks (e.g. savings) may be used for either consumption or investment; moreover loans obtained through credit contracts can be used for a variety of purposes, investment designed to raise future productive capacity being only one.

Nevertheless, the access status of an individual or household with respect to savings, loans or the other forms of finance or credit clearly impacts on the livelihood choices available and therefore financial capital is recognisably an important component of individual or family assets (Rakodi and Jones, 2000). In the case of the elderly, those with access to credit lines, loans and pensions have a great advantage over those without such access to them in achieving better livelihood (HAI, 2004). Amongst the five types of capital, physical capital and human capital comply with the orthodox economic definition of capital, according to which whereby an investment is made to achieve a future flow of returns and a conventional rate of return to investment can be calculated (Coleman, 1990:101). Putnam (1993:276) reveal that the concept of social capital departs further from narrow economic definitions of productive assets. Social capital is a subject of continuing debate concerning its definition, its coverage of personalised networks as compared to more formal manifestations of community organisations such as co-operatives, farmer associations, village committees and its efficacy as a vehicle for describing political, social or economic change (Harris, 1997). For social interaction to be termed capital, it must persistently give rise to resources (for example, of trust or knowledge) on which people can draw, even if the social interaction itself is not

permanent (Collier, 1998). As Carney (1998) indicated in the table above, social capital is closely linked to political capital, is based on access to political process and decision-making and is best seen as a gatekeeper asset, permitting or preventing the accumulation of other assets (Booth, 1998:79).

One of the important attributes subsumed under assets is the access that individuals or households have to different types of capital, opportunities and services. As Scoones (1998) puts it, access is defined as the rules and norms that determine the differential ability of people in rural or urban areas to own, control, or otherwise claim or make use of resources such as land and common property. Access depends on institutional arrangements involving power and politics. It is evident that in both rural and urban contexts different institutional arrangements exist which may have a direct or indirect impact on the livelihood outcomes of the resident population. According to Scoones (2009), livelihoods can be understood or approached from both a rural or urban context and the assets and livelihood activities in these locales may differ from each other. The following section introduces the analysis of livelihoods in the two contexts, that is, rural and urban.

2.3 Rural and Urban Livelihoods

The livelihoods of the poor are determined predominantly by the context in which they live and the constraints and opportunities this context presents. This is because context, economic, environmental, social and political, largely determines the assets accessible to people, how they can use these, and impacts on their ability to secure livelihoods. One of the influential and important aspects of livelihoods is environmental context. Urban livelihoods and rural ones are affected by different factors. Livelihoods can be traced both from a rural or the urban set up and within these parameters people are exposed to different factors.

According to Meikle (1999:111), it is the context that makes an urban livelihood distinctive and both rural and urban contexts are dynamic and multifaceted, but the urban context is more complex. Urban areas provide a great number of opportunities and a variety of services. The difference between urban and rural contexts is that in urban areas cash transactions are more common hence people in these areas are more dependent on cash incomes and often lack access to communal resources such as water and food, which are freely available in rural areas. Most urban areas despite distinctive individual attributes share economic, environmental, social and political characteristics which in turn influence livelihood strategies. Harris (1997) and UNCHS (1996) present urban areas as engines of economic growth and as locations of complex networks of activities essential to basic human functions of living which operate by drawing on the skills and labour of their populations. Economic opportunities available in urban areas attract migrants from rural areas or less developed areas in search of work and the chance to improve their livelihoods. Although urban areas boast a more buoyant economy than do rural areas, there are often high levels of unemployment and underemployment. Many poor urban dwellers survive by engaging in a variety of activities in the informal sector. The most vulnerable, poor and least secure or skilled, engage in a variety of marginal, often illegal or semi-legal activities, such as begging, waste picking or prostitution.

As initially indicated the urban economy depends on cash, goods such as water, food and housing have to be bought in the market whereas in rural locations access to these resources for many rural area households may not involve purchasing at all. In urban areas urban residents rely on services provided by the local authorities and these are accessed by those with the purchasing power. In rural areas local water resources such as wells, streams, rivers and boreholes can be accessed freely without payment. The urban poor need greater cash

incomes than do most rural households in order to survive (Wratten 1995; Satterhwaite, 1997). Looking at the plight of the elderly, it may be concluded that the livelihoods pursued by the elderly person living in urban areas is much more expensive and difficult than that in the rural areas. Therefore, the economic context in which one lives or resides has a direct bearing on the livelihood outcomes. Although much may be said about urban livelihoods this study focuses on trying to understand the livelihoods of rural older people. Therefore, a more elaborate analysis of rural livelihoods follows in the section below.

2.3.1 Rural Areas

The definition of rural as opposed to urban is important in the measurement of and fight against poverty. There is no universally accepted definition of 'rural' because different countries have different perceptions and definitions of rurality (UNRISD, 2008). Therefore, what is rural may already be politically or administratively defined as to make meaningful international comparison difficult. Anrinquez and Stamoulis (2007) observe that in practice there are two ways to define rural. The first method is to geopolitically define all of the state, regions and district capitals as urban and by exclusion all the rest as rural. This applies to countries like Colombia, El Savado, Dominican Republic and Paraguay. According to this definition the population that lives outside the geopolitical limits of a city (especially in a growing city) are miscounted as rural while populations living in small municipalities in sparsely populated regions are miscounted as urban (Anrinquez and Stamoulis, 2007).

The second method defines rural in terms the use of population agglomerations. Anrinquez and Stamoulis (2007) move away from the first approach and indicate that population concentrations exceeding 2500 inhabitants are considered urban, while by exclusion, the rest is defined as rural. The population agglomerations approach to define what is rural seems feasible because it establishes a clear threshold. However, although this threshold varies

around the world, it makes international comparison difficult. For example, in Mexico the borderline is 2500 persons or fewer, in Nigeria 10 000 or more (IFAD, 2001:17). The major problem with this borderline is that it leads to overestimation of the urban population and considering the fact that annual population growth in most developing countries has been around 2-3 %, many places may exceed the rural –urban borderline even though they hardly change their lifestyle (IFAD, 2001:18). This indicates that rural populations could be larger than what the official figures provide. The lower the rural-urban threshold is set, the fewer people are classified as rural and consequently the lower is the share of public expenditure allocated to rural areas.

The failure of these two methodological approaches to give a clear cut universally accepted definition of ‘rural’ calls for other approaches. According to UNRISD (2008), a less often used method worth mentioning in view of its relevance for social protection and rural poverty analysis is consideration of the availability of services to define rural and urban. Anriques and Stamoulis (2007) indicate that in Honduras an area is considered to be urban if (in addition to having a population of 2000 inhabitants) it possesses services that come with education and health infrastructure. Atchoarena and Gasperini (2003:21) suggested a multi-criteria approach for defining areas. The following points were noted;

- Settlements of low density
- A place where activities are affected by a high transaction cost associated with long distance from cities and poor infrastructure
- A space where human and infrastructure occupy only a small share of the landscape
- Places where most people work on farms
- Natural environment dominated by pastures, forests, mountains and deserts
- The availability of land at a relatively low cost

Taking into consideration the above points it may be argued that they correspond to many characteristics of so called rural areas in developing countries particularly in Africa. The issue of service delivery is serious as national governments do neglect these areas and concentrate more on urban areas. Infrastructural development is slow and settlements in these areas are dispersed and of low density. Unlike rural areas in developed countries, where one can find light industries, essential services and defined and upgraded road networks, the situation in most African countries is different as all these characteristics are low grade or non-existent. Due to the absence of essential services that create job opportunities rural Africa experiences high levels of migration as people move to urban areas for better living. Poverty tends to hit hardest in rural areas where people find it difficult to make a living from available resources, usually natural and physical.

2.3.2 Rural Poor

Frequently, rural dwellers in developing countries are treated as a homogeneous group despite diverse contexts and different determinants of their poverty status. Okidegbe (2001:43) presents the rural poor in five categories that include;

- The landless (those without any crop land)
- Those with a low assets base, or smallholder farmers with up to 2 hectares of crop land
- Pastoralists (those who are not settled in any specific area and who derive most of their income from pastoral livestock)
- Rural women (especially women headed households) and
- Ethnic minorities and indigenous people

In general terms, the rural poor are characterised by their weak access to social, economic, financial and political assets. Chambers and Conway (1992) in their definition of livelihoods suggest that assets are the starting point in the construction of a livelihood and are important

as an input. Therefore, if rural people are characterised by weak access to these essential assets their livelihood strategies cannot resist and cope with shocks and risks and so they become susceptible to poverty. Furthermore greater vulnerability , higher levels of the rural poor to risk and uncertainty and exclusion from social, administrative and political processes are typical characteristics (Farrington and Gill, 2002: 2).The context of rural people is difficult and can be defined as having (1) a low agriculture potential (owing to combinations of climatic soils and disease problems), (2) a fragile ecology, (3) a weak infrastructure, (4) highly fragmented and weakly functioning markets, as well as (5) poor connectivity to national, regional and global markets. However, while much has been written about the rural poverty, it still needs proper delineation. It is thus important to analyse the different approaches to poverty discourse before the exploration of the various livelihoods options of the rural people can embarked upon.

2.4 The Poverty Discourse

Poverty reduction is now at the core of development policy-making and a key commitment of the international community. 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. HAI (2004) is of the view that it is mostly the elderly and children who are mostly affected by poverty as they usually depend on other people for their survival. It is also estimated that for the next two decades the majority of the population living in developing countries will continue to be rural. Consequently, achieving the targets of poverty reduction set by the international community for the year 2015 will require particular emphasis on rural areas. Despite their importance to it, rural people in developing countries still tend to be neglected in the fight against poverty (UNRISD, 2008). One important emerging component of development policy to address poverty in developing countries is the sustainable livelihoods approach. The

approach is developed to help understand and analyse the livelihoods of the poor and also to stimulate debate and reflection, thereby improving performance in poverty reduction.

According to Khan (2001:14), 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 have been the major causes of rural poverty in developing countries. Aspects such as culture, climate, gender, markets and public policy are among the things contributing to rural poverty. Poverty is a multidimensional process that can be analysed and interpreted in different ways. It is not a state of existence but a process with many dimensions and complexities. To understand poverty, it is essential to examine the economic and social context including institutions of state, markets, communities and households. Different concepts of poverty have been developed and may have different meanings. A closer look at some of the concepts will be useful in trying to understand the trends of poverty in the lives of elderly people.

2.4.1 Concepts of Poverty

Discussions of poverty often debate why some people live in it whether by reason of individual inability or mistakes or because of the influence of the existing environment. The central question in the analysis of livelihoods is how poverty can best be addressed for a better livelihood. It is believed that poverty hinders the construction and attainment of better livelihoods. Different schools of thought, authors and organisations have conceptualised the term poverty. In most general terms poverty is viewed as lack of income to purchase basic needs.

2.4.2 Income Concepts

According to May (1998), poverty is the inability to attain a minimal standard of living, measured in terms of basic consumption needs and the income required to satisfy them. From May's definition it follows that one is considered to be in poverty when he/she lacks the basic necessities of life and this can be measured in terms of necessary consumption and the income needed for it. Basic necessities entail such things as food, shelter, clean water and clothing. In the attainment of livelihoods the absence of such basic needs means that one cannot earn a living and therefore becomes vulnerable or susceptible to shocks and risks.

Research on poverty has been based on income as a benchmark. The World Bank has adopted about US \$1 a day as a global poverty datum line below which people are failing or struggling to survive. This limit or benchmark set by the World Bank means that absolute poverty defines the situation of all those falling below the established poverty line.

For the purposes this study, failure to access a minimum amount of money as defined by the World Bank means that elderly people are really in poverty. In countries with old aged pensions in place the elderly have been able to stave off poverty and have been able to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, clean water and health care. Lack of income in cash has meant that aged people in the developing countries remain in poverty as they cannot meet their basic requirements of life. It is even worse in urban areas where every service is monetized unlike in the rural areas where access to common resources can help to make a living in the absence of money. Services such as drinking water are easily accessible as rivers, wells and streams are readily available for free. As for food rural people are able to grow crops to cushion themselves against hunger and starvation.

2.4.3 Basic Needs Concept

As argued earlier, poverty is a multi-dimensional concept such that the concept of basic needs may help to identify the poor from the non-poor (Streeten, 2001:149). Income alone cannot adequately represent basic necessities such as food, shelter and clothing. In fact public services that address such basic needs directly may substantially improve the health and welfare of the poor without necessarily raising their income. According to this approach, households are defined as poor if their food, clothing, medical needs, education, social welfare and security needs are not met. The elderly in Zimbabwe according to this approach will be classified as poor because nothing has been done by the government to provide such services to the aged.

Evidence from this impoverished country shows that prior to the government adopting structural adjustment programmes in the early 1990s there was provision of free primary health care to children and the aged and price controls for basic food commodities were in place. This ensured that poor people could meet their basic needs but later, after all these services were scrapped, more people fell into poverty. In South Africa the increase in service delivery protests is seen as an indication of their state of poverty and not being able to access services such as clean water, health, basic education and transport networks. However such people do live well above the US \$1 per day poverty line set by the World Bank. The SLA recognizes the role of organizations such as the government in the building of the livelihoods of the poor. For the livelihoods of the poor to be improved, it is essential that government provide these basic needs. The absence of such services impacts on the outcome of sustainable livelihoods for the poor because it means they have to fend for themselves to meet these basic needs and not everyone has the assets and capacity to meet them.

However, although the basic needs approach has received attention even from international and national poverty programs for its more meaningful description of the poor and poverty, it has its own limitations in that needs change over time and in that it is problematic to specify the amount of items, type of items and characteristics of the basic needs (Streeten , 1998). Its failure to indicate how people could meet their basic needs and the amount or income needed to do so is also a drawback. This approach too calls for other approaches that can be used to define, interpret and explain poverty.

2.4.4 Social Darwinian Theory of poverty

Various theories have been developed to explain the concept of poverty and the social Darwinian theory of poverty was the first such theory to emerge within sociology. This theory tries to explain poverty in terms of the behaviour and attitudes of the poor themselves (Islam, 2005:58). It believes the poor are poor as a result of the fact that they do not work hard, mismanage income, are involved in substance abuse and spending on luxury and have family disorders. Lack of ambition or an inner motivation to work are among the causes of poverty according to this school of thought. Malthus and Herbert Spencer supported this approach and believed that only hunger would teach the poor civility subjection (Islam, 2005:58). This theory of poverty when applied to the context of the elderly only applies for those who did not work, save and invest. A life course approach suggests that to understand and work effectively with older people we need to see them in the context of their past lives, their life story or biography and their recalled experience (Hepworth, 2000). This will allow us to better understand whether they did enough to guard against the risks and uncertainties of old age. Those who worked and saved for later life are able to avoid poverty by either engaging in income generating activities or disposing of their assets, as some rural elderly do, for example, by selling livestock. However, the theory has its own share of limitations in the sense that behaviours and attitudes alone cannot account for poverty. The context in which

one lives may have much to do with the state of individuals. Individual lives may be affected by external factors that can plunge them into poverty. For example, in war torn areas, the impact of drought, economic collapse, and political unrest might disrupt livelihoods even when people want to work. In the Zimbabwean context the dollarization of the economy led to hundreds of aged people becoming poor when their savings in Zimbabwean dollars became useless. People who had worked their entire life and saved for retirement found themselves in poverty as the government changed the currency to replace its valueless dollar. It can be said that although this theory tried to explain the causes of poverty it is one sided in its account of it. It certainly calls for a better conceptualization of poverty.

2.4.5 Culture of poverty

Culture of poverty is a theory of poverty that was developed by Oscar Lewis, an anthropologist. Based on information from Mexico, he argues that poverty is a specific syndrome that grows up in some situations. It requires an economic setting of a cash economy, a low level of unemployment, under-employment, low wages and unskilled people. The absence of voluntary or state support, a stable family, and low income populations tend to cause development of a culture of poverty against the dominant ideology of capitalism and accumulation (Lewis, 1998). To Lewis (1998) the poor realise that they have a marginal position within a capitalist society that is characterised by individualism which prevents them from any chance or prospect for upward mobility and success. In order for the poor to survive they must develop their own culture, institutions and agencies because the larger society tends to ignore or bypass them. A snapshot of the elderly poor in developing countries suggests that they are a homogenous, dependent group that does not bring any benefit to the economy and costs the state too much in pensions and grants. This pictures older people as part of a culture of poverty since their situation matches most of the characteristics described by Lewis' theory. Accordingly, the poor come to embody a common set of norms, values,

patterns of behavior that are different from the general culture. A common belief in developing countries is that the needs and cares of the elderly are in the hands of the entire family or household such that they don't have to fend for their living. In developed countries the availability of social pensions has meant that the elderly are not labeled as poor people. Lewis (1998) argues that poor people have a way of life or reflects a subculture characterized attitudes, values and individual personality portraying fatalism, helplessness, dependence and inferiority, a weak ego tuned to gratification in the present and a strong preoccupation with masculinity.

However, although the theory of culture of poverty has been tabled as an explanation of situational poverty in certain contexts, Lewis believes that it has been greatly misunderstood and misused. According to Islam (2005), Lewis saw it as an extreme form of adaptation the poor are forced to undertake under certain conditions. The poor reject the dominant culture and its institutions because they are not served by them and therefore their own subculture grows out of despair and protest. Given the plight of the elderly, they may indeed feel dejected, isolated and neglected because of their physical situations. In most employments the retirement age is 65 years and after that one is considered as not fit or able to work and the result is loss of employment. In a context of high inflation and unfavorable economic conditions, retirement pensions saved throughout one's employment history are depleted as time moves on. Thus the elderly may feel the need to look for alternative survival strategies to safeguard their livelihoods. This is because they cannot secure employment at that age, receives no state grants, and are isolated from relatives and society generally.

2.4.6 Sen's account on poverty

Amartya Sen published extensively on poverty. He has made profound contribution to the study of poverty over the last decade. According to Sen (2001), poverty is a complex, multifaceted concept that requires a clear analysis in all its many dimensions. There are geographical, biological and social factors that amplify or reduce the impact of income on each individual. The poor generally lack a number of elements such as access to land, health, longevity, justice, family and community support, credit and other productive resources such as a voice in institutions and access to opportunity. Sen (2001) argues that to be poor is to live below an imaginary poverty line such as income of two dollars a day or less. It means having an income that does not allow an individual to cover basic necessities taking into account the circumstances and social requirements of the environment.

To Sen (2001) poverty analysis should focus on an individual's potential to function rather than on the results the individual obtains from functioning. In his discussions of poverty, he discusses the biological, inequality and relative deprivation approaches to the study of poverty. He argues that due to differences in the individual's habits, culture, norms and vagueness of requirements, the biological approach does not adequately explain poverty. Sen (2001) explores the social, political and economic factors relating to economic inequality (the inequality approach) and poverty. According to Sen (1983), a redistribution of resources, wealth, assets, the ownership of the means of production, even without expansion of the country's productive capacity and capabilities, can significantly reduce the incidence of poverty.

According to Williams (1999:34), Sen's sentiments on deprivation are that studies of deprivation should focus on people's functioning and capabilities rather than on narrow

income or consumption based indices of poverty as propounded by earlier theorists and institutions like the World Bank. The deprivation approach adds a new dimension to the understanding of poverty and he views functionings as the constitutive elements of a person's well being that may vary from such elementary things as being adequately nourished, being in good health, avoiding escapable morbidity and premature mortality, to more complex achievements such as being happy, having self respect and, taking part in the life of the community (Sen, 1992). He discusses the capability approach which defines capability as the various combinations of functionings that one is able to achieve. The approach to well being is important in that it focuses attention on functionings, the end states of well-being, and thus retains some measure of absolute poverty whilst at the same time recognising the importance of individuals' perceptions of their own position.

Sen's work on poverty is based upon the fact that capabilities and functionings are constrained by people's entitlements. Entitlements are defined as the set of alternative bundles of commodities (Dreze and Sen 1999). Therefore entitlement sets are broader than income, including the full range of resources that a person has at his/her disposal for the realization of capabilities (Williams, 1999). Entitlements describe the relationship of the resources that poor people have and the commodities that are at their disposal that are essential to meet their basic requirements. It therefore means that if one is limited in these entitlements and commodities there is a high likelihood that one's capabilities are greatly hindered and this has an effect on the overall livelihood. Therefore livelihood outcomes can be measured on the basis of a set of commodity bundles as discussed by Sen.

An important point to note from Sen's account on poverty is that there is a strong link between the construction and attainment of livelihoods. Similarly Chambers and Conway's

(1992) definition of livelihoods tries to establish a relationship among different variables such as capabilities of individuals or households and the various forms of assets and the types of activities required. However, Scoones (2000) argues that the notions of well-being (Chambers, 1995, 1997) and capability (Sen, 1986) provides gives a wider definitional scope for the livelihoods concept. Sen (2001) views capabilities as what people can do with their entitlements, an approach which encompasses far more than the material concerns of food intake or income. Such ideas incorporate more fully the human capital that allows people to do things, but also the intrinsically valued elements of 'capability' or 'well-being'. Chambers (1997) argues that such a well-being approach to poverty and livelihood analysis may allow people themselves to define the criteria which are important.

All these approaches have tried to define poverty from different dimensions but one known factor is that poverty levels are much more concentrated in rural areas than in urban areas and that the rural dwellers are the ones most commonly perceived to be poor. The nexus between livelihoods and poverty is a very important one. Although it has been agreed that poverty is a multi-faceted concept, the SLA argues and proposes that the poor have assets and choices that will help them evade poverty and its consequences. Livelihoods approaches have been considered by development practitioners as escape routes from poverty. As already noted, the poor have access to five types of capital assets (physical, natural, financial, social and human) which they can draw upon selectively in the pursuit of livelihood activities to achieve desired outcomes, such as increased income, reduced vulnerability and more reliable access (Scoones, 2000). Poverty for many elderly people is due to many factors ranging from failure of the national government to cater for the needs of the senior citizens to dwindling support from family members and other relatives of the aged people. This leaves them vulnerable to a lot of factors and helps to undermine their well-being. According to Chambers (1989:1),

“vulnerability is not the same as poverty. It means not lack or want, but defencelessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk, shocks and stress. Chambers (1989) described poverty as ‘deprivation, lack or want’, so as to distinguish it from vulnerability. Scoones et al (1996: 9) make a link between shocks/stresses, livelihoods and vulnerability that increased risks. Shocks and stresses may undermine rural livelihoods in a way that increases vulnerability, resulting in impoverishment and powerlessness. These ideas of Chambers and Scoones support the view that poverty is a result of one’s being vulnerable to risks, shocks and stresses. Poverty then also affects rural livelihoods as rural dwellers fail to achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter sought to introduce the livelihood and poverty concept as they are the main themes of the study. Poverty has been viewed by different scholars as multi-dimensional and caused by many different factors. In simpler terms it depicts the deprivation of individuals and households of the essential basic needs of life. Using a livelihood approach, it was noted from the chapter that, to avert poverty and its consequences, rural people have access to capital assets that allow them to engage in livelihood activities to improve their well-being or status of living. The chapter also highlighted the fact that the study of livelihoods can be understood from two different contexts, that is, either from a rural or an urban perspective. The major distinction between these two is that livelihoods in the urban areas are dependent on the daily use of cash for the attainment of basic needs of life which is not the case for rural livelihoods.

For rural dwellers access to capital assets such as natural, physical and social capital helps ensure that livelihoods needs are met. Common resources are accessed free of charge and they are always readily available for use by rural dwellers. Lastly the chapter highlights the

fact that there is a strong connection or link between livelihoods and poverty. Development practitioners have used the livelihoods perspective as the ideal approach to deal with rural poverty as it starts with a recognition of the various assets at the disposal of poor people. Poverty has greatly affected the livelihoods of the people as they are exposed or susceptible to various shocks, stresses and risks in life. Having discussed what livelihoods are, the contexts in which they are practiced and how poverty is conceptualized, the focus will now turn to an understanding of the rural livelihoods strategies employed by rural people in their endeavor to combat rural poverty.

CHAPTER THREE

Rural Livelihoods Strategies

3.1 Introduction

Poverty levels appear to be higher in rural areas than in the urban centres. Rural dwellers have also been considered to be the poorest people who rely on access to common pool resources (Ellis, 2000). As argued in the previous chapter, the livelihoods perspective has been used as an approach to minimize the incidence of poverty in the rural areas. Rural areas are endowed with a pool of resources which are accessed by the poor to construct their livelihoods. This chapter expounds on the previous one, as it looks at the livelihoods strategies or activities engaged in by rural dwellers as they seek to improve their living and eradicate poverty. Livelihoods in the urban and rural areas differ drastically as a result of many factors. In urban areas financial capital seems to be the major concern as urban dwellers always have to fork out money to meet their daily needs for food, shelter and water. Although other forms of capital assets may be found they are not as common as they are in the rural context. Using the SLA this chapter seeks to outline the dominant livelihoods strategies or portfolios which rural dwellers engage in, to help them counter the effects of poverty and to give them sustainable livelihood outcomes.

3.2 Rural Livelihoods

The sustainable livelihoods framework has been adopted by many scholars and development agencies as an alternative methodological approach to the alleviation and reduction of poverty. It aims to reduce vulnerability by helping people to build on their own support and resources (Bryceson, 2004:619). Earlier conventional approaches failed to tackle poverty and left many loopholes. According to UNSRSD (2008), it has been realised that the conventional definitions and approaches to poverty eradication focused too narrowly on certain aspects of

poverty, such as low income, and did not consider the vulnerability and social exclusion aspects. For rural areas it may be argued that inadequate attention has been paid to the complexity of rural livelihoods and the multiple dimensions of rural poverty (Carney 1998). Rural households engage in different activities to ensure that they make a living and as according to the World Bank (2002:318) the analysis of how rural individuals or households fare in making a living dismisses frequent misconceptions about rural populations. It is often believed that rural households are either all farmers or all diversified. Instead, there is a considerable heterogeneity in what they do and in the relative importance of what they do for their livings. A majority of rural households engages in some agricultural activity but may derive a large part of their income from off farm activities and from migration. These have been termed livelihood strategies and the concept has become central to development practice in recent years.

Livelihood strategies allude to the range and combination of activities and choices that people make in order to achieve their livelihood goals. On the basis of their personal goals, their resource base and their understanding of the options available, different categories of households, poor and less poor, develop and pursue different livelihood strategies. These strategies include short term considerations such as ways of earning a living, coping with shocks and managing risk, as well as longer-term aspirations for children's future and old age. Livelihood strategies can be positive, helping households to become more resilient and less vulnerable, or negative when they result in a further erosion and decrease of the asset base (Chambers and Conway, 1992). A key goal of livelihood strategies is to ensure household economic and social security. Scoones (2002:4) identifies three broad clusters of livelihood strategies within the SLA. These are agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration. Broadly speaking, these are seen to cover the range

of options open to rural people. Firstly, either one gains more of a livelihood from agriculture (including livestock rearing, aquaculture, forestry etc.) through processes of intensification (more output per unit area through capital investment or increases in labour inputs) or extensification (more land under cultivation). Secondly, one diversifies to a range of off-farm income earning activities and, lastly, one may move away and seek a livelihood, either temporarily or permanently, elsewhere, through migration (Scoones, 2002:5). Or, more commonly, you pursue a combination of strategies together or in sequence. According to Herbinck and Lent (2007: 14) this livelihood typology offers useful insights into the broader and diverse rhythms of social change and provides relevant categories for describing and analysing rural livelihoods. For rural households livelihood strategies are designed to suit their assets endowments and to cater for the constraints imposed by market failures, state failures, social norms and exposures to universal risks. For most rural people agriculture seems to be the most common strategy and according to the FAO (2002) agriculture provides employment for 1.3 billion people worldwide, 97% of these in developing countries it is the major source of livelihood for rural households.

3.2.1 Agriculture: A major strategy for rural households

According to the World Bank (2002), agriculture is a source of livelihood for an estimated 86 percent of rural people. OECD (2006:17) has reported that agricultural sector productivity has contributed greatly to economic growth and the reduction of poverty. In the rural areas agriculture has the capacity to reduce poverty by harnessing the productive capacity of the poor's very assets of land and labour and by lowering and stabilising food prices and providing opportunities of employment and rural economic growth. Agriculture is defined as the production of food and goods through farming and includes the production of crops (either for commercial or subsistence use), livestock rearing or the combination of both. OECD (2006:18) also presents agriculture as an activity engaged in by households in

farming, herding, livestock production, fishing and aquaculture. An important point to note is that agriculture can be practised for either subsistence or commercial purposes and for the poor people with limited resources practicing agriculture is mainly for subsistence or consumption purposes.

Saith (1998) presents agriculture as the primary strategy that has been the dominant approach to rural development in the last three decades of the twentieth century. This was because it has supported rural households indirectly or directly and small poor farmers could simultaneously achieve simultaneously growth, poverty reduction and a living. Ellis (2000:98) argues that direct support for the rural households included subsidies for fertiliser, irrigation and funding of international and national agricultural research. Indirect support has included funding of rural infrastructure such as rural feeder roads, the creation of state parastatal agencies to provide services to agriculture, and integrated rural development programmes comprising components within supposedly unified frameworks (Ellis, 2000:98).

Poor people in rural areas rely heavily on their environment for most of their needs and are affected by the deterioration in the quality and quantity of these resources. The availability of natural and physical capital such as land, water, air, biological resources, livestock, irrigation canals, buildings and environmental services, etc. have made it possible for agriculture to be practised as a livelihood strategy in the rural areas. Marcus et al (1996) argue that many rural households in communal areas regard themselves as agriculturalists and those without land aspire to land within these areas while those with land are eager for more; this indicates the value of land based strategies to livelihoods. The production of crops and rearing of livestock is a social protection mechanism for these people as they gain a livelihood, and gain income through sales.

Ellis (2000:11) talks of farm income generated from own farming, either on owner occupied land, or land acquired through tenancy or cash. This income encompasses livestock as well as crop income and also includes consumption of own farm output as well as cash income derived from the output sold. Sales of livestock such as cattle, goats, sheep, chicken, etc. and crop sales such as maize, beans, millet and vegetables boasts income for the rural people. Hence one cannot overlook the direct use value derived by most rural households from the outputs of land based livelihoods strategies. According to Cunningham (2005:40), land based strategies act as a rural safety net for household members and the safety net value of land based goods and services are used in time of need to cope with shocks and stress. The full range of goods and services associated with livestock produce and gardening, wild foods harvested from amongst staple arable crops and collection of natural resources for consumption, etc. are direct use values of agricultural activity. Agriculture can be practiced for commercial or subsistence and consumption purposes depending on the availability of capital assets like land, labour, financial capital and physical capital. The most common practice that has been dominant in the rural areas is subsistence agriculture which is affordable for poor people.

3.2.1.1 Subsistence Agriculture

Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009:460) reveal that poor households access their food from the market, from subsistence production and from transfers from public programmes or other households. It is difficult to give a precise definition of subsistence agriculture but it is, as Heidhues (2003:120) presents it, a farming method that is typically characterised by low external input levels and low productivity (per unit of land and labour). It is closely linked to low levels of economic development and is more dominant in less developed countries in Africa. It can also have dual meanings in the fact that it is seen as material consumption in the context of subsistence and as a certain way of production (subsistence production) which

has certain characteristics. In classical economic terms, in line with the works of Smith, Malthus and Ricardo, subsistence is basically viewed as a material consumption basket that is necessary for people to make a living and to reproduce themselves. The literature refers to subsistence agriculture as synonymous and in tandem with such concepts as traditional, small scale, peasant, low income, resource poor, low input or low technology. Other scholars have described it as farming in which smallholder farmers just engage in it to raise enough food for their family's consumption.

Subsistence farming is a suitable or ideal option for poor rural households as it is a less intensive method of farming and a self sufficiency practice. In the absence of significant cash income subsistence agriculture is the best possible livelihood strategy to ensure food security for poor rural households. Their lack of adequate resources to intensify agricultural production for marketing purposes has left them to provide food and other outputs for consumption purposes. Efficiency in resource use has been lacking in subsistence oriented agriculture for various reasons. The absence of formal credit and external inputs in the production process prevents higher inputs, and simple technologies such as cattle drawn ploughs and animal manure for fertilizer are used. Lack of entrepreneurship and absence of specialization keeps land and labour productivity low and have a negative bearing on subsistence agriculture (Heidhues, 2003:120).

Moreover, the priority given by smallholder farmers to the satisfaction of family needs implies foregoing the benefits of comparative advantage, specialization and division of labour. The result is that it only assures a low standard of living for subsistence farmers and their families. The marketing of agricultural products or outputs is an important element for most farmers. With subsistence agriculture the marketing of produce only takes place when

there are surpluses from subsistence production, usually following an exceptional good harvest. From these remarks it is clear that subsistence agriculture is usually associated with backwardness and inefficiency and as a hindrance to economic growth and performance as its major priority is to bring food to the table of the smallholder farmer. Hirschman (2000) argues that subsistence or smallholder farmers' behaviour often appears mysterious to economists as they are seen to behave irrationally and their method of farming is considered as germane low productivity sectors that lack the dynamism to drive economic development.

Although subsistence agriculture has been viewed as an impediment to economic growth and performance, it is often the only way for rural people to survive under extremely difficult and risky conditions. Baiphathi and Jacobs (2009:463) argue that subsistence or smallholder agriculture plays an important role in reducing the vulnerability of rural food insecure households. It is therefore important in the improvement of livelihoods and in helping to mitigate high food price inflation and in guarding against risks and uncertainties. Risk and uncertainties dominate people's lives in rural areas. According to the Royal Society (1992: 4), risk is the chance, in qualitative terms, of a defined hazard occurring and it therefore combines a probabilistic measure of occurrence of the primary events with a measure of the consequences of such events. The difference between risk and uncertainty is fuzzy in practice and is not a useful distinction since all events are fundamentally uncertain in some way, particularly where human agency is involved (Scoones et al, 1996).

While there is no universally accepted distinction between risk and uncertainty, it can be said that the two go hand in hand and may undermine rural livelihoods and increase vulnerability, resulting in impoverishment and powerlessness. Risk aversion has been found to be a consistent and common thing among the poor rural people as it is for most human behaviour

where the consequences of risk are serious or life threatening (Binswanger 1980:49). An interpretation of the models of risk behaviour indicates that subsistence agriculture can be interpreted as the protection of household against extreme and unpredictable risks, especially those that may endanger a household's survival or expose it to hunger. This is true especially for sub-Saharan Africa where research has shown that most rural households practice agriculture for food security, consumption and as a safety net against possible risks. Where a surplus is achieved after a good harvest some of the produce is sold as to provide for other household utilities. Heidhues et al (2003:127) are of the view that resource poor farmers in developing countries have been choosing from a wide variety of risk coping strategies involving both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Chambers and Conway (1998), in their livelihood analysis, reveal that rural people have a ready access to resources, such as natural and physical assets, which builds a platform for them to construct livelihoods. Access to arable land, water, human labour and other inputs for the rural people has rendered agriculture the first strategy to avert and guard against risks. The most common issue in rural areas concerns food security. Given the little pieces of land they have, rural people have taken to subsistence farming to avoid food crises.

3.2.1.2 Food security and Subsistence agriculture

According to Young (2001:221), the concept of food security has developed over the past three decades and the concern has focused more on the ability of countries to secure adequate food supplies. However, food is not only a concern at international or national level. It is also a paramount issue at grass roots level especially in poor rural communities. Recent research has revealed that subsistence food production is increasingly important in some countries, mainly as a fallback against a backdrop of inflation and a proliferation of cash needs. HAI (2008:14) reports that continuing inflation of international food and oil prices is causing an escalating food crisis in developing countries, which as a result, are taking steps to combat

food insecurity. The FAO (2007:56) defines food security as a condition where all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. This shows that asset endowments and their combinations are the construction of a livelihood. Oxfam (2008) reveals a livelihood approach in assessing food security at a conceptual level. The livelihoods approach to food security simply entails emergency programming to support livelihoods and save lives. Subsistence production may be seen as an emergence program that can be utilised by poor rural people to save their lives from hunger and ensure future consumption. Emergence programming means more than to give food hampers or aid to the needy rather, it is to have a defined response to a need (hunger or famine) by engaging in activities that adapt, help cope and sustain and build against resilience stresses and shocks such as hunger and famine. For rural households to maintain food security and safety, subsistence production has become the main activity or program to save livelihoods.

Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009:467) note that in most of sub-Saharan Africa food insecurity affects the urban more severely than the rural poor as they are heavily dependent on the market unlike their rural counterparts who are able to exploit natural resources to provide for food and generate income. Rakodi (2002:38) reports that the vulnerability context of an individual or household affects the way in which livelihoods are constructed. Urban people face two crucial components that affect households' pursuit for food security and these are ability to earn cash income and the (rising) prices of food. In rural areas agriculture has been the dominant practice since the availability of land and other essential minimum resources ensure a living for the rural people. Bryceson (2000:7) takes subsistence production of food to be a major component of livelihoods in sub Saharan Africa. Rural farmers ensure that the food deficit is reduced and through subsistence production or smallholder production they

improve the food supply and hence cushion rural folk against food price shocks, thereby improving their livelihood security. Food insecurity does irreparable damage to livelihoods and affects the self sufficiency of the rural people through malnutrition, morbidity and mortality.

In his entitlement theory of famine Sen (1981) provides the conceptual basis for all agencies approaching food security assessment. His theory states that people's exchange entitlements (or their livelihood sources) reflect their ability to acquire food. The sub-divisions of the entitlements include production based-entitlements of crops and livestock. Although subsistence farming has been the most common practice in rural areas, Scoones (2002) also believes that rural agriculture can be approached from a different angle as rural dwellers intensify their activities by fully utilizing the resources available to them.

3.2.1.3 Agriculture Intensification and Extensification in Rural Livelihoods Analysis

Proponents of the SLA argue that in the pursuit of livelihood improvement, one would rather gain more of a livelihood from agriculture intensification (more output per unit area through capital investment or increases in labour output) or extensification (more land under cultivation) (Scoones, 2002:4). For successful agricultural productivity one has to put into use these two concepts, especially agricultural intensification that may also be equated to commercial agriculture, a more business like form of production. For poor rural people, poor resource endowment and adverse institutional policies have been seen to be the major causes of low and declining agricultural production in sub-Saharan Africa. Tiffen et al (1994:39) define agricultural intensification as the use of an increased average of inputs for labour or capital in smallholdings either on cultivated land or on grazing land or both, for the purpose of increasing the value of output per hectare. This system of cultivation uses large amounts of labour and capital relative to area. Agricultural intensification links up with commercial

agriculture, the production of crops for sale to a wider market, unlike subsistence agriculture that is intended for household consumption only. Cash crops for commercial agriculture include maize, potatoes, sugar beans, tea, coffee, rubber, banana, cotton and wheat. Most developing nations like Zimbabwe are agro-based economies meaning that their revenue comes mainly from the production of cash crops that are sold on the international market.

Agricultural extensification reflects to a system of crop production using less labour and capital in relation to the area of land being farmed. Crop yields in extensive agriculture depend on such things as soil fertility, the terrain, climate and the availability of water. An important factor in the distinction between agricultural intensification and extensification concerns the processes and asset endowments of the two types of agriculture. Agricultural intensification requires financial, physical and labour resources, that is, it employs large amounts of labour capital and requires one to apply fertilizers, insecticides, fungicides and to plant, cultivate, and often harvest mechanically. The process of agricultural intensification takes different forms that have different outcomes in the livelihoods of rural people. Craswell (1997) shows that it might include expansion of agricultural land, intensification of labour per unit area of land using traditional methods, creation of on-farm employment for rural people, adaptation of capital intensive methods and a change in product mix. Of key importance is that the intensification of agricultural production brings a change in overall rural economic growth as new opportunities are opened up, both on-farm and off-farm, resulting in the betterment or improvement of rural livelihoods. According to Ellis (2000:45), the consideration of rural livelihood strategies as part of the process of reducing vulnerability and poverty and to raise incomes by on- farm diversification while invaluable should be combined with non-farm diversification for better livelihood enhancement results.

3.3 On Farm diversification as an alternative livelihood strategy

On farm diversification may be seen as a complementary or alternative livelihood strategy for rural households. According to Ellis (2000:112), on farm diversification refers to the maintenance of a varied spread of crop and livestock production activities complimenting each other in various ways. This might involve cultural practices that are specifically designed to spread risk or to take advantage of complementarities between crops in their use of soil nutrients, sunlight and other resources. In view of this, one may speak of intercropping and mixed cropping as diverse farm systems (Blarel et al, 1992). By contrast, monoculture can be said to be the opposite of on-farm diversification in which the farmer relies on planting one type of crop over and over again. Central to the debate about on-farm diversification is the question about whether and how the process brings a desired change in the livelihoods of rural people and why one should diversify on-farm activities.

Many studies have demonstrated that traditional cultivation methods such as mixed cropping have lessened the adverse impacts of unexpected risks and uncertainties, such as unseasonal temperatures and drought because different crops in the mix possess different degrees of resilience to unstable climatic conditions. Experts in soil science have also argued that mixed cropping adds to the nutrient content of the soil, as continuing monoculture does not. The important point of on-farm diversification is that it guards against general crop failure and meets the need to diversify income production. A rural farmer who plants both maize and groundnuts or sugar beans on the same field is able to ensure greater food security and a surplus for marketing. Jaffee and Morton (1995:19) point out that recent studies have shown that in sub-Saharan Africa on-farm diversification can be combined with intensification to provide new and higher income sources for rural households. Marketing of outputs has led to success and the research has indicated that domestic demand led cultivation of vegetable

crops like tomatoes, onions and shallots that have generated income for smallholder farmers who have diversified their produces. Thus, smallholder farmers, during the rainy season, can on plant maize and other crops for consumption and during the off-season can rely on market gardening, horticultural products such as vegetables that sell much more quickly on the market, as these are perishable. On the same piece of land one might want to use by products from maize or beans or corn to venture into livestock rearing or poultry production as a way to increase the income levels of farm produce.

According to Ellis (2000:113), agricultural intensification may or may not coincide with diversification, depending on the route taken to deploy resources more effectively and the use made of complementarities in input use and between outputs. Moreover, intensification does not have to follow the specialization route, one can maintain wide variety of practices such as mixed farming, mixed cropping, alley-cropping, sequential cropping, inter-cropping, crop livestock systems, etc. and these represent in varying ways intensification based on multiple farm activities rather than just one or few. Farm diversification that involves intensification has the potential for increased overall productivity in concentrated areas, i.e. capacity and livestock can have a converse output with more rewards for the farmer. In short it may be said that in most rural settings agriculture has become the main livelihood strategy as households have free access to natural capital; therefore they utilize the land to grow crops and guard against food insecurity. Besides agriculture, Scoones (2000) argues that rural dwellers diversify to off-farm activities to better their livelihoods as well.

3.4 Rural livelihood diversification

In as much as agriculture has been the dominant livelihood strategy for rural people, rural development theorists point out that it is not the only way to make a living in the rural areas. Livelihood diversification is a very important process in the rural areas as rural dwellers tend

to shift their focus from on-farm activities to off-farm activities which are more inclined to provide cash incomes. Livelihood diversification is defined as the process by which rural households or individuals construct or engage in diverse portfolios and social support capabilities in order to survive and to improve their standards of living (Ellis, 2000).

3.4.1 Deagrarianisation, depeasantisation and livelihood transformations

Though agriculture has remained a mainstay in the African rural economy, structural changes taking place have seen a shift from agriculture as the dominant livelihood strategies in rural areas. Bryceson (2004:617) argues that the process of deagrarianisation and depeasantisation has accelerated in association with the implementation of structural adjustment policies in developing countries. Past research has indicated that in various African countries there is a decline in peasant commodity production, a surge in non-agricultural income diversification, and a proliferation of multi-occupational households, thus accelerating rural class stratification and growing poverty. Bryceson (2004) defined deagrarianisation as a process of occupational adjustment in income earning orientation, social identification and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly agriculturally based modes of livelihood. On the other hand, depeasantisation is a specific variant of deagrarianisation whereby the economic capacity and social coherence of peasantries goes through a gradual change and is undermined.

The implication of these processes is that the once praised livelihood strategies of agricultural production for consumption and marketing are undermined, transformed and superseded by structural changes in the rural sector. Livelihood reorientation and readjustment is “caused” by external factors beyond the control of the rural people. Neo-liberal policies have not had an impact on the livelihoods of urban people only but have impacted even more on the

livelihoods of rural people who, in the past, relied mostly on agriculture as their main livelihood strategy. Through the availability of subsidies for agricultural inputs such as maize seed, pesticides, fertilizers and agricultural loans rural people have been able to boost their production to overcome poverty. During the 1980s and 1990s most African countries, because as a result of financial debt, were forced to adopt structural adjustment and market liberalisation policies that initiated processes of deagrarianisation (Bryceson, 2004:618).

The structural adjustment programmes, as evidence from African countries suggests, introduced privatisation as the order of the day, as parastals and marketing boards that serviced peasant farmers with agricultural inputs and facilitated their access to markets were abolished and considered to be detrimental to state effectiveness, for example, in Zimbabwe. The result of this is that peasant adjustment to increasing costs of production and poor marketing prospects have led to reallocation of land and labour away from agriculture as people looked for other livelihood options. Demeke (1997) and Iliya (1999) report that the end result for poor farmers was that the very small acreages they had were sold or rented to large scale farmers as they turned to agricultural wage labour or non-farm activities themselves. They simply could not support or finance their own agricultural activities in the absence of government subsidies and loans. Large scale commercial farmers with adequate capital and technology could continue to practice agricultural activities.

Structural adjustment programmes not only affected agricultural activities but also impacted negatively on the social scene as educational and health services were also removed in the midst of overall commodity price inflation. As to food security that used to be achieved through subsistence farming rural people now tend to use cash to purchase food as they could no longer fully support themselves from their land. Survey research conducted by DARE in

Ethiopia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa in the late 1990s reveals that most households had one or more non-agricultural income sources and between 60-80% of their income derived from these sources. The declining agricultural commodity production and expanding participation in non-agricultural activities indicate that as much as rural people might want to depend on one strategy, in times of stress and shocks they are able to take other routes to ensure betterment of their livelihoods and guard against poverty. As a result of the neo-liberal policies that advocated state withdrawal from welfare provision, the rural poor's capital resources were being severely depleted as their agricultural commodity production was undermined (Bryceson, 2004:620).

For a rural population without agricultural commodity production, a strong sustainable economic foundation is hard to come by. Bryceson (2004) has termed rural dwellers in the midst of deagrarianisation and depeasantisation as 'relic agrarian population' as their once enterprising livelihood strategy was undermined and racked by neo-liberal policies that have torn apart the rural economy. Marginalisation of peasant production and tribal populations has been a recurrent theme in capitalist expansion and has adversely affected rural populations. African rural economies have gone through a transformation and have been forced into unsustainable pattern of activity and coping or survival strategies best described as hand to mouth and making ends meet and eking out a living.

Bryceson (2004) argues that diversification as an individual or household level survival strategy does not fit in the conventional picture since its many attributes defy the straitened notions of sectors, specialisation and transition. Chambers (1997:162) argues that poor people normally diversify sources of livelihood in order to survive in a risk prone and uncertain world. This shows that, the issue of diversification is not only meant for avoiding risks or to

face an uncertain future but is a matter of survival; the reasons for diversification is desperation (poverty, lack of assets, vulnerability and disaster). Another view expressed in the literature however discusses diversification as a matter of choice and opportunity involving proactive household strategies for improving living standards.

3.5 Principal motivations for livelihood diversification

According to Ellis (2000), various factors may cause people to diversify to different livelihood opportunities. It is either to improve their livelihoods by choice or it is due to external factors that force the individual to diversify in order to survive. The following section discusses the main causes of rural livelihoods diversification as well as the forms of diversification.

3.5.1 Necessity versus choice

Necessity and choice are two overarching considerations as to why rural households or individuals pursue diversification as a livelihood strategy (Ellis, 2000). Davies (1996) contrasts this as a struggle between survival and choice which Hart (1994) also sees it as an antagonism between survival and accumulation. By definition necessity refers to involuntary causes for individuals or households to diversify such as evictions from land as a result of natural or civil disasters such as floods, drought, etc. By contrast voluntary and proactive reasons for diversifying reflect the choice of an individual or household living a rural area to find education, work or health facilities in urban areas. In considering the dichotomy between choice and necessity it is often argued that involuntary diversification (for reasons of distress) is a bad thing as it results in household members becoming more vulnerable and than they were before and results in them opting for taking casual and low productivity activities with poor prospects of coping resilience and sustainability. Gosh and Bharadwaj (1992:154) see it as a last resort rather than an alternative livelihood. Evidence from most African states shows

that the majority of poor households in rural areas have diversified as a result of distressful conditions and they have not achieved what they expected from these livelihood options.

The dichotomy between necessity and choice was revealed through an analysis of underlying trends and processes and also household level strategies. Ellis (2000:56) argues that trends and processes in the larger economy may create general conditions that provoke livelihood diversification as a response. However, individuals and households are likely to respond to these underlying changes in different ways, due to factors that vary between households, such as income diversification and asset profiles. Some of the underlying trends that stimulate livelihood diversification are rural population growth, farm fragmentation and declining returns in farming as compared to other activities, that is, raising real production costs and declining market prices may turn farmers away from agricultural production.

To substantiate this point by examining the motives for livelihood diversification, the household economic model which predicts diversification as a function of on- farm returns on labour time as compared to off-farm earning opportunities is useful. Through a cost and benefit analysis it can be shown that, for the household it is about seeing the most advantageous strategy given the available inputs. Thus, a consideration of inputs versus outputs contradicts significantly to the determination of diversification. Ellis (2000) says for a household with a given asset base, that is, land, infrastructure and equipment and a given total amount of labour time, it will consider making the returns by using more time on the farm more profitable than engaging in other income generating activities. Accordingly factors that increase the output or return for time spent in on-farm activities would tend to reduce motivation to diversify. The fundamental factors are an increase in the prices of farm outputs and an increase or rise in farm productivity obtained through agricultural intensification. On

the other hand, a rise in off-farm or non-farm wage rates or greater opportunities to undertake remunerative non-self employment would entail a motive to diversify. This logic can work its ways variously. The risks factors can provoke both on-farm and off-farm diversification to reduce and spread perceived risks and to reduce the adverse impact of failure in any single branch of household activity. A view of on-farm risks may trigger a diverse range of food crops rather than a concentration or specialisation in one cash crop, and off –farm risk encourage a search for income sources with associated probabilities of failure different from on- farm risks. Although the household economic model has been successful in providing a useful entry point for examining the determinants of diversification it does not capture inter-temporal dimensions of livelihood strategies and describe the circumstances of survival under stress. Thus it is imperative to look at other factors that determine diversification. These include seasonality, risk coping behaviour, labour markets, credit markets and asset strategies.

3.5.2 Seasonality

Chambers et al (1991) say that all rural households confront seasonality as an inherent feature of their livelihoods. Seasonality as an important aspect of livelihood analysis explains the many patterns of diversity in rural household incomes especially those involved in on-farm diversity and off-farm agricultural wage earning. According to Alderman and Sahn (2009:88), seasonality in economic terms depicts a situation in which returns to labour in both on farm activities and off farm labour markets vary during the year, so as to cause seasonal changes in occupation as labour is switched from lower to higher return activities and also from place to place.

Various theorists have argued against seasonal changes in labour occupations as it makes for instability in income and thus affects the livelihood cycle as individuals and households have

to cope with different environmental conditions. From an agricultural perspective, it is understood that the production cycles of crops and livestock enterprises are determined by the onset of rains, their duration, length of growing season, etc, and these seasonal factors apply as much to landless rural families that depend on agricultural labour markets for survival. For families engaged in off-farm activities, seasonality has a negative impact as household consumption needs are mismatched with uneven income flows. Fluctuations in income flow as a result of seasonality are an impediment to income sustainability because one cannot really plan the use of the income. Someone in an urban setting with a stable job and a monthly income can plan and saves for future use and be prepared to work against risks and uncertainties, but people depending upon seasonal labour income cannot do so. Ellis (2000:58) argues that to ensure sustainability for rural households, crop storage, output sales and savings could be used to convert unstable income (due to seasonality) into stable consumption.

A snapshot of the rural economy reveals that both risk and market imperfections are inherent in it. In addition, consumption smoothing and income instability are real problems faced by rural households constituting important motive for income diversification associated with seasonality in order to reduce income instability (Ellis, 2000:58). This requires new income earning opportunities to compensate for reduced income in the seasonal pattern, that is, migration or permanent migration of a family member to non-farm occupations. For household diversification as a result of seasonality to be engaged in, Ellis (2000) suggested the economic motivation or reason for diversification is achieved when the marginal return of labour time in farming, for any individual, falls below the wage rate from self-employment attainable off the farm. Then the household or individual switches to off-farm or non-farm activities. Seasonality then has a bearing on the livelihood diversification of rural households.

The failure of a particular activity to bring substantial income suggests doors to other activities that can bring a desired income must be opened. The literature indicates that for both on-farm and off-farm activities seasonality is the dominant factor that affects income stability and consumption smoothing. Failure of these activities to provide a stable income makes rural households vulnerable as it does not guarantee that an individual or household will be able to cope with and adapt to shocks and risks. Livelihoods based upon seasonal labour income are said to be unpredictable and cannot fully protect households. Non-farm activities such as crafts, for example pottery, iron smithing, roof thatching, etc. do not provide regular income but are only on demand occasionally. Scott (1995) has called these livelihood strategies rural home based industries which rural dwellers undertake on the basis of certain skills and capabilities. The SLA framework subsumes these under human capital as they are potential activities that can improve and sustain the livelihoods of the rural dwellers. In rural Zimbabwe those skilled in making clay pots (needed for beer brewing) can diversify this activity and better their income opportunities.

3.5.3 Risk strategies

Bryceson (1996:106) posits that many researchers consider risk to be the fundamental motive for livelihood diversification. For Dercon and Krishnan (2006:854) risk motivations are often confused with coping arrangements and voluntary decisions and actions. Anderson et al (1992) define risk as the subjective probability attached by individuals or by households and the outcomes of the various income generating activities in which they are engaged. Households implement strategies in response to different situations to guard against different perceived or anticipated outcomes. According to Ellis (2000), income diversification is a risk taking strategy, that is, a trade-off between a higher total income involving probability of income failure and a lower total income involving a smaller probability of income failure.

Risk averse households should be prepared to accept lower total income for greater income security.

A critical feature of livelihood diversification is the achievement of an income portfolio within a framework of low covariate risk among its components. The implication is that the factors that impact on or create a risk for one income source will contribute a risk for another income source (Ellis, 2000:60). A tried and tested characteristic of rural livelihoods in developing countries is that income opportunities accessible to poor households, such as own-farm production and agricultural wage labour, show a high correlation between risks attached to alternative income streams; that is environmental impacts such as droughts impact negatively on all income channels simultaneously.

Ellis (2000) argues that amelioration of risks helps to improve livelihood behaviour in the rural areas of developing countries and incorporates the economic strategies of occupational diversification and migration, and supports the maintenance of social cohesion and solidarity of kinship ties. Thus, understanding the risk behaviour strategies of the poor helps in designing policies that support them. By emphasising risk aversion behaviour, rural poor people are able to guard against shocks and can protect their household livelihoods. There is an ongoing debate among academics about the difference between household risk strategies and coping behaviour. The two have been confused on how some researchers treat coping as an aspect of risk behaviour (World Bank, 1990: 90).

3.5.4 Coping strategies

The World Bank (1990) pointed to confusion between household coping strategies and risk strategies. The former may be defined as a sequence of survival responses to crisis or disaster. Webb (2002:33) argues that the difference between risk and coping is clarified by distinguishing *ex ante* risk management from *ex post* coping with crisis. The management of

risks is a deliberate strategy to compensate for anticipated failures in individual income streams by maintaining a spread of activities (Walker and Ryan, 2000). On the other hand, coping is an involuntary response to disaster or unanticipated failure in major sources of income. The distinction implies that risk strategies consist of forward planning to spread risk across a diverse set of activities in view of the subjective judgments about the degree of risk attached to each source of income. Thus, for determining the motivation for diversification, it may be argued that coping, other than risk, refers to the methods used by rural households to make a livelihood or to survive when confronted with unanticipated failure. Unforeseen, unpredictable failures happen in lives of individuals, households and societies such that they have an adverse impact or bearing on livelihoods of people and if not guarded against prior to occurrence, the only remaining option is to turn to involuntary look at strategies to cope with these failures. Blaikie et al (1994:57) says that most anticipated failures are associated with natural and civil disasters including droughts, floods, hurricanes, pests and civil wars.

However, evidence from most African states indicates that not only natural disasters, but economic and political crises have taken the greatest toll on livelihoods. In Zimbabwe for example the economic collapse that saw inflation reaching astonishing figures of 231 million% and political unrest affected both urban and rural livelihoods (CSO, 2009:43). Urban people had to resort to firewood for energy since electricity was too expensive for the poor who could not afford generators. Rural people had to sell livestock as remittances from the urban centres dwindled owing to the economic crisis. When confronted with risks rural dwellers tend to dispose of their physical assets to gain income as a coping strategy. Such anticipated risks and shocks strain the livelihoods of rural people and may make them more vulnerable to poverty.

Coping strategies attempt to counter the effect of disasters in various ways. These includes drawing upon savings, using food reserves, gifts from aid organisations or families, community transfers and, sale of livestock and other assets. Ellis (2000) notes that, with respect to diversification unplanned responses may involve the search for new income sources at first, forced asset sales later, thus altering the future livelihood patterns of the household. This is true because with unanticipated failures one has to make do with the best available options for coping with and adapting to the situation at hand. Accordingly, a household that relies on income sources from agriculture and faces crop failure and failure to acquire income for the children's education will sell assets such as cattle, goats, sheep and chickens to create the immediate funds needed.

This is true for other needs such as unanticipated deaths as in the case of educational needs especially because there are no formal policies and practices with regard to old age pensions. As to the viability and sustainability of such practices it must be said that although they provide immediate relief for the family or household, they are detrimental to future livelihood. After all assets provide the foundation for the construction of sustainable livelihoods; hence the sale of valuable assets makes the household vulnerable to future poverty. Coping then may be understood as a way to combat distress and crisis that creates a new livelihood pattern. This is different from the practice of risk management as a determinant of diverse livelihood patterns.

3.5.5 Labour markets

Labour markets are important in the discussions about livelihood diversification in the face of the threats posed by unstable insecure income sources. Labour markets offer a supply of non-farm opportunities for the generation of income differentiated by considerations of education, location, skills, gender and age. Rural households tend to turn to labour markets as they seek

to diversify their portfolios and command better livelihood opportunities. It is believed that both on-farm and off-farm activities offer income generating opportunities to rural people. An analysis of the economic motivations for diversification in relation to seasonality reveals that generally the marginal return on labour time in farming falls below the return to self-employment in off-farm activities. This suggests the switch to activities with higher returns, that is, off farm employment.

Employment opportunities vary according to skill, education, gender and age. Most organisations have an age limit of 65 years. Gendered livelihoods are an important consideration in livelihoods diversification as some activities are pursued by men, not women and vice versa. For example, female opportunities in farming and land ownership are limited but more plentiful in trading and textile factories. Davis and Hossain (1997:102) point to the social exclusion in terms of social rules that govern access within the family and in the community. Economically, labour allocation governed by social rules may hinder individual household access and entitlement to particular income streams. As much as rural people might want to partake in labour markets as a livelihood diversification strategy their choices and capabilities are governed by social rules. According to Ellis (2000:63), substantial literature on rural labour markets in developing countries reveals that agricultural labour markets are poorly developed or non-existent.

Rural people must go further afield to participate in active labour markets and must migrate to distant work opportunities for a livelihood. Toulmin (2000) points to the cultural value of large family size to ensure labour availability for agriculture and to facilitate diversification into non-farm activities. Current debates on rural wage labour indicates that in most Asian countries labour is readily available as a result of endemic land strategies and significant

inequalities in land ownership. Therefore, the majority of people have to resort to other labour owing to being landless (Ellis, 2000:69). This is not so in African countries as the focus has been on imperfections in labour markets and land markets that give rise to the emergence and persistence of institutions like sharecropping that avoids the hazards associated with hired labour (Bardhan, 1999:75). The institution of share cropping seeks to lock together land and labour markets in such a way that the sharecropping tenant (labourer) is motivated to apply quality labour inputs to the production process. This has benefited landowners economically as it reduces the cost of labour and enhances the quality of work performed.

3.5.6 Credit market failures

Credit markets have become a backbone for most commercial farmers as they provide access to substantial amounts of money that can be repaid over a period of time. This has driven agricultural intensification. All resources can be tapped with sufficient financial back up. However, the situation is different for poor rural farmers who cannot access credit or loans from financial institutions to practice agriculture. Rural people have been kept from commercial farming and subsistence production according to market oriented methods as a result of lack of financial capital from credit houses. Hoff et al (1993) report that rural financial markets in developing countries operate in this fashion. The reason for credit market failure in the rural areas is simply because of the anticipated cost of setting up banking operations in rural areas and providing adequate information to potential borrowers.

The major reason put forward by financial institutions is that for this rural people lack collateral security for the credit to be extended and consequently defaulting lenders are a dead loss for the credit provider. Inability to access credit triggers a livelihood diversifying behaviour as households seek other opportunities to attain the needed income for agricultural

purposes or other essential activities. According to Ellis (2000:74), this strategy has the potential to offset the absence of credit facilities in rural areas and to save the poor from having to pay back high interest on loans received and keeps individuals and households from entering into subordinating social relationships with private money lenders.

3.5.7 Asset Strategies

Rural households consider long term livelihood security as an important aspect of their lives which requires more than only taking advantage of current available income earning opportunities. Sustainable development considers the needs of the current and future generations. In the livelihood literature the issue of sustainability has not been as prominent as other determinants of diversification; rather, it is an important attribute in household's asset strategies. Household asset strategy may also motivate towards diversification to increase income generating capabilities in the future (Ellis, 2000). Livelihood assets lay the platform upon which better livelihood strategies are constructed and they include natural, physical, human, financial and social capital. Although these assets are open to rural people, some of the sub-categories fall outside the direct control of individual rural households.

The livelihoods definition includes services provided by both public and private organizations activities that contribute to a living for the rural people. Ellis (2000:74) reveals that services such as rural infrastructure (roads and power) and health, education are provided as public goods and services for the people and investment in people's improvement is a priority of agencies such as NGOs and donors. Livelihood investment that is constructed around other assets open to rural people ensure that households are well prepared and well protected against future shocks and stress through the improved quality of assets. Compared with other principal motivators of diversification, Ellis (2000) recognises that the distinguishing aspect of asset strategies as a motive for diversification is solely based on their

intertemporal nature. This is to say that the purpose of diversification is to achieve greater livelihood security in the long run or in future. Thus diversification for this reason may be temporary and be meant for future gains. It is diversification undertaken to improve human capital (e.g. financing the schooling of children) that may result in more diverse sources of household livelihood as the children may use their acquired skills later to pay back. Research has indicated that rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa devote most of their valuable time to personalised networks, setting up complex but informal systems of rights and obligations to improve future livelihood security.

From the above analysis of household asset strategy it can be concluded that this motivation for diversification is of paramount importance in the rural livelihood framework as it recognises the need to invest for future use and also to ensure that sustainability is maintained within the rural household. Benefits of livelihood diversification might not be enjoyed immediately but in the long run it provides patterns as livelihood investments are used to cushion against unexpected shocks. Investment in human capital ensures that capabilities and skills are enhanced. Much has been said about the principal motivations for livelihood diversification in rural areas and some of the livelihood options undertaken in different situations. Scoones (2000) recognizes that rural dwellers have the option to migrate to a different location to improve their livelihoods.

3.5.8 Migration as a livelihood strategy

Migration is not a form of diversification but rather it is a livelihood strategy on its own. It is important for rural livelihoods as it links up with labour market factors in making survival decisions. Moreso, poverty and oppression have been commonly seen as the root causes of migration. Skeldon (1997:15) argues that migration emanates from the desire to improve one's livelihood and that it is the poorest and most destitute who migrate. De Haas (2006:23)

points out that costs and risks are part of migration consideration, as are knowledge and social networks. It is also important to look at socio-economic developments such as rising incomes, education levels and access to information that tend to be associated with increasing immigration. According to neo-classical migration theory, migration is caused by spatial inequalities of income (De Haas, 2003: 3). Neo-classical theorists assume that push and pull factors as in, equilibrium models, are among the determinants of migration as income maximising individuals respond to geographical differences in the supply and demand of labour. Thus individuals migrate from low-wage regions, i.e. rural areas, to high wage, labour scarce regions, i.e. urban areas. Due to migration it is believed that labour will become less scarce at the destination and more scarce at the sending end. A counter argument to neo-classical theory is from the historical–structuralist theory of migration. According to Castles and Miller (1993:22), the structuralist theory is rooted in Marxist political economy and has criticized neo-classical migration theory by arguing that individuals do not have a free choice since they are fundamentally constrained by structural forces. From this perspective individual choice is not an issue in the decision to migrate, rather people are forced to move because of an undermined traditional economic structure by their incorporation into the global political and economic systems. Rural people migrate from their regions not because of individual choice but rather because of the failure of the rural economy to ensure better livelihoods, employment opportunities and services.

De Haas (2003) reports that historical structuralists do not have a fully developed migration theory but rather, hold the view that migration is a natural outgrowth of disruptions and dissolutions inherent in the processes of capital accumulation. Andre Gunder Frank's dependency theory argues that global capitalism has contributed to the development of underdevelopment and structuralists have interpreted migration as one of the many negative

manifestations of capitalist expansion (Massey et al, 1998:61). Wallerstein's world systems theory holds the idea that peripheral regions and countries have been incorporated into the capitalist economy and that migration is associated with it. In the end, migration ruins stable peasant or rural societies and undermines their economies, uproots their populations and urban centres gain much from proletarian, cheap, immigrant labour (De Haas, 2006). Grand theories of development argue that forced migration compels the underprivileged to leave rural areas for better fortunes in developed (urban) contexts.

In his analysis of neo-classical and structuralist- migration theories, De Haas (2006) is of the view that they are too rigid and too deterministic to deal with the complex realities of migration and development realities. These approaches see migration as the outcome of the interplay between macro forces. That is, neo-classical theorists see migrants as a homogeneous group focused exclusively on maximising income and automatically reacting to wage differences and hence overlooking individual agency. According to Taylor (1999) and Stark (1990), the emerging New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) offered a subtle view of migration during the 1980s by arguing that migration is when an individual undertakes a risk sharing behaviour in a household by seeking to diversify resources like labour to minimise income risks. This contrasts with the neo-classical and structuralist theory of migration. De Haas (2006) argues that central to NELM's theory of migration is the integration of motives that play a role in the migration decision, not individual income maximisation as purported by neo-classical theorists. In their discussions of the reasons and motivations for migration, Lucas and Stark (1985:902) observe that migration is primarily a response to income risks by households so that remittances can serve as income insurance for households in the home region. Yet, as a livelihood strategy open to rural people, it plays a substantive role in providing potential sources of investment capital and makes up for lack of

credit and life insurance, a buttress against and risks in developing countries (Stark, 1991; Taylor, 1999). NELM's approach to migration has striking conceptual parallels with the livelihood approaches. De Hass (2006) says research has indicated that poor people are not a passive homogenous group victimized by global macro-forces but rather they strategizes or actively engage in activities to improve their livelihoods even in difficult harsh environments (Lieten and Nieuwenhuys, 1989).

3.6 The rural growth linkages approach

An analysis of rural livelihoods shows that they center on the relationship between on-farm and off-farm activities. Rural dwellers have undertaken these activities to improve their livelihoods and also to control the impact of rural poverty. It is of paramount importance to understand the connection between on-farm and off-farm activities as they work hand in hand to bring change and development in the rural economy as a whole. The relationship between farm and non-farm rural activities has been governed by the rural growth linkages approach that has also informed policy discussion. This approach was developed in the 1970's for the study of rural growth, employment and incomes in Africa and Asia (Bell et al, 2000:10). One fundamental aspect of this approach is that it retains agriculture as a core strategy and at the same time invokes the prospect of a diverse and dynamic non-farm rural sub-sector that provides employment opportunities for rural people who are not able to fully participate directly in farm production and growth. Haggblade and Hazell (1991:33) argue that the starting point of the growth linkages approach is that growth in agriculture provides a stimulus for the growth of rural non-farm activities in developing countries. Given agricultural intensification which generates large sums of financial capital, technology, labour and a high output, rural people can participate in the process through employment when harvesting produce, and, later, through off – farm activity in the rural economy.

Ellis (2000:100) posits that linkages in the rural sub-sectors are evidenced by rising expenditures of farm households on locally produced non-farm commodities and services including consumer goods and services (expenditure linkages), inputs and services to agricultural production (backward linkages), and processing and marketing services related to farm outputs (forward linkages). Consumption by farmers of locally processed food (butter, flour, maize meal, milk, bean curd), of clothing and textiles (i.e. hand woven materials) and utensils (e.g. clay pots) reflect the expenditure linkages in the rural economy. Backward linkages comprise purchases by farmers of important elements for their farming activity such as fertilizers, implements, water pumps and machinery repair. Activities related to farm outputs such as trading, storage, transport, wholesaling, food processing and packaging depict forward linkages in the rural economy. Mellor (2003:23) identified the strength of the growth linkages and concentration on labour intensive goods and services in rural areas for the consumption by local households, in that agricultural growth has the potential and capacity to significantly enhance rural non-farm employment and thus broadening the participation of the poor in the benefits of growth and generation of a greater market for agricultural output. Agricultural intensification and its outputs opens avenues for poor rural households to improve their livelihood incomes through farm employment and non- farm employment as they can also produce goods and services vital for the rural economy to grow.

Unpublished research in rural Zimbabwe has shown that the rural economy has benefited from the land reform that saw rural farms intensifying agricultural production. It has created self employment opportunities for local poor people to provide equipment used for farming such as scotch carts, hoes, cattle drawn ploughs and cultivators. This is because the newly resettled farmers did not have sufficient financial capital to purchase sophisticated farming machinery and therefore had to rely on locally produced products. Self employment

opportunities have been regarded as part of the Rural Home Based Industries. The home-based business industry is a licensed engine for economic growth that has proven its viability by its significant contribution to the national GDP — as well as in improving the livelihoods of poor people (World Bank, 2009). Rather than concentrate on formal employment, rural people diversify to focus more on their capabilities and skills, thus improving their well-being. Usually it is engagement in the craft business and small entrepreneurships that defines home based industries. For rural farmers, products from the land and also livestock can be marketed as RHBI commodities.

Clearly one cannot isolate agricultural productivity from non-farm diversification as they are interlinked and are of mutual benefit. By providing such services, rural households increase their purchasing power by gaining income from their sales. It is believed that for the rural linkages model to work, rising farm-led demand invest or call into being new rurally located, labour intensive, small factory production in the consumer supply and output markets of the farm sector. Thus expenditures and backward linkages ought to be from the local rural areas and, if not concentrated in that area they may occur predominantly in urban areas (Ellis 2000:101). Sanghera and Harris–White (1995) argue that, for rural non-farm growth to occur, the rising demand by farmers enabled by farm income growth must be mainly directed towards rurally produced consumer and input commodities. Ellis (2000:101) argues that the key feature of new small scale production in the rural economy is its rural location that takes advantage of low labour costs and lower cost sites of production as compared to urban areas and proximity to the source of demand in terms of farm family spending power.

Of great importance to the understanding of the growth linkages model is that the direction of causality is always from farm growth to non-farm growth and not the other way round (Ellis,

2000:101). For rural economies to fully grow and ensure the full participation of all its dwellers, a successful agricultural base oriented to increasing farm growth through increased production beyond subsistence marketing and processing end products. Subsistence agriculture, initially seen as a stumbling block to income growth, cannot provide much of the needed farm growth but growth can come through agricultural intensification that utilises labour and capital intensively to produce maximum production per unit area. An increase in farm income growth has a direct bearing on non-farm activities that can benefit the whole rural community through increased participation in employment (Ellis, 2000). The rural linkages model suggests that rapid farm growth will bring into being a dynamic rural non-farm sector in response to local linkages of agriculture.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter sought to outline the rural livelihood strategies open to poor people. It recognizes that for rural people the main strategy is on-farm activities, agriculture being the main livelihood strategy. The abundance of and free access to natural resources has seen rural people venturing into subsistence farming as the main livelihood strategy. Lack of access to other essential assets, financial, physical and human, has hindered rural people in commercializing their agricultural activities. Rather, they depend on subsistence farming practiced for consumption purposes only. The production of crops is not the only option available to rural farmers since on-farm diversification allows rural people to venture into other activities too such as livestock rearing. The chapter highlighted the fact that agriculture is not the only livelihood strategy open to rural people; rather, through livelihood diversification rural dwellers have been able to diversify into a range of activities. In some instances, agriculture might not meet all the needs of the rural dwellers and so they see the need to venture into other livelihood enhancing activities. One of the important factors in livelihood diversification is that rural dwellers might take it as a way to improve their

livelihoods or as a survival strategy following shortfalls from on-farm activities. It was also noted that RHBI have been an option for to rural people as they seek to improve their income. Skills and capabilities have ensured that rural people do engage in such activities. Although not much has been said of migration, Scoones (2000) argues that it is another option available to rural dwellers to earn better living.

Chapter Four

Old age perspectives: Analysis of theories of ageing and the dimensions of ageing

4.1 Introduction

The number of older people worldwide is increasing dramatically, causing widespread concern. Uhlenberg (1992:170) argues that the ageing of populations is a pervasive phenomenon across all developed countries in the late twentieth century that is expected to continue into the twenty-first century. HAI (2002:17) reveals that in developing countries the proportion of older people is predicted to rise from 8% to 19% by 2050, with the proportion of children falling from 33 to 22 per cent. Growing old, once the sole prerogative of people in 'developed' countries is now a shared benefit of development worldwide. OECD (2006) supports this fact by observing that two-thirds of the world's older people live in developing countries. Population ageing or the old age bulge is a result of both increasing life expectancies and declining fertility (World Bank, 1994:29).

Although the world has seen an increased number of people living in old age, it is however disturbing to note that a number of them, especially in developing nations, have been neglected and sidelined in the development process. Older people just like others in society do have special needs and rights that ensure their livelihood. According to UN (2002:14), the reality for many older people throughout the world is that their lives have been constrained and limited by poverty and social exclusion. Social exclusion as a result of age is a limiting factor in the sense that those resources essential for survival and better living bypass the aged people as they are seen to be passive and unable to utilize them. This social exclusion of the elderly in the development process and in resource allocation leaves old aged people vulnerable to risks and shocks in later life, as they cannot fend for themselves. HAI (2002:57)

reports that older people's deprivation in an ageing world cuts at the heart of global commitments to eradicate absolute poverty and therefore undermine efforts to achieve sustained economic and social development. The majority of old age people live in rural areas where poverty levels remain high and where support services are very minimal. In the African context there is a general belief that after retirement one relocates to rural areas where life is considered cheap and more affordable than in the urban centres. The preceding chapter looked at the various livelihood strategies employed by rural people based on the availability of capital assets, and access to them. The elderly constitute the greater portion of rural populations as most of the young men migrate to urban centers for better opportunities. Old aged people and children are left alone and in the absence of state support end up in poverty.

A number of theories have been advanced to explain the ageing process and the social factors associated to it. This chapter builds on three major theories that look at old age from a social perspective. Discussions of the disengagement theory, activity theory and continuity theory will reveal how older people's situation has been conceptualized. The core argument of this chapter is that, although aged people are expected to disengage from all activities, their situation (old age poverty) does not allow them to do so and therefore they must continue to be actively involved in daily activities to ensure a living. Failure to cater for themselves leaves them dependent on other forms of help. The debate about what defines ageing has been ongoing in both the developed and developing countries. Different societies attach different meanings and symbols to ageing. Firstly, it is necessary to consider how old age is defined.

4.2 Defining Old age

There is no consensus as to what constitutes old age but generally the concept is defined from perceptions about capacity to remain self-sustaining and economically active (UNDP,2006). Uhlenberg (1992:173) argues that old age is socially defined as a stage in life beginning in the early sixties, in which retirement from work and many other social responsibilities is expected. Although the United Nations has classified those aged 60 and above, in Africa the situation seems to be different as the formal retirement age ranges between 55 and 60 years. HAI (2004) alludes to the fact that the definition of old age by African communities also differs from that in developed countries that have accepted the chronological age of 65 years and over as definition of the 'elderly' or older person. In the developed countries this definition is more closely linked with the age at which one can begin to receive pension benefits through a social security system that guard against risks and shocks in old age.

In Africa, the more traditional definitions of an older or 'elderly' person correlates with the chronological ages of 50 to 65 years depending on the setting, the region and the country. The UN definition is inappropriate because actual birthdates are quite often unknown since many individuals in Africa do not have an official record of their birth date, and the more so in rural settings. However, traditional means have been used in Africa to identify the aged. HAI (2004) notes that the colour of a person's hair, failing eyesight and diseases such as arthritis are features used to define an older person. Though various definitions have been used to define old age, in many instances the age at which a person becomes eligible for statutory and occupational retirement pensions has become the default definition. The ages of 60 and 65 years are often used, despite its arbitrary nature, and debates about this can be followed from the end of the 1800's through the mid-1900's (Thane, 1989; Roebuck, 1979).

According to Kimuna (1999), old age is a stage in the life cycle that has been variously stereotyped. It is commonly believed that the elderly live a socially isolated existence, are beset by health problems and experience considerable emotional stress. Social gerontologists argue that the process of ageing has been socially constructed as if the aged constitute a homogeneous social group. Typically, older people are perceived by both the general public and many social researchers, as being all alike. Part of the reason for this assumed homogeneity is the use of the all pervading blanket term “elderly”. Much has been written about what defines ageing but one thing is clear: throughout the world nations have to grapple with the increasing number of people living in the later life stage. Research and projected results show that the population of the aged will continue to increase and it is the more prepared nations with sound economic and social policies that are able to deal with the consequences of increased number of the aged. It is imperative to look at the demographic picture of ageing populations throughout the world and to consider what this means for the policy makers.

4.3 Demographic picture of the World’s ageing population

Population ageing is a global phenomenon that has seen an increase in the number of people living in old age both in the developed and developing countries. Demographers argue that changes in both the size of the population and its age structure are mainly due to the relationship between the rates of births and deaths. Whilst net migration influences some change in age structure, it is the relationship between the birth and death rates that tells the picture (Macnicol, 2006:64). As indicated earlier, the ageing process refers to the increasing proportion of older persons within a population. Demographic change has been seen as one of the dimensions of social change in societies. As people age they go through different changes, physical, social, biological and even physiological. For the developed nations improved health facilities, better standards of living and a concrete social security system

have made for prolonged living. Not so in the developing nations where such systems are lacking. Macnicol (2006:46) argues that demographers attribute falling death rates to the general improvements in diet and in working and living environments that have taken place over the past two centuries.

Developing countries have lagged behind as a result of extreme poverty perpetuated by poor economic growth, poor government policies and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Statistics from HAI (2004:30) reveal that whereas the number of people at 60 years or more was 200 million in 1950; by 1975 this had increased by 75 per cent to; 350 million and by 1999 the number had shot up to nearly 600 million. It is further projected that by 2025 the world population of the elderly will reach 1.2 billion and by 2050, 2 billion. Africa's older population is currently estimated to be slightly over 38 million, and is projected to reach 212 million by 2050. This means that Africa's older population will increase six-fold in five decades (HAI, 2004). Population ageing as a global phenomenon has led to the need for policies to cushion old age people against poverty. For the developing countries this is a tall order as most governments find it difficult to provide social security cover for the senior citizen, leaving a burden that has been difficult to bear for the family members of elderly people. The reduced capacity of the aged to venture into employment opportunities or income generating activities as a result of physical frailty has meant that the elderly are a vulnerable group of people that needs special attention to keep them from falling victim to risks and shocks in later life. The state of old aged people is determined by their life before they reached the later life stage.

4.4 Theoretical perspectives in Ageing

Various theories have been developed to explain the ageing process of human beings. Biological, psychological and social theories have been used to explain and measure ageing in modern society. Although psychological theories have much to say about ageing this study

is concerned mainly with ageing from a social perspective, that is with the social role with the social role or place (status) of the aged in society (Usdin and Hofling, 1978:12). Ageing, to a social scientist refers not only to a decline in social usefulness but also to an alteration in status. Relevant social theories of ageing and the elderly are affected by the structure of society and the process of social change. Busse (2007:63) holds the view that the status of older people is high in static societies and tends to decline with rapid social change. Social gerontology has been concerned with the impact of human ageing on all aspects of society. The ageing process is influenced and enhanced by both cultural and societal forces. Sociologists have seen individual lives as socially constructed and all sociological theories focus on the changing roles and relationships that accompany ageing (Phillipson, 1998). These theories discuss how changing roles, relationships, and status impact on the older individual's ability to adapt to change. Knowledge of social theories enhances understanding of the position of older people in society, the cultural attitudes to older people, the attitudes and expectations of older people themselves, and also the interaction of older people in the society. The following sociological theories of ageing, disengagement, activity, continuity and structural dependency theories will be discussed.

4.4.1 Disengagement theory

According to Cumming and Henry (1961:13), disengagement is an inescapable process in which many of the relationships between an ageing person and other members of society are severed and those that remain are altered in quality. The theory proposes that it is natural for young and able bodied people to take on the roles of older people as they are pushed out of the system (Cumming and Henry, 1961:15). It paints a bleak picture of old age. A major shift in interaction between seniors and society begins once older people fully recognise the brevity of their remaining life span. In general society tends to distance itself from the elderly as they are taken to be passive and unproductive. From a neo-liberal perspective the elderly

are considered as a burden to the state by the disbursement of pension and grants and therefore should be disengaged from the social security system and fend for themselves in a free market economy.

Cumming and Henry (1961) argue that growing old involves a gradual and inevitable mutual withdrawal or disengagement that results in decreasing interaction between an ageing person and others in the social system he/she belongs to. It gives the elderly people a new role in life; that is, rather than for one to be fully engaged in a lot of activities old age reduces the capacity to fulfill those roles and facilitates disengagement. In developed or industrial nations where old aged people are beneficiaries of state pensions and grants disengagement theory does apply, older people whose job skills degrade voluntarily remove themselves from the workforce. Access to pensions and social grants protects them against poverty. However, in developing countries lacking social security pensions, the aged face a double misfortune as they are pushed out of employment and become vulnerable to the risk of poverty. Many, instead of resting and enjoying a new life as elderly persons continue to engage in manual labour so as to meet the challenges facing them.

The theory applies universally for both developed and developing countries and for all historical times. Disengagement is inevitable; it is bound to happen sometime in one's future life and also it is not caused by social factors alone. According to Stein et al (1999), in every culture and at all times, the society and the individual prepare for the ultimate disengagement (death) by an inevitable, gradual and mutually acceptable process of social disengagement. It is a double withdrawal, of the individual from society and of society from the individual. From the individual's side withdrawal is achieved by reduction of the number of roles one plays, a lessening in the variety of roles and relationships and weakening of the intensity of

engagement in those that remain. Loss of work is seen to generate a crisis of identity for the elderly as retirement cuts them off from involvement in the activities of the society, resulting in the dissolution of occupational and community ties. Victor (1997:11) posits that from a societal point of view the individual is granted freedom from structural constraints and permission to withdraw. Once set in motion, the process is irreversible and the individual retreats from the social world, which in turn relieves him/her of normative control leaving the individual becoming de-socialized and demoralized with loss of self esteem. For the aged it is a difficult process but, as Hochschild (1975) suggests, the process of disengagement is functional for the individuals as it leaves them to engage only as they are able and for society enforcing roles for young people.

4.4.2 Activity Theory

Activity theory is in contrasts with the previous theory as it points that to remain active and engaged with society is crucial to satisfaction in old age. Havighurst (1968:126) supports the theory by arguing that involvement in social networks and integration in them is positively related to life satisfaction. Accordingly the successfully adjusted older person is engaged in life and maintains a high level of social contacts. To maintain a positive self-image, older people must develop new interests, hobbies, roles and relationships to replace those that are diminished or lost with ageing. The theory suggests older people should continue to be active and resist the limitations brought about by ageing as long as possible. Havighurst (1968) further argues that society has been a limiting factor for the aged by applying different norms to the aged than for the middle-aged. The elderly have been seen as a dependent and passive group of people.

However, studies from various nations indicate that the aged are in the later stages of life and do contribute enormously to the solidarity and cohesion of society by providing care to

orphans, such as those left behind by the consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. If so society should not demand declining involvement of its ageing members. Being active and engaged in different roles of society ensures that older people can make a living and sustain themselves even in the absence of a social security system. They can contribute to the improvement of livelihoods. Disengagement from societal roles leads to redundancy and dependency of the elderly. Activity theory seeks to prevent that by arguing that activity is preferable to inactivity because it facilitates well-being on multiple levels. This theory is substantiated by the SLA, which argues that for one to have a better and improved livelihood engagement in different livelihood activities is essential. By taking on different livelihood opportunities the aged are able to disprove the assumptions of the disengagement theory. For aged people in developed countries it may not be necessary to be continually active in the economy. SLA recognizes access to different capital assets as most important for one to be active in livelihood construction. Using the assets accumulated throughout the lifespan and their human skills older people can continue to make a living even in the absence of formal support from the state. This link between SLA and activity theory is vital for conceptualizing the issues of old age poverty and how it can be tackled.

Critics of activity theory point out that not all of the older people will maintain a middle-age lifestyle because of functional limitations, lack of income and lack of the desire to do so. This is particularly true in most African states where old age people have been finding it difficult to compete with other groups in profitable employment. The aged in their endeavour to be profitably engaged face financial constraints due to their reduced capacity to work and due to stigmatisation by society. Due to loss of physical strength, older persons are increasingly unable to hold their own relations with other groups and this results in withdrawal from societal activities.

Older people may also lack the motivation and desire to be active as they feel that they have worked long enough and now need to step back and give to upcoming younger members of society their chance. Of course health becomes an important consideration for the aged people in determining their continued engagement in society. Some aged people disengage from society simply by reason of poor health. Activity theory compliments the continuity theory which advocates for a continued engagement by the elderly people in their different livelihood enhancing roles

4.4.3 Continuity theory

Continuity theory argues that personality, values, morals, preferences, role activity, and basic patterns of behaviour are consistent throughout a life span, regardless of life changes (Allan, 1998). Atchley (1999) states that aged people try to maintain continuity of lifestyle by adopting strategies connected with their past experience. Continuity theory is a modification and elaboration of the activity theory. Activities central to the life course of an individual will still be carried on and or practiced in later life. According to this theory the patterns of behaviour, traditions and beliefs that were practiced in adolescence and adulthood are likely to continue even as one reaches later life stages. Moody (2010:75) argues that past coping strategies continue as old aged people try to grapple with the challenges of ageing in the face of death. They do not sit and relax to wait for help but, rather, engage in various activities and strategies to ensure that they make a living.

Though most countries have set the ages of 60 and 65 years respectively as retirement ages, continuity theory argues that the elderly ignore such 'norms' and go beyond these ages to continue in their various activities to ensure and maintain security in later life. Bliesnzer et al (1992:97) argue that to simply maintain the same standard of living as they grow old, aged

people must rely on pensions, savings and/or their children or other relatives. However, matters differ in developing from developed countries where pensions are in place for the elderly. The majority of developing countries do not provide pensions to the aged so that they have to rely on themselves or on family members. However, due to increased levels of migration of able bodied young people, the elderly are left behind to fend for themselves and dependent children. In such circumstances most aged people continue with different life activities, both on-farm and off-farm strategies, to look after themselves. The continuity theory therefore stresses the perpetual involvement of the aged in making their livelihoods. Continuity and activity theory are intertwined in the sense that both of them advocate for the full engagement of aged people in the construction of their livelihoods. Rather than being dependent, aged people continue to work for their well-being and, at times diversify activities. Although organizations regard the age of 65 as the time for retirement continuity theory notes that aged people will continue to work even to sustain their livelihoods. SLA recognizes that livelihoods are affected by context. In the context of economic downturn savings and occupational retirement pensions might not be enough to sustain aged people throughout later life and hence they take remunerative work. These two theories argue that aged people need to continue to engage in livelihood construction activities to be able to stave off poverty. The main purpose of this study is to explore the strategies which the aged use and against what limiting factors. Failure to engage in livelihood activities, for many older people, results in dependence on external support.

4.5 Poverty and material deprivation in Ageing

Discussions on ageing generally focus on the disadvantages people face as they grow older. These disadvantages range from systematic stereotyping and discrimination of older people, or ageism, to chronic illnesses that increase with age and poverty. Old age poverty has become an area of interest for many scholars who have focused on the cause and impacts of

poverty at old age. In both developed and developing countries old age is associated with declining living standards. The ability of older people to meet their basic needs is compromised as they reach old age. Barrientos (2006:24) observes that studies in the developing nations of Latin America and Africa indicate a high incidence of income or consumption poverty among the elderly. Many older people live mainly in multigenerational households. Apart from income, nutrition and education old age poverty shows other dimensions. Elderly poor people are excluded and isolated from mainstream development activities, which leaves them vulnerable to poverty.

Old age poverty in developing countries can be attributed to rapid economic and social transformation. This has contributed to the vulnerability of the elderly people. Heslop (2002) argues that a number of related trends in developing countries account for the emergence of old age poverty. The economic adjustments brought about by the process of globalization, changes in labour market conditions, and especially social sector reforms, have adversely affected the livelihoods of older people. Moreover, changes in household structures migration, HIV/AIDS, and deteriorating health conditions undermine old age well-being. In the absence of appropriate policy interventions to provide social security old age poverty befalls the elderly in developing countries. The following sections look at the different factors causing old aged poverty in developing countries.

4.6 Access to paid work

According to Heslop (2002), access to employment opportunities is important means to stave off poverty and cope with unexpected expenses. Changes in global labour markets have seen many older people pushed out of paid employment as organisations opt for younger and more vibrant people. The official retirement in both developed and developing countries is 65 years, and in the absence of formal pension plans, aged people are likely to end up in poverty.

Studies have shown that occupational pension is not enough to maintain aged people's life style. On average the income of younger workers is twice that of pensions received by older people (Anand and Hanson, 1998). Labour markets change, and appear to confirm the disengagement theory of ageing. Barrientos (2002) adds his voice to the growing concern about economic and labour transformations by arguing that these rapid changes pushing people away from formal employment into peasant agricultural activities have implications for the employment and livelihoods of the elderly. As a result of such changes aged people have been forced to change their livelihood strategies away from being full time formal workers to being part-time or casual workers with less stable income. Also, economic transformation has produced a rapid rise in unemployment for older workers and so affects the livelihoods of the aged. Mupedziswa (1999:33) argues that in the event of retrenchments some of which have been occasioned by the implementation of neo-liberal policies of the World Bank, such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in most of the Eastern and Southern African countries as well as Ghana, aged people of 55 and over have been the first to be retrenched. As a result of poverty in old age many older people remain in jobs with lower remuneration especially in the developing countries. In developed countries in contrast they can rely on a state sponsored social security network. Participation by older workers in informal employment is relatively high in developing countries, but their employment opportunities and remuneration decline with age. The contribution of older workers to economic activity is commonly undervalued, and this renders older people and their households more vulnerable to unfavourable economic conditions including poverty (Kato, 1998).

In view of all these factors it can be said that ageing is not just a matter of actual age but, rather, it is a stage in life where economic opportunities are reduced and undermined as a result of changes in labour conditions that favour younger people. Lack of access to better

paying formal employment exposes older aged people to economic hardships. Ellis (2000) argues that without proper access to essential resources households in developing countries enter into poverty. Neo-liberalism tends to forestall policies that cater for the vulnerable and the poor. Without concrete social policies poverty becomes dominant to the elderly. The HIV/AIDS epidemic has also negatively impacted the aged and plunged them into poverty

4.6.1 HIV/AIDS and Poverty

According to Quigley (2003:21), too little attention has been paid to older persons in the context of the AIDS epidemic, even as they make a substantial contribution to the well being of adults who live with HIV/AIDS and their grandchildren. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been seen to be one of the causes of poverty in developing countries. Its impacts include the death of working-age adults, the diversion of resources to care, and the rupture of traditional chains of knowledge transmission (White and Mouton, 2005). Masanjala (2006) argues that much of the literature on HIV and AIDS shows the AIDS epidemic to have an immense impact on the economies of hard-hit countries, hurting not only individuals, families and firms, but also significantly slowing economic growth and increasing poverty. Ill-equipped to cope, the elderly as household heads have carried the burden of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The illness of adults seriously affects older parents in developing countries (Knodel, 2001:55). They give care, co-reside, provide material support, care for grandchildren, experience child loss and face community reactions.

Research in developing countries indicates that the effect of the AIDS epidemic on rural livelihood outcomes is profound and varied. International evidence shows that household the impact of the AIDS epidemic is felt at different levels. The direct loss of human and social capital and the diversion of resources and income to health-seeking and caring activities have a critical impact on the various livelihood activities on which rural families depend to secure

food and income. As a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic young people and the middle aged have been greatly affected, leaving behind their children who become dependent on the care from aged people. Though it is well known that the most immediate impact of HIV/AIDS is in human capital, the epidemic adversely affects other categories the aged's livelihood assets-financial, social, physical and natural. Serplle (1999) states that the pandemic generates new poverty as households suffer reductions in total income owing to illness, diversion of household resources to caring for the affected children or even total loss of income due to the death of a breadwinner. Older people have taken the burden of care for the sick on themselves and provide them with all the support they can muster. This has directed the aged away from their livelihood activities, as caring of their dying children comes first. They spend more time in caring for sick households members and farm-work and the household has reduced resources for its well-being. Unlike developed countries sick persons in Africa cannot spend weeks in hospital care, but must be cared for, largely, at home. The costs associated with illness and death to HIV/AIDS eats up the older people's savings and they may have to borrow money at high rates of interest, or search for additional sources of income (Koestle, 2000:47). In rural Africa, households deplete their financial assets when faced with such a situation and end up impoverished. First they dispose of unproductive assets before finally disposing of productive assets like land, draft animals and equipment in a bid to find a cure and care for their children and relatives (Mutangadura, 2000:12). The little that aged people have is used up and leaves them in poverty.

Research on ageing in developing countries regard elderly people as traditionally protected by extensive family networks, but the increasing impact of the epidemic has eroded these social networks leaving the aged vulnerable to poverty. Through cash remittances and remittances in kind the elderly in Africa have eked out a living in the absence of formal social

security systems. The AIDS epidemic has resulted in the depreciation of social capital in that death and sickness do erode social networks. Flows of income from the urban to the rural area have ceased or become minimal as the impact of HIV/AIDS ravages the working class in the urban areas. In view of all these factors it may be said that the HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a profound effect on the livelihoods of the aged. The loss of income earners and the cost of caring for sick children and grandchildren has left the aged particularly in Africa vulnerable to poverty. Without state support the circumstances of aged people in Africa will continue to deteriorate and become catastrophic.

4.6.2 Social Exclusion of the Elderly

Ageism and social stereotypes have also had an impact on the elderly. According to HAI (2004), material poverty not only denies older people basic necessities such as medicines and food but it also prevents their effective participation in the society at all levels, including economic, social and political life. Society has tended to see aged people as so passive and unproductive that they have been marginalized from development activities. The contributions that older people have made to the development and well-being of their nations are hardly noticed. The preceding section touched on the contributions that the aged make in the face of such deadly pandemics as AIDS and yet society has not recognised their role. However, the role they play in looking after the children of those that die of AIDS is hardly appreciated.

The implications of social exclusion are that it distances and hinders older people from the mainstream of society, making them less likely to participate in social development, decision making and planning in their communities. They are less likely to be considered in the allocation of resources and more likely to lose the self-esteem and dignity that come with having a recognised role. National governments, planners and key stakeholders in society

have shown a frightening inclination to discriminate against older people (Ongoda and Nhongo, 2006:77). This discrimination, maltreatment, neglect and abandonment of older people is reaching an alarming level especially in developing countries.

Events in Zimbabwe illustrate the point. Ongoda and Nhongo (2006:77) show that in the resettlement programme implemented during the mid 80's in Zimbabwe, those above 60 years did not qualify for resettlement. Older people used their children or younger wives to qualify. Recently a study conducted by UN (2004) in Zimbabwe revealed that the elderly were excluded from the government's land reform programme. This left aged people outside the government's rural assistance programme directed at enabling agricultural inputs. It also denied aged people the economic benefits of increased outputs in crop production. Social exclusion of the aged has been witnessed in the failure of Zimbabwe's government to provide social protection for its senior citizens. The government is duplicit in that it has national policies to cater for the needs of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and for the care of people living with HIV/AIDS; yet the aged as a vulnerable group is not catered for.. Dire poverty prevent the aged poor from meeting basic needs and this makes older people feel isolated and excluded from the wider society; hence they begin to suffer from stress and ill-health. Peachey (1999) supports the point by arguing that the impact of ageist attitudes not only denies older people their rights but also serves to exacerbate their vulnerability.

Apart from exclusion from physical and natural benefits studies in developing countries show that the aged people are not recipients of poverty reduction activities. Barrintoes (2007:28) argues that poverty reduction interventions commonly used in developing countries, such as public works or microfinance or micro insurance, have age determined exclusions which reduce their effectiveness in addressing old-age poverty and vulnerability. The exclusion of

older people from public works comes from the type of work that is normally required, mainly infrastructure improvement or maintenance. Micro-finance and micro insurance schemes, as a general rule, exclude older people and older workers as potential beneficiaries. SEWA's (Self Employed Women's Association) integrated insurance scheme, for example, is open only to women aged 18 to 55. Such examples show that aged women are not considered when it comes to ways of improving the well being of women. Such discrimination and neglect of the elderly in poverty reduction programmes exerts emotional pressure on them as they feel insignificant and often stressed to the point of illness.

4.6.3 Health and well-being in ageing

Ageing, as a process of change, comes with many problems and challenges. The process exposes individuals to increasing risk of illness and disability as the body becomes weak and frail. The biggest problem older people face in the area of health is the cost and accessibility of health services. For older people in the developing world, personal health consistently ranks alongside material security as a priority concern (HAI, 2002). In developed countries where health schemes are in place and affordable, people's life expectancies have tended to be higher than in developing countries. Physical health for many poor people is their single most important asset, bound up with the ability to work, to function independently and to maintain a reasonable standard of living (HAI, 2002). Good health as an element of human capital is vital for carrying out livelihood strategies. Aged people who have deteriorating health conditions struggle as they cannot engage in any activities.

Evidence from developing countries indicates that when in good health aged people have continued to engage in work while those who have fallen ill end up in poverty when family or household support is insufficient. The inability of aged people in Africa to access health care has been attributed to their low income levels due in part to the introduction of structural

adjustments. In Zimbabwe, primary health care for the aged people and for children was free and subsidized. Following the adoption of structural adjustment programmes this was no longer the case. Rising inflation has seen health care prices moving beyond the reach of the aged. The elderly have come to suffer from easily treatable diseases such as arthritis, back and eye problems, etc. If health care was freely provided by the state in developing countries this would not be. It appears that lack of access to health care has left the aged in developing countries vulnerable to sickness and disease as they lack the means to pay for treatment needed. Instead, aged people have resorted to informal health, traditional medicine and faith based healing.

4.7 Livelihood sources in Old age

Although the aged have been vulnerable to poverty they have continued to contribute to their livelihoods. They engage in various livelihood strategies to make a living and to combat the effects of poverty. In developed countries with strong economies and effective social security policies, older people's activity to their well-being is minimal compared with developing nations. According to Chambers and Conway (1992), a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. It also refers to transfers from public and private sectors that help in the construction of livelihoods. In the developing world there is considerable variation across countries and regions with regard to livelihoods in old age (Barrintoes, 2007: 30).

The livelihoods of older people and their households are more complex and diverse in developing countries than in developed ones. Within the developing world they also differ across countries and regions and with context (rural or urban). In developed countries where pensions are provided extensively, retirement describes a shift in the main source of livelihood and protection in the shift from employment income to pension income. In the

developing nations only a minority enjoys pension income and thus livelihoods in old age show a diverse mix of sources and strategies (Ardington, 1995: 41). Traditionally it has always been believed that the care of aged people in the developing countries lies in the hands of their extended families but due to economic transformations the aged people have been forced to implement their own strategies for livelihood as remittances and other forms of help have dwindled. Barrintoes (2007:30) argues that economic and social transformations have led to rapid change in the livelihood patterns of the aged.

4.7.1 Income packages

Access to an income is most fundamental in the construction of livelihoods. Studies of incomes packages present an entry point to the study of the livelihoods of older people. According to HAI (2003), income packages describe the composition and relative weight of the different sources of household income. In the developed and developing world older people have different sources of income that help them make a living. From a rural area perspective, Ellis (2000) argues that there are different sources of income open to rural people. These include farm income, that is, income generated from own-account farming, and off-farm income which typically refers to wage or exchange labour in other farms. Barrientoes (2007:30) distinguishes between private and public transfers, with the former reflecting income support from family and social networks and the latter reflecting income from pensions and other public programmes.

Besides such transfers one of the notable income sources that has added value to the livelihoods of the aged is labour earnings. Labour earnings have been seen as a key category in the livelihoods of the aged in both the urban and rural contexts. Income from employment and self-employment has helped aged people globally to accumulate assets and engage in different activities that improve their well-being. However, studies have indicated that though

aged people might engage into different employments, their earnings may be low as compared to that of other age groups. Economic and labour transformations have seen a high turnover in most organisations as the aged are disengaged from the labour market. Only those with scarce skills are hired after the age of 65 years, but most have to live on retirement pensions, or engage in informal self employment. According to Scott (1995), home-based industries have become an alternative option for many urban and rural people as formal employment opportunities are hard to come by. Aged people have also engaged in self-employment or home based industries with the idea of constructing a livelihood. Given sufficient capital, home based industries have enabled older people to build livelihoods as they engage in self-employment activity such as tailoring and clothing, metal working, construction, pottery, weaving, retail shops, butcheries and carpentry. Studies in most rural societies, where formal employment is difficult to come by and where formal security systems are non-existent, have revealed that the aged have resorted to self employment livelihoods.

A diversity of possible activities allow aged people to choose the most appropriate strategy in view of available assets, skills and capabilities. Pang et al (2004:65) say of rural China, “when the elderly withdraw from formal labour in rural China, they do not necessarily stop working”. Examining the labour patterns of the near-elderly and elderly they came to the conclusion that more than 62 per cent continue to participate in informal work, including both household chores and taking care of grandchildren. In rural Zimbabwe, though there are no official data to substantiate it, most aged people do engage in different activities both on and off the farm as they look for income sources through their labour. HAI (2002:88) also reports that, in Zimbabwe, 60 per cent of those aged between 60 and 64, and 50 per cent of those

aged over 65, are economically active. Analysis of both formal and informal employment has revealed that the aged rely on such activities for their livelihood.

4.7.2 Role of private transfers on old age livelihoods

In the absence of public transfers, the main sources of livelihoods and protection for older people are their own economic activity and private transfers from family members. Research on old age livelihoods indicates that private transfers do play a crucial role. The social relations and networks which allow for livelihood construction are defined as social capital. Scoones (2000:21) posits that there are various sets of assets that enhance the building of sustainable outcomes and social capital is one of the essential assets. According to Ellis (2000), social capital refers to the social networks and associations in which people participate and from which they can derive support for their livelihoods. Support services then are an aid to livelihood outcomes. Cash and non-cash remittances have been sources of livelihood for many aged people, especially in developing countries. According to Maphosa (2005), remittances of a portion of a migrant worker's earnings sent, back from the area of employment to the migrant's home area, play a central role in the livelihood of many households and have become a focal point in the ongoing debate concerning the viability and sustainability of this livelihood option. Aged people have relied heavily on remittances as they fight against poverty in the absence of formal social security systems. Such transfers which, usually, are from urban areas help older people to obtain basic commodities and meet essential needs.

4.7.3 The role of old age pensions in livelihood construction

Studies by the ILO (2002) reveal that in the developed nations the main source of livelihood and social cover shifts from formal employment to pension income as one reaches old age. Not so in developing countries where only a few have access to old age pensions and most

have to rely on other sources of income. In developed countries, old age pension schemes constitute the main policy instrument to address old age poverty and vulnerability. Old age pension schemes provide regular, dependable and reliable income transfers in old age thus insuring against the risk and stresses that come with older people outliving the resources they have set aside for old age (Diamond, 1996:16). There are various forms of pension schemes that cater for older people, both in developed and developing countries. These are universal pensions or non-contributory pension schemes which are characterised by the roll out of cash transfers to all aged people over a set age limit. Contributory pensions are another form of social security scheme which sees aged people partially contributing towards the pension; these are also found in developing countries. More needs to be said of non-contributory pension.

4.7.3.1 Non-contributory pensions

According to HAI (2003:15), the vulnerability of older people and their households has often led to the introduction of non-contributory pension programmes. Ageing is characterised by growing distance from markets, as older people find it harder to obtain employment and their accumulated assets are used up or decline in value. In some of the developing countries universal pensions have been introduced as the best way to prevent poverty among aged. Research conducted in countries such as South Africa and Brazil indicates that such pensions have the capacity to reduce household poverty by 94 % (HAI, 2004). The elderly in such countries have been able to stave off absolute poverty through access to cash transfers that help them meet their basic needs. According to Case and Deaton (1998), analysis of households that receive old age pensions reveals they have been able to buy nutritious food and send their grandchildren to school.

Aged people receiving pensions are respected in South Africa as they have become a source of livelihood for entire households. In South Africa the basic amount received by an elderly person is R1140, 00, enough to meet their own basic needs. The success of the non-contributory pension scheme in South Africa caused other nations in the region, such as Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia and Tanzania, to introduce similar forms of pension for the elderly. Nyangulu (2000:23) indicates that in Lesotho the old age pension improved the nutritional status of the aged people and has ensured that they get credit from shops. These examples reflect the concern of national governments about the livelihoods of the aged. This is in line with the Second World Assembly on the Ageing and its report, ‘‘A Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action, 2002’’. This report challenged governments to meet the challenges of the ageing population and provided the world’s policy makers with a set of 117 concrete recommendations, covering three main priority directions:

- Older persons and development
- Maintaining health and well-being into old age
- Ensuring enabling and supportive environments for the elderly (Second World Assembly on Ageing, 2002).

However a closer look at social policies in Zimbabwe indicates that there is no formal social security scheme in place to cater for the needs of the aged. This leaves a lot of questions as to how older people in Zimbabwe can and do survive in the absence of social security schemes.

4.8 State of aged people in Zimbabwe

According to Madzingira (1999:11), in Zimbabwe those aged 60 years and above are generally poor, while the majority of the very poor reside in rural areas. Communal land tenure in Zimbabwe inhibits the majority of the poor, who constitute 70% of the total population (Madzingira, 1997:12). Poverty Assessment Studies conducted by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare in 2006 confirmed that old age poverty in

Zimbabwe is very high with about 62% of all Zimbabweans living in households with an income per person below a level sufficient to provide for basic needs.

Aged people in Zimbabwe have been subjected to poverty as a result of many factors. According to Madzingira (1997), due to unemployment and retrenchment old aged people in Zimbabwe are unable to really cater for themselves and so depend on the help from family and relatives. In the absence of a formal security cover they have been subjected to absolute poverty and the most affected are those who live in the rural areas. Studies have shown that aged people in rural areas have not really been cared for and statistics reveal that only about 90% of all the old people's homes located in urban areas and occupied by the whites are economically able to pay since they have contributory pensions (Madzingira, 1997). Economic transformation in the past has caused suffering for most aged people in Zimbabwe as neo-liberal policies were implemented by the government on the assumption that economic growth initiatives were to affect livelihoods of ordinary people. According to HAI (2000), the elderly were targeted by retrenchments and forced into retirement as neo-liberal policies advocated cutting down on public expenditure. Ramji (1990:13) states that because of cut-backs in government expenditure, the elderly were faced by removal of subsidies on health care and the introduction of user fees in hospitals and clinics. This proved to be too expensive for the aged, especially in the rural areas.

The World Bank Report (2006) indicates that the family remains the most widely used survival strategy for the majority of the older people. This is true for Zimbabwe where research has suggested that the family is still a major support mechanism, with 45% of older people in the country receiving cash transfers in small amounts and the remainder receiving transfers in kind. Though aged people in the country have been subjected to poverty they

have not been idle or overly dependent on help from other people; rather, they have ventured into various livelihood strategies as a way to improve their livelihoods. Though little is documented about the livelihoods of the aged, generally in the country, a few studies have shown that most rural people have depended on agriculture for survival. Chadya and Mayavo (2002) indicate that aged people in rural Zimbabwe have been engaged in seasonal labour on commercial farms as they seek to improve their income earning levels. Such activities have seen aged people employed in the harvesting of cotton, tobacco, tea, sugar cane and maize in exchange for food or some income. The sustainability of such activities is questionable as they are only carried out seasonally. This points to the severity of rural poverty among the elderly as they look for every opportunity that can give them an income.

4.9 Conclusion

In conclusion it may be said that the situation of the elderly is changing globally due to demographic, economic and political changes. The aged people in both developed and developing countries face a number of changes but only the aged in developing countries are subjected to old age poverty as their weak economic base does not allow their national governments to provide them with national social security systems. The chapter has discussed social theories of ageing such as disengagement theory which advocates for the complete withdrawal of aged people from all forms of activity and that they be replaced by the younger generations. However, the implication is that the disengagement of aged people from employment leaves them without a livelihood and they end up in poverty. Counter-arguments from activity and continuity theories propose that aged people should continue to be active in all roles in order to sustain a living and guard against risks and uncertainties. It was also noted that the challenges that face the aged in Africa have been perpetuated by national laws that were adopted as measures to improve the economy and that saw the removal of state assistance in the areas of education, health, agriculture, housing, etc. Such economic policies

saw aged people facing the axe in most industrial organisations as their duties and roles were no longer seen as valuable. Still the elderly have been able to get some relief from social networks, and their families and relatives too have helped them. Moreover they have themselves ventured into livelihood activities that help them make a living.

Chapter five

Theoretical framework of the study: Sustainable Rural livelihoods Approach

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning this study on rural livelihoods of aged people. This study applies the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) in an attempt to connect all the aspects of the inquiry, that is, problem definition, purpose, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis. For this purpose, SLA acts as a map that gives coherence to the empirical inquiry. In this study SLA will be used to analyze the rural livelihood strategies of the aged people in Mubaira Community. The approach clearly traces all livelihood activities and the processes that underpin them.

5.2 Historical Development of Sustainable livelihoods Approach

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach was developed through a range of actors, including researchers, practitioners and policy-makers. Firstly, the SLA is part of a wider shift in approaches to development through the 1980s and 1990s towards a focus on human-wellbeing and sustainability, rather than economic growth. Unlike other theories and approaches, the SLA evolved as a tool that was meant to provide a conceptual understanding of poverty and its causes. Scoones (2009:7) adds to this assertion by arguing that SLA laid out a vision for rural people-oriented development that is focused on the realities of poor people. It forms a guiding principle for rural development practice developed from the strands of livelihoods ideas developed through the 1980s and 1990s (Chambers 1983; Chambers and Conway, 1992). Various approaches had been used before in a bid to address rural development issues and although successful in some areas, they did lack some coherence. The concept of Sustainable Livelihoods Approach appeared in the research

literature in the 1980's. Solesbury (2003:14) notes that the emergence of the sustainable livelihoods paradigm represented classic paradigm shift in the development lexicon which has conceptually drawn on changing views on poverty, recognized the diversity of aspirations, the importance of assets in communities and the constraints and opportunities provided by institutional structures and processes in various donor and development agencies. In practical terms the concept places people rather than resources, facilities or organizations at the center and emphasizes the view that development must be participatory and improvements must be sustainable (Carney, 1998:8). Its rise to prominence was witnessed after it was crystallised in the Brundtland Commission Report in 1987 and the first UNDP Human Development Report in 1990, as a result of NGOs and supportive researchers who had negotiated this shift over the preceding decades. The sustainable livelihoods approach succeeded in winning the attention of key policy-makers in donor institutions in the early 1990s, DFID in 1997 and the Natural Resources Department, away from the knowledge and theory that had ruled the day before.

5.3 Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

According to Scoones (2000:1), the concept of sustainable livelihoods has been critical in the development debate and it is the purpose of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach/ Framework to show how important it is for rural development. The approach indicates how sustainable livelihoods are achieved through access to a range of livelihood resources (natural, economic, human and social) which are then combined in the pursuit of different livelihoods strategies. Scoones (2000) suggests that agricultural intensification or extensification, livelihood diversification and migration are the main strategies or activities in which people engage to make a living. Of great importance to the framework is the role of a range of formal and informal organizational institutional factors that influence, enhance

and limit sustainable livelihood outcomes. DFID (1999:40), an international development agency, reports that the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) is a way to improve understanding of the livelihoods of poor people. It draws on the main factors that affect poor people's livelihoods and the typical relationships between these factors. It has been used in planning new development activities and in assessing the contribution that existing activities have made to sustaining livelihoods. Its two key components are to act as a:

- a framework that helps in understanding the complexities of poverty
- a set of principles to guide action to address and overcome poverty

On the other hand Ellis (2000:37) suggests that the framework is a version of the assets-mediating processes-activities approach that is utilized in various guises by researchers, development practitioners and change agents for poverty eradication, sustainability and building livelihoods. Not only does the framework focus on the understanding of the resources and activities or strategies of the poor rural people in their pursuit to construct livelihoods but it also presents a tool that is useful as a guide to micro policies concerned with poverty reduction in the rural areas though it might also serve usefully for tracing local level impacts of macro policies (Ellis, 2000).

Micro policies include economic instruments (i.e. taxes, subsidies and interest rates), advisory or delivery services such as agricultural extension, veterinary services and projects (e.g. microcredit projects based on group lending), facilitation and enabling functions (e.g. formation of groups and associations to achieve specific goals on behalf of their members; reducing bureaucratic barriers and individual or community action) or targeted interventions (e.g. employment guarantee schemes). Carney (1998) suggests that the sustainable rural livelihoods framework is a tool that can serve:

- To define the scope of and provide the analytical basis for livelihoods analysis, by identifying the main factors affecting livelihoods and the relationships between them

- To help those concerned with supporting the livelihoods of poor people to understand and manage their complexity
- To become a shared point of reference for all concerned with supporting livelihoods, enabling the complementarity of contributions and the trade-offs between outcomes to be assessed
- To provide a basis for identifying appropriate objectives and interventions to support livelihoods.

5.4 Understanding the Framework

According to DFID (2000) livelihoods are shaped by a multitude of different forces and factors that are themselves constantly shifting. People-centered analysis is most likely to begin with the simultaneous investigation of people's assets, their objectives (perceived or expected livelihood outcomes) and the livelihood strategies which they adopt to achieve these objectives.

5.4.1 Assets as the base of Sustainable rural livelihoods

Assets are the base or foundation of the sustainable rural livelihoods framework as they are owned, controlled, claimed and accessed by the rural livelihoods. They are the basic stepping stones, or building blocks, upon which individuals and households are able to undertake production, engage in labour markets and participate in reciprocal exchanges with other households. As Carney (1998) suggests in his definition of a livelihood and assets comprise natural, physical, human, financial and social capital and these form the core of the SLA. However, various researchers have come up with different categories of assets. Swift (1998: 11) classifies assets as the investments, stores and claims. Here investments include human, individual, and collective assets, stores include food reserves, items of value, such as gold and money in the bank, and, lastly, claims include reciprocal claims on other households and

claims on patrons, chiefs, government and even the international community. Maxwell and Smith (1992:40) in their analysis of food security, divide assets into productive capital and non-productive capital, human capital and claims. Similarly Reardon and Vosti (1995) consider assets as natural and human resources, on-farm physical and financial resources and off- farm physical and financial resources. The list is endless and to contains some elements in common while others appear on all lists. Though these various researchers and scholars have come up with different categorizations of resources/assets they do amplify the meaning and scope of these five categories. It is apparent that most of the anomalies between the lists of different researchers are resolved by the following classifications of resources.

5.4.2 Natural Capital

Natural capital comprises the land, water, and biological resources that are utilized by people to generate a means of survival. Rural development agencies have reported that natural resources are the primary and most utilized resource base in the rural areas. Ellis (2000:32) argues that natural capital is not static, nor is its utilization for survival purposes confined to gathering activities such as collecting wild vegetables or hunting wild animals. Natural capital is the most open, freely accessible resource base that rural people count on for their livelihoods. Livelihoods in the rural areas are built around the availability of such essential resources as land, water and vegetation. Along with livestock, rural people's livelihoods are constructed and maintained around these assets. A comparative analysis of rural and urban settings reveals that urban livelihoods are monetized. Access to monetary income is essential for urban survival while for rural dwellers natural resources are the most used and accessed (Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones, 2002). Some urban sociologists have indicated an increased sprouting of urban agriculture as a survival strategy for poor urban dwellers but this cannot match the rate at which agriculture has been a source of livelihood for rural people.

The usefulness of natural capital as a possible element in transforming and enhancing rural livelihoods can be comprehended when it is brought under such human control to increase its productivity. This has occurred since the beginning of sedentary agriculture in the evolution of farming systems (Ellis, 2000:32). Of importance for the natural capital is distinction between the renewable and non-renewable resources. Renewable resources consist of those ones that replenish themselves over time, that is fishery stocks, or trees used for firewood, or water in underground aquifers, or that are managed to ensure their renewal, such as soils in farm fields or water flows in irrigation canals. On the other hand, natural capital also includes non-renewable resources that may be pertinent to rural livelihoods in some locations, or in indirect ways. These are principally extractive resources such as metal, ores and oil, stocks of which in a particular location are permanently depleted according to the rate of extraction by human agency. Sustainability is a theme that runs across the livelihood framework, and it is the proper use of these resources to ensure their durability and life span continues. A complete overhaul of both renewable and non-renewable resources has a negative impact on rural development in the long run as it hampers efforts to eradicate or minimize poverty levels and at the same time increases dependency. Therefore natural capital is the core and principal foundation for the building of rural livelihoods and its full utilization results in sustainable outcomes if brought under human control.

5.4.3 Physical Capital

Physical capital assets consist of capital that is created by the economic production processes (Ellis, 2000). Buildings irrigation canals, roads, tools and machines are examples of physical assets. Physical capital enhances the construction and building of livelihoods. Natural capital on its own is not enough to enhance effective livelihood outcomes, it must be complemented by the use of physical capital. The construction of buildings, irrigation canals, roads, ploughs, scotch carts, silos, dairy centers have helped in the primary and secondary stages of the

construction of livelihoods. For agriculture to be successful in rural areas, it is not only the availability of land and water, but rather the use of machinery, such as tractors, ploughs and irrigation schemes that have enhanced agriculture to be a success. The construction of warehouses or silos has meant that agricultural produce is not exposed to bad environments or conditions but is well kept before consumption or marketing. A good example is construction of tobacco burning furnaces in which freshly harvested leaves are stored and treated at a certain temperature before they go to the market. The availability of such kind of buildings renders all the good use of arable land when there is adequate rainfall to produce quality tobacco plants since it allows the product to reach the market. This cements the point of Ellis (2000:33) who says that, in economic terms, physical capital is defined as a producer good rather than a consumer good.

A developed physical capital base enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of sustainable livelihood outcomes. The construction and development of roads and communication networks enhances the proper and fast marketing of farm produce and also the movement of rural people for other activities, even off-farm activities. Scoones (2000) reports that infrastructural assets such as roads, power lines, and water supplies are very important and facilitate livelihood diversification. Roads facilitate movement of people between places offering different income-earning opportunities and they open up markets that otherwise would not even be there. In countries lacking telecommunication facilities they play an important role in transferring of information between rural centers and remote areas (Swift 1998:67).

While it is widely appreciated and accepted that rural economies are based on agriculture, the absence of light and manufacturing industries has been attributed to lack of electricity. This

also constrains small scale services from developing in rural areas and whilst off –farm employment opportunities for the rural poor. The growth in industries would put a cap or limit on migration to urban centers and increase the labour market in the rural areas. According to Rakodi and Jones (2002) shelter is similarly multifunctional, potentially providing income from rent as well as a location for home based enterprises. The leasing and renting out of accommodation has been a source of livelihood when used to generate income flows for its owners i.e. by utilizing it for cottage industry or renting out rooms (Moser, 1998:13). The productive capital that enters the asset list of Maxwell and Smith (1992:31) is included here under physical capital.

There has been a notable change in that physical or man-made capital can substitute for natural capital in many circumstances. The development of technology coupled with industrialization is one way in which physical capital cumulatively substitutes for natural capital over time. Ellis (2000:34) argues that this substitution process can potentially help to take the pressure off natural resources that are being depleted in local contexts that is, water pipes can substitute for open demands with consequent reduction in loss from leakages and evaporation. Also, by generating electricity and using of solar energy sources in rural areas the strain on natural forests that have been used for firewood can be reduced and natural vegetation sustained.

5.4.4. Human Capital

The chief asset possessed by poor rural people is their own labour. Human capital denotes the labour available to the households and includes education, skills and health (Carney, 1998). Investments made in pursuing one or more occupations increases human capital. Rakodi and Jones (2000) are of the opinion that lack of human capital in the form of skills and education affects the ability to secure a livelihood quite directly in both urban and rural areas. The fact that human capital includes good health means that any handicapped, unfit person struggles

with labour intensive work. In times of distress, poor people have engaged in multiple occupations as they seek to maximize their earnings and have better improved livelihoods. So in developing countries people engage in both on-farm and off-farm activities with some even taking evening jobs to increase their income.

Ellis (2000:34) states that households as groupings of human capital are not static in composition either in industrial or low-income societies. The human capital composition of a household changes constantly due to environmental changes that are due to both internal and external factors. Internal demographic reasons (births, deaths, marriage, migration and children growing older) are some of the internal factors affecting human capital composition (Moser, 1998:14). Macro policies have played a great deal in enriching human capital. Public education and health services are policies that have been designed to raise the level of human capital across the globe. Public education has made an input in creating employment. Either one is formally employed or one starts his/her own business with the skills and knowledge acquired through education. Thus, human capital enhances the construction of livelihoods for the people possessing the necessary skills. A negative impact on these macro policies has negative consequences for poor people. According to Cornia and Jolly (1987:112), a major concern about structural adjustment policies in most developing countries has been the reduction of state support in education and health due to budgetary cutbacks. This negatively impacts on the poor as they cannot really afford to access health care and education due to the introduction of user fees. This results in an unskilled, incompetent population without ideas to construct livelihoods. Successful economies are based on improved health systems and a well educated population to carry out essential services.

5.4.5 Financial capital and substitutes

The engagement in labour activities, either off-farm or on-farm, reflects the desire to earn income for consumption. Though some theorists have argued that the poor work in exchange for food, financial gain is the main priority. Financial capital refers to stocks of money to which the household has access. This is likely to be in the form of savings from employment and access to credit in the form of loans. Absence of credit loans for the rural poor may be due to the lack of collateral security as this might lead to default in repayment of loans and credits. This is why most African rural farmers do not venture into commercial or agricultural intensification. Availability of land and human labour alone is not enough to fully venture into a farming enterprise, rather, it is financial back up that ensures the development and creation of physical assets, such as machinery and farming equipment that can be used as production tools. The rearing of livestock has been viewed as a critical form of storing wealth as a buffer against bad times, in most African countries.

5.4.6 Social capital

Ellis (2000:35) takes the term social capital to refer to community and wider social claims on which individuals and households can draw by virtue of their belonging to social groups of varying degrees of inclusiveness in society at large. Moser (1998) defined social capital as reciprocity within communities and between households based on trust deriving from social ties. Early theorists like Scotts (1976:63) and Platteau (1991:39) argued that this places the emphasis on localized reciprocity, as envisaged for example, in ideas of moral economy and social insurance. Social security also directs attention to personal or family networks, typically comprising near and remote kin, as well as close family friends that offer spatially diverse potential means of support when past favours are reclaimed. Not only are investments made in money or human capital but the time and resources that are devoted to extending and nurturing social networks imply that they are very much seen as an investment in future livelihood security by rural households (Bery,1989,1993). Swift (1998) states that, social

capital is made up of networks of both ascriptive and elective relationships between individuals, which may be vertical as in authority relationships or horizontal as in involuntary organizations, and of the trust and expectations which flow within those networks. Therefore social capital would comprise the vertical claims, that is, on patrons, chiefs and politicians that are expected to be met in times of crisis. Putnam et al (1993) have their own views of social capital where they consider it as consisting more of horizontal social groups such as associations, clubs, and voluntary agencies that bring individuals together to pursue one or more objectives in which they have a common interest e.g. farmers' associations. Their concept of "horizontal associations" between people suggests that social capital consists of social networks ("networks of civic engagement") and associated norms that have an effect on the productivity of the community. Putnam et al (1993) furthers the argument by saying that two empirical presumptions underlie this concept, that is, networks and norms are empirically associated, and these have important economic consequences.

The formation of social groups in communities has positive value as these have brought people together, uniting them to help each other in times of need. The affiliation of a certain member to a social group gives affection and belonging to someone and in many instances group members have benefited from their membership. In developing countries, social networks seem to be predominant as evidenced by rural people who help each other in times of distress, and by family ties that keep people together and unify them. However the modernization of rural areas has affected family ties, as migration has taken its toll in disintegrating families. Older people have assumed the role of caregivers for young children left behind by their migrating parents and marriage ties have been affected by migration as partners fail to commit to their families and engage in extra-marital affairs away from home. The key to the definition of social capital in Putnam et al (1993) is the idea that it facilitates

coordination and cooperation for the mutual benefit of the members of the association. Social networks in urban areas are not all supportive of the poor, or effective as social capital and appear less robust due to the mobility and heterogeneity of their populations. Bebbington (1999) argues that of all the assets described as enhancements for livelihood construction, social capital is clearly the most difficult to describe in other than broad qualitative terms. The reason is that a great deal of reciprocity is hidden and discovered only by anthropological research or at times of serious livelihood crisis. The social and political environment that enables norms to develop and shape the structure cannot be ignored in the discussions of social capital. Booth (1998) argues that social capital is closely linked to political capital based on access to political process and decision making and best seen as gatekeeper asset permitting or preventing the accumulation of other assets. Institutional relationships and structures, such as government and the political regime, the rule of law, the court system and civil and political liberties are crucial as elements of social capital. North (1990) and Olson (1982) say that such institutions have an important effect on the rate and pattern of social and economic development.

Though the usefulness and impact of social capital may be difficult to measure, research has indicated that it is a very important form of capital that cannot be ignored if desired economic and social change and development is to be achieved. It has been recognized that, natural, physical, human and financial capital only partially determine the process of economic growth because they overlook the way in which economic actors interact and organize themselves to generate growth and development (Grooatert, 1998:13). The missing link is social capital. Putnam et al (1993) argue that a higher density of voluntary associations in Northern Italy explains that region's economic success by comparison with Southern Italy where such associations are less frequent. Buckley (1996) also reports that after the 1991 fall

of Somalia's government civil disorder prevailed and incomes declined throughout most of the country. An exception was the port city of Boosaaso, where a local warlord organized a security force and a council of clan elders with support from local people. Trade flourished and incomes improved. These two examples reveal social capital's contribution to economic growth and the power of social integration. Different researchers have come up with different diagrams to present the sustainable livelihoods framework to indicate how it operates and functions. For the purpose of this study, I will adopt the diagram presented by the Department for International Development that lays the components of the sustainable livelihood framework.

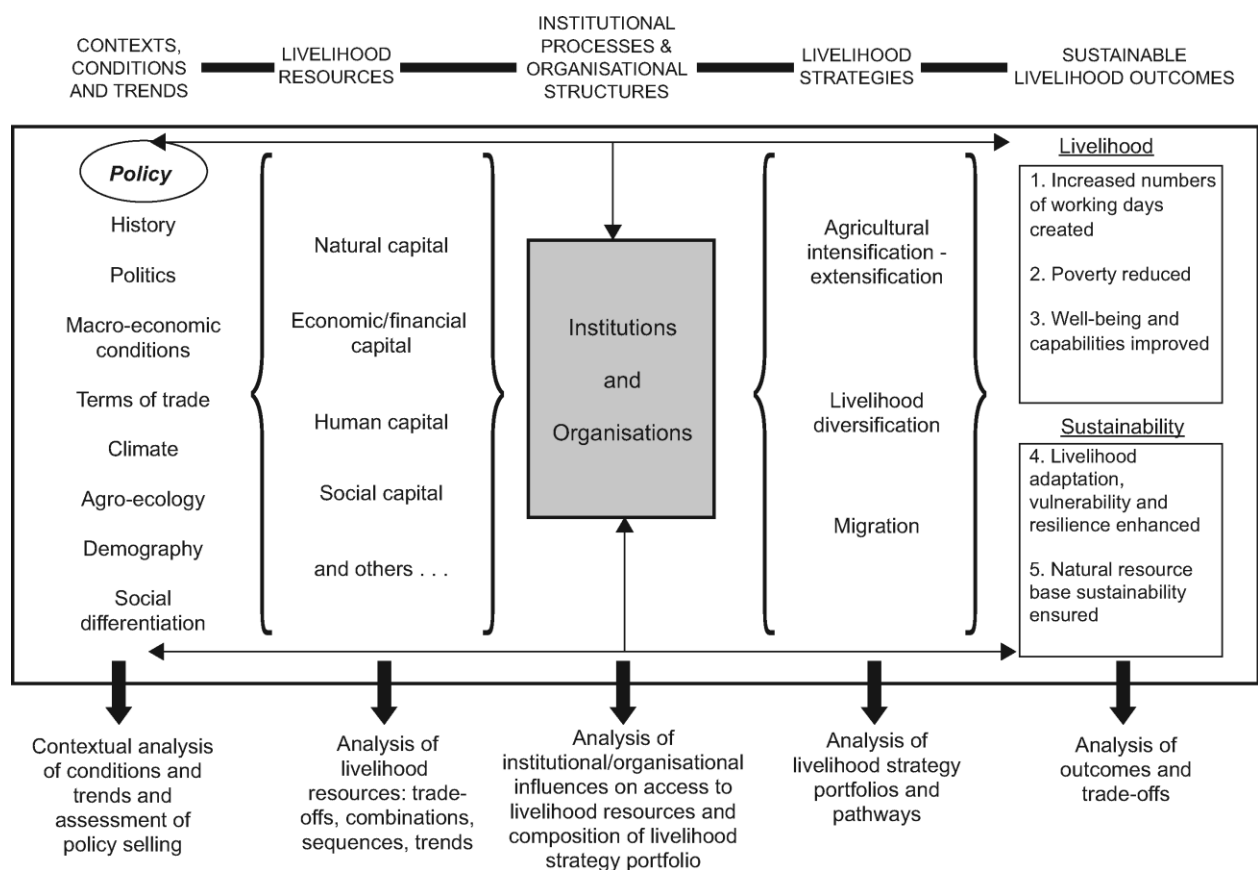


Figure 5.1: Sustainable livelihoods framework: Adopted From Scoones (2000)

5.5 Mediating Processes

Translation of a set of these assets into a livelihood outcome is mediated or initiated by a great number of issues that include contextual socio-economic policy considerations. Scoones (1998) divides these into categories of contexts, conditions and trends and institutions and organizations. All these concepts and practices are useful in understanding the process towards sustainable livelihood outcomes. Trends would include history, politics, economic trends, climate, agro ecology, demography and social differentiation (Ellis, 2000:37). Carney (1998) defines this as the vulnerability context and transforming process. Vulnerability is both a condition and a determinant of poverty, and refers to the ability of people to avoid, withstand or recover from the harmful impacts of a shock.

5.6 Vulnerability Context

The assets which poor people possess or have access to, the livelihoods they desire and the strategies they adopt are influenced by the context within which they live. Various scholars have come up with different definitions of vulnerability. According to Rakodi and Jones (2002) vulnerability refers to insecurity of well-being of individuals, households or communities in the face of a changing environment. Environmental changes that threaten welfare may be ecological, economic, social or political. Risk and uncertainty and declining self respect tend to accompany environmental changes (Moser, 1996). High degree of susceptibility and exposure are the key features of poverty and this includes risk of crises, stress and shocks and little capacity to recover quickly from them. Carney (1998) says that to understand vulnerability it is necessary to analyse trends (resource stocks, demographic change, available technologies, political representation and economic trends), shocks (the climatic and actual or potential conflicts) and culture (as an explanatory factor in understanding how people manage their assets and the livelihood choices they make). It is also possible to distinguish between

- Long term trends, such as demographic trends or changes in the natural resource base
- Recurring seasonal changes, such as prices or employment opportunities and
- Short term shocks, such as illness, natural disaster or conflict.

DFID (2000:43) also presents a slightly different dimension of vulnerability by including seasonal trends and shocks that affect people's livelihoods. The key attribute of the definition is the fact that these factors are susceptible to control by local people themselves, at least in the short and medium term. Livelihood insecurity is a constant reality for many poor people and insecurity is a core dimension of most forms of poverty.

Kelly and Adger (2000) present a different definition of vulnerability as they argue that it is the capacity of individuals and social groups to respond to, and cope with, recover from or adapt to any external stress placed on their livelihoods and well being. Analysis of vulnerability involves identifying not only threats to individuals and households and their assets, but also their resilience, that is, their ability to mobilize assets, exploit opportunities and resist or recover from the negative effects of the changing environment. Thus the ability of individuals and households to avoid or reduce vulnerability and to increase economic productivity depends upon the availability of assets and also upon the ability of the victims of change to transform those assets into income, food or other basic necessities, by intensifying existing, developing new or diversifying strategies (Moser, 1996, 1998). Soussau (2000) adds that 'in general, the more affluent and asset-rich a household is, the more options it possesses in the face of shocks, and therefore, the more resilient it is to disruption in its livelihoods base'.

Societies do include vulnerable groups such as elderly persons, orphaned children, widowed or divorced women, disabled people and refugees. Bohle et al (1994) argue that the likelihood

of such groups of people falling into traps and misfortunes is high as they are susceptible to shocks and risks. Some of the factors that contribute to being vulnerable are, lack of social networks, social stigma, especially for the aged people, experience of traumatizing events and lack of a general voice and empowerment. Finally Watts and Bhole (1993) give a definition closely linked to the above in arguing that vulnerability has three co-ordinates: first, the risk of exposure to shocks and trends; second, inadequate capacity to cope with shocks and trends; and third, the risk of severe consequences of, and attendant risks of creeping or limited poverty due to crisis, risk and shock.

As argued by Scoones (2000:8) the vulnerability context is very important, as it reflects the environment in which one operates and outlines the expected outcomes of livelihood patterns. In particular, it describes structural processes that can materially disrupt different aspects of the livelihoods process. For example, climate change will directly affect the long-term characteristics of the resource base, with other consequences compounding from there, whilst a devastating cyclone will have massive immediate impacts and can cause structural change to the characteristics of a household's livelihood processes (Soussan, 2000). In a changing global world, a change in the political, economic, climatic and social contexts does impact on how livelihoods are met and on expected livelihood outcomes. According to DFID (2000) vulnerability may be due to many factors which relate to policies and institutions and to lack of assets rather than the particular trends, shocks or aspects of seasonality per se. For example, many urban poor residents they suffer vulnerability due to their informal legal status, poor living environment (both physical and social) and lack of subsistence production.

5.7 Institutional Processes

The importance of understanding institutions and organizations in the sustainable livelihoods approach matrix is that they explain how livelihood resources are bound together to allow

various strategies to be pursued and different outcomes to be realized. Institutional and organizational processes are an important aspect of the rural livelihoods approach. According to North (1990), institutions are the formal rules, connections and formal codes of behavior that gives human interactions. For sustainable livelihoods to be achieved it is paramount to have an awareness of the structures and processes that mediate the complex process. A clear understanding of institutions can be derived from sociological and anthropological literature. According to Giddens (1979), institutions are regularized practices (or patterns of behavior) structured by rules and norms of society which have persistent and widespread use. Institutions may be both formal and informal, often fluid and ambiguous and sometimes usually get multiple interpretations by different actors. Scoones (2000:13) supports the view that power relations are embedded within institutional forms, making contestations over institutional policies, rules and norms to be always important. Institutions are dynamic and subject to continual change and are shaped and reshaped over time. Thus institutional arrangements which enhance or hinder the construction of sustainable livelihoods are always changed to the advantage or disadvantage of individuals or households.

It should be noted that communities, societies, countries and regional and international areas are governed and guided by certain patterns of behavior that shape the outcome of livelihoods. For example, a ban, as in many African countries on the cutting down of trees for firewood, has seen many poor people losing a livelihood they had gained by selling firewood and their energy use levels were affected as they now have to look for other options. This is also true in instances in which the use of nets for fishing in community rivers is prohibited as local natural resources management boards seek to preserve the species. As a result fishermen lose their livelihood and the nutritional value gained from eating fish. Ellis (2000:38) gives an example that land tenure institutions comprise such determinants of access to land as the

ownership structure at a particular moment (possibly highly unequal), whether this ownership is defined by private freehold title or by customary rights of access, the existence or not of a market in land. By being dynamic and flexible institutions are part of a process of social negotiation rather than fixed objects or bound social systems. There is a link between institutions and organizations. According to North (1990), institutions are the rules of the game and therefore should be distinguished from organizations, which are players. Ellis (2000) calls organizations as groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives. Examples of organizations include government agencies (e.g. police force, ministry of agriculture and government veterinary service), administrative bodies (e.g. local government), NGOs, associations (e.g. farmers' associations) and private companies. The interplay between organizations and institutions influences the access to livelihood resources and the composition of a livelihood strategy portfolio. Davies et al (1997) suggest that institutions are the social cement which links stakeholders to access to capital of different kinds and to instruments of power, the gateways through which they pass on the road to positive or negative (livelihood) adaptation. Davies' assertion therefore raises the question of whether institutions really matter for policy and practice of development for sustainable livelihoods.

5.7.1 Utility of Institutions in the Sustainable livelihoods Approach

According to Scoones (2000:9), the integration of institutions in the SLA is important because, having an understanding of institutional processes allows the identification of restrictions / barriers and opportunities (or gateways) to sustainable livelihoods for rural poor people. Formal and informal institutions also play a key role in mediating access to livelihood resources and, in turn, the composition of portfolios of livelihood strategies. An understanding of institutions and organizations is key to designing interventions that improve livelihood outcomes. Secondly, an institutional approach is important in SLA analysis as it

sheds light on social processes which underlie livelihood sustainability. Scoones (2000) posits that achievement of SLA is not a deterministic affair; rather, contestations, negotiations and trade-offs are evident at every turn. An insight into social relationships, their institutional forms (both formal and informal) and the power dynamics embedded in these is very important. All the support, help and intervention for sustainable livelihoods must be aligned if suitable institutional entry points are to be found.

Lastly, institutions are also of use in the SLA in emphasizing underlying rules and norms. A complex institutional matrix mediates the processes of livelihood change (Leach et al, 1997; Cousin 1997). Analysis of an institutional environment looks at the combination of a wide range of informal and formal institutions and organizations operating at different levels, from the household to the national and international level. These influence different people to pursue combinations of different livelihood strategies resulting in sustainable livelihood outcomes.

5.8 Livelihood Strategies: Portfolios and Pathways

The accumulation and presence of assets mediated by social relations, institutions and organizations results in individuals, households and villages undertaking livelihood strategies. Within the SLA livelihood strategies are very important as they depict the activities engaged in by individuals or households to produce a living that might be sustainable. Scoones (2000:10) says that the combination of strategies or activities pursued are called a livelihood portfolio. Some portfolios may be highly specialised with a concentration on one or a limited range of activities; others may be quite diverse. Livelihood strategies are dynamic and they respond to changing pressures and opportunities and adapt accordingly. As indicated earlier, the adoption and adaptation of livelihood strategies is influenced by exogenous trends and shocks. These have a bearing on the activities or strategies which

individuals or households adopt. Within the SLA, Scoones (2000) identified broad clusters of livelihood strategies open to rural people. These are agricultural intensification/extensification, livelihood diversification and migration. Rural households engage in any one of these activities depending on the availability of certain resources/assets. Ellis (2000:38) gives a slightly different emphasis as he argues that livelihood strategies can be divided into natural resource and non-natural resource based activities. Natural resource based activities include collection or gathering (e.g. from woodlands and forests), food cultivation, non food cultivation, livestock keeping and pastoralism and non-farm activities (Ellis, 2000:39). On the other hand, non-natural resources based activities include rural trade (marketing of farm outputs, inputs and consumer goods), other rural services (e.g. vehicle repair), rural manufacture remittances (urban and international) and other transfers such as pensions deriving from past formal sector employment. Strategies or activities in all categories represent potential contributions to the survival portfolio of rural households.

Though Ellis (2000) has successfully differentiated between natural based livelihood activities and non-natural livelihood strategies or activities, much attention is accorded to Scoones' (2000:10) classification or types of livelihood strategies. The SLA diagram shows that agriculture, livelihood diversification and migration are the principal strategies employed by poor people in rural areas. A look at agriculture reveals that it is either individuals or households who increase or boost their livelihood outcomes by intensifying resource use in combination with a given land area or by bringing new land into cultivation or grazing. In the discussions of agriculture, land is considered the prime asset on which rural people build their livelihoods. Ellis (2002:40) reveals that for agricultural intensification attention is directed towards the institutions and organisations that facilitate technical change in agriculture. Important to note for agriculture is the fact that individuals and households practice it for two

main purposes; consumption and cash income or both. However, commercial agriculture depends on the availability of all forms of capital, that is human, financial, and physical capital in the form of technology, and also on natural resources. Studies in most African rural areas have indicated that agriculture is the main strategy of livelihood whether for consumption or subsistence or, less frequently, as commercial enterprises; the latter less frequently for lack of essential assets. Another hindrance has been the poor development of marketing systems and credit assistance that has left farmers unable to finance their activities. Another strategy is on-farm diversification in which a farmer focuses on both the production of crops and rearing of livestock.

Livelihood diversification is the alternative strategy which rural people use to gain sustainable livelihoods. The understanding is that besides agriculture, rural people engage in other different livelihood enhancing activities that can be termed non-farm strategies. Scoones (2000:10) says diversification may involve a wide income earning portfolio to cover all types of shocks or stresses jointly to handle a particular type of common shocks or stress as a well developed coping mechanism. Non-agricultural income diversification has substituted agricultural activities as people search for much needed cash income. Livelihood diversification is a paramount concept in the rural areas as it presents rural dwellers with many more opportunities to obtain a living. As discussed earlier in chapter three the reasons for diversification are numerous. The last strategy discussed within SLA is migration, which sees people move from one area to another in search of better livelihoods.

Although much has been said on the core principles of the SLA, the approach has been criticized for certain reasons.

5.9 Limitations or weaknesses of the SLA

Although the SLA has been a success story in the approach to rural development and poverty eradication, concerns have been expressed about the approach's failure to address many issues including the thorny question of theoretical adequacy. Various scholars have also raised questions about the impact of the livelihoods perspective in rural development. This section presents a critical review of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to development, beginning with a presentation of the central weaknesses of the academic literature on SLA, particularly in relation to theoretical consistency. In the process of countering these criticisms, solutions to the challenges faced by the approach are proposed. The section will also address the implications of these criticisms or weaknesses of SLA on the overall study.

One of the fundamental concerns of SLA is the focus on poverty reduction (Carney, 2000). According to Small (2007), while this focus on the poor is useful for highlighting specific issues related to poverty, it also results in specific biases within the approach. Despite its apparent holism, SLA analysis does not formally take into account the actions and influence of wealthier "players" in the field - analysis of assets and their use is focused on the poor, whereas wealthier people are included only peripherally as part of the "transforming structures and processes." The wealthier or most affluent have a greater part to play in the attainment of sustainable livelihoods for the poor. A number of studies show that the wealthier players have played a part in assisting the poor to achieve livelihoods or minimise poverty by assisting them with capital assets. Therefore the approach has been seen as lacking in acknowledging the role of such players. Rather it mainly subsumes them under the role played by institutions and organisations in the building of sustainable livelihoods. Although proponents of SLA may argue that the role of wealthier players can be presented

under social capital, there is a need to clearly include such players as they have contributed much to the upliftment of the poor people (Small, 2007). In this study it can be argued that better off aged people and wealthier people have contributed enormously to the care of aged people in the absence of social security systems but such roles and contributions are not clearly outlined in the SLA.

5.9.1 Its failure to account for the analysis and measure of capital assets

Although the SLA has been successful in showing that the most paramount step to eradicate poverty is the accumulation of capital assets, it can be said that the approach fails to account for the analysis and measure of the capital assets. The major challenges for operationalising sustainable livelihoods framework is how to compare and measure capital assets. The approach identifies five types of capital assets which are financial, physical, natural, social, and human as viewed by the DFID framework (Carney 1998; DFID 1999). Moser (1996), in a study for the World Bank, looked at how access to certain assets, such as, labour, social, economic, infrastructure, housing, and household relations, reduced the vulnerability of poor households. However Baumann and Subir (2001) are of the view that capital assets such as political capital should be given equal status with other capital assets. From the DFID's SLA, political capital does not feature whereas it has an enormous role to play in the achievement of sustainable livelihoods and poverty eradication.

This would provide a basis for a more structured and rigorous analysis of power than the 'policies, institutions and processes' box of the SLA presents. However, it could well be argued that a sound definition of social capital would necessarily include a consideration of power and political relationships. Although this can be achieved there are particular difficulties in defining, let alone measuring capital assets. In particular social capital may mediate access to other assets, and is not neutral. It is suggested that the potentially 'dark

side' of social capital, such as the hijacking of participatory exercises by elites, is also often overlooked (Beall, 2002; Fox, 1997; Thin, 2000).

Different institutions appear to value different forms of capital according to their own priorities. The World Bank (1997) appears to emphasise the importance of social capital for the development of economic capital. On the other hand Fox (1997) argues that despite this emphasis World Bank projects have actually eroded local social capital. Bryceson (2000) and Ellis (1999) argue that it will be more productive, in terms of poverty reduction, to work on raising human capital. Heller (1996), on the other hand, argues that the achievements in raising levels of literacy and life expectancy are attributable to the production of two forms of social capital, through class mobilisation and state intervention. Although all these raging debates on which is the appropriate are ongoing, Pretty (1999) makes the important point that in addition to defining and measuring levels of capital, it is necessary to understand the linkages and trade-offs between them. He further argues that sustainable systems would increase the capital base over time, and specifically examining the relationship between capital assets.

A clearer understanding of the linkages and tradeoffs between capital assets is paramount in the need to achieve sustainable outcomes. Although different capital assets maybe more preferred depending on the context it should be noted that linking the capital assets is more advantageous than looking at them in isolation. In most rural areas it is difficult to measure the contribution of other forms of capital assets as natural capital dominates in the construction of livelihoods. Most studies in rural settings have shown that subsistence agriculture is the main source of livelihood for rural dwellers and it is the access to natural capital that determines ones success. To really measure the contribution of other assets like social capital is difficult because of the different definitions relating to social capital. What is

clear from the literature, however, is that trying to quantify and even define capital assets is fraught with difficulties. Some even dispute the use of 'assets' as a unit of analysis. Beall (2002) feels that conceptualising assets in this way reduces them to neo-classical economic concepts. The breaking down of people's livelihoods in terms of assets may have only a superficial value. It tells us nothing of the relationships between assets, of how assets may change over a lifetime, or whether having high levels of one particular asset may compensate for low levels of another. Taking into consideration Cleaver (2001) in her examination of livelihoods in the Usangu basin in Tanzania it was found that the materially wealthier people had relatively low levels of social capital (as defined by membership of societies/clubs). Therefore one would wonder if high levels of financial capital make social networks unimportant.

Although much can be said on this subject, what can be concluded is that the failure of SLA to define and measure capital assets has a major implication on this study of the livelihoods of the aged people. Since the state has failed to meet and address the needs of the aged people, family members and relatives of the aged people have taken the role of care for the aged people in Zimbabwe. However with such difficulties to measure the capital assets it is difficult to have a clearer understanding of how such help (subsumed under social capital) has contributed to the well being of the aged people. It is also difficult to measure how the assets they have accumulated overtime have contributed to the construction of better livelihoods. If the approach could offer a clear way of measuring capital assets it would go a long way in assessing if sustainability is being achieved.

5.9.2 Issues of governance, politics, power and citizens rights

The livelihood perspective has been heavily criticised for glossing over the issues of governance, power and politics. A major criticism of the SLA has been in its exclusion of

power relationships, whilst significantly, much development debate of the current time is around the ideas of rights, governance and policy reform for the eradication of poverty (DFID, 2000). At a national level this predicates the need for the reform of legal frameworks, policy and service delivery to respond to the needs, interests and rights of all. The main point is that emphasis should be placed on improving governance through decentralisation of state power and on institutional and organisational change to increase accountability and transparency (Goldman, 1998; Hobley, 2001). Hobley (2001) raises some crucial questions about what level of change is required by organisations in order to support SL interventions, and how such change should be supported. She is critical on the role of politics and political capital on the state in relation to citizens, service delivery and the private sector. More so she looks at how citizen empowerment and state responsiveness can be increased, and what mechanisms are in place for increasing choice. The issue of governance has been a critical one when looking at the context of the study in Zimbabwe. Welfarist approaches consider proper governance as meeting the human needs and rights of the citizens and also being able to deliver sound social services. The failure of the current government of Zimbabwe to offer sound social policies to cater for the needs of the aged people is seen as a deprivation of a citizen right. The pre-independence state of 1980 had social policies to cater for the aged but they only covered white citizens segregating the majority of the black people. It is the duty and mandate of the national government to meet the needs of its citizens especially those who are internationally considered as vulnerable people. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 22, citizens have the right to social security and therefore the absence of such mechanism presents and failure of the political leaders in addressing the plight of their people.

Rights-based approaches explicitly deal with power through the advocacy of a universal code of rights and entitlements for all. The theoretical bedrock for much rights-based work can be linked to Sen's (1999) conception of 'development as freedom'. Freedom is seen to be the ultimate goal of social and economic arrangements and the most efficient means of realising general welfare. However, Sen (1999) argues for the avoidance of development formulae and in favour of engagement with multiple outcomes and possibilities that include a reassessment of development as a mechanism for economic growth. Most recent work suggests a fusion between the idea of rights and the SLA to produce a 'livelihood rights approach'. This would follow the premise that rights matter and that the poor must be supported and empowered to claim their rights (Moser and Norton, 2001).

Although the approach has been heavily criticised for its failure to conceptualise the issues around citizen's rights, recent evidence shows that there is now a move towards addressing such a problem. Conway (2002) highlights that DFID's move towards rights based programming is evidence of this direction. In reality, what the rights-based approach brings to international development is a legal foundation for the rights of individuals (poor and wealthy), based in human rights frameworks, thus providing a moral impetus for governments to fulfill these rights for their own citizens (Nyarnu-Musembi and Cornwall, 2004). As such, it addresses power relationships directly, but does not specify a conceptualization of change. Rights-based approaches do not have a platform for recognizing the breadth of resources, many of them informally accessed, that people draw on to maintain livelihoods. An integration of rights based approaches and SLA can thus usefully build on the strengths of each.

Carney (2002) also suggests that while the SLA principle of putting people first is important, there have been numerous concerns from various scholars who feel that they fail to emphasise sufficiently the need to increase the power and rights of the poor and to stimulate changes in social relations. Carney (2002) goes on to say that the concern is that the practice of sustainable livelihoods may be extractive meaning that information may be gathered locally while it is processed into decisions elsewhere. The point is that the issues have to do with the overall governance framework, how that is understood and with the role that the poor play. The understanding of how people relate to institutional environment where the power lies and how and why changes take place should be emphasised by the SLA. If these are not prioritised there may be little scope for reducing poverty and to assist the very poorest group in a sustainable manner. Scoones (2009:10) advocates for politics and power to be central to livelihood perspectives for rural development. He also states that politics is not just 'context' (as portrayed in the SLA), but a focus for analysis in and of itself. Bauman (2000:54) also argues that politics is not just a matter of adding another 'capital' to the assets pentagon, with all the flawed assumptions of equivalence and substitutability inherent to it. Instead, attention to power and politics must move beyond the local level to examine wider structures of inequality. On the other hand, it is suggested that the framework also needs to broaden institutional analysis beyond governance to include community and familial structures (Bingen, 2000). Johnson (1997) argues that institutional arrangements can either discourage or encourage the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods and raises consideration of informal rules and norms and the importance of considering how policies are interpreted on the ground. Cleaver (2001) refers to a process of 'institutional bricolage' through which people create new institutions using elements of existing social and cultural arrangements, demonstrating the potential complexity of institutional reform. This helps especially the poor and the powerless (women and aged) people to have their rights recognised at local levels rather than

be governed by communal norms and values which are designed by a minority. A good example is that in most patriarchal societies women are not entitled to own assets such as land as cultural norms see them as partaking or benefiting from their husband's share. Also cultural norms of inheritance have left most women with nothing after the death of their husbands as the property and belongings of the deceased are inherited by his kins or relatives. This results in the women falling into the poverty net. Therefore the major implication of the failure of SLA to address the issues of governance, politics, power and rights are that this criticism leaves it as a weak approach to address developmental issues. In this study there is a great acknowledgement that old aged people are part of the groups that are powerless, not fully represented and dependent on external help especially from family care. Therefore if the government cannot address the plight of the aged people it therefore means that the targets of the SLA to eradicate poverty cannot be achieved because the government is considered as one of the critical players in dealing with poverty. Research from other countries like South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Tanzania where there are proper governance structures to meet the needs of aged people, indicates that poverty has been reduced to significant levels through the disbursement of old age pensions and grants. By having access to such services the elderly can meet their needs and feel that their rights are being recognised. In Zimbabwe if such services can be provided aged people can be able to achieve better livelihoods. This can only be a success story if the SLA that has been considered by most development practitioners as a guide to eradicate poverty can fully address and prioritise issues of governance, power and politics rather than to cluster them under institutional and organisational processes.

5.9.3 Its failure to capture change over time

One of the fundamental goals of sociology as a discipline is to understand the process of social change in society as a whole and how it affects groups and individuals. SLA as an

approach has been criticised for its failure to capture the processes of change over time. For many scholars there is a great deal of discussion concerning the DFID framework and how it should be employed in practice and in the analysis of livelihoods. It is greatly assumed that livelihoods are not static but rather that they go through a process of change meaning they are dynamic. There is some concern that methodological frameworks should not become over codified and institutionalised, and specifically that the DFID framework is insufficiently dynamic, in the sense that it fails to capture 'change' both external and internal to households (Beall, 2001; Ellis 2000). Taking into consideration the focus of this study, SLA's failure to capture processes of change leaves a lot to be desired. This is because the study of old age livelihood strategies is a process of change itself. One cannot reach old age overnight but rather goes through a series of stages in life in which he or she engages in different activities. This simply means that one cannot be expected to work in the same occupation that he or she worked during middle adulthood but rather there is a shift or change that occurs. Through processes of retirement, living ways are bound to change; either the aged person relies on occupational pension or engages in informal work opportunities or becomes dependent on the help from relatives and children. In the study of ageing, the life course perspective has been used to trace the processes of change throughout the life span. Therefore if the SLA fails to account for change in the lives of the individuals concerned it becomes difficult to attribute the causes of poverty and how possible interventions can come about. Change does not only occur in individual lives but rather communities or even countries go through a process of change. Contextualising the issues of Zimbabwe, it can be argued that most of the suffering which aged people are facing together with the rest of the poor people is because of changes in the economic, political and social contexts that are negatively affecting individuals and their livelihoods. Prior to the instigation of economic and political sanctions on the country in 2002, the standards of living were far better than at the present moment and in the past two

years inflation reached a record 231 million per cent. Hence for the approach to be able to address the impact of poverty there is a need to conceptualise the issues of change, clearly indicating how change in individual lives, households and at national level in politics or economic matters affect the livelihoods of the poor people. Such a criticism laid on the SLA leaves this study with a lot of unresolved questions pertaining to how the situation of aged people in Zimbabwe has deteriorated to such alarming levels. In the late 90s studies in Zimbabwe show that one could depend more on his/her occupational pension without even taking informal employment at old age. For those who were not employed at all they could make ends meet on their own without much help from the family or other relatives. The proliferation of humanitarian assistance is a clear indication that social conditions of the aged people have deteriorated at a faster rate than in the last decade. Unless addressed, the failure to capture change over time in the analysis of livelihoods renders the SLA to be an approach that is ahistoric, taking the current situation as a given, rather than identifying the events or forces that led to the existing social institutions (O'Laughlin, 2002).

5.9.4 SLA as a methodological tool or model than a theoretical approach

To add more to its failure to account for social change, SLA is been criticised within the academic discourse as a methodological tool of international development practitioners than a coherent theoretical brand that explains improved approaches to rural development. According to Small (2007), the SL approach is not formally linked to any one theory of social or economic change, grand or otherwise, relying instead on an array of current international development concepts and values, including participation, empowerment, holism and equality. As a result, although it draws together a number of themes from current international development thought, it does not integrate these ideas into a theoretically consistent whole. As indicated above, processes of social change are left undefined. This is

particularly problematic for an approach that actively seeks to use and intervene in these processes. In addition to its lack of focus on critical issues, specific conceptualization of social structure and power relations (market, class, gender and ethnicity) are noticeably missing from the SL approach (Moser et al., 2001). The issues on livelihoods are built around such concepts. Scoones (2009:12) supports this by arguing that livelihoods are structured by relations of class, caste, gender, ethnicity, religion and cultural identity. Such social relations inevitably govern the distribution of property (including land), patterns of work and divisions of labour, the distribution of income and the dynamics of consumption and accumulation.

Therefore it can be argued that, in the absence of connection to broader theories, SLA as it is presented by international development agencies can be construed as essentially micro-economic in orientation. From Wiggins's (2002) perspective, the SLA formulation of a "broad, holistic" approach to livelihoods represents a simple micro-economic equation of resources plus structure equals outcome. This presents a specific concern were Wiggins argues that the use of SLA concepts by development practitioners unfamiliar with broader theories could lead to intervention clearly in opposition to established principles. An example he gives is the importance of basic supply and demand knowledge: the implication in SLA is that identification of "successful livelihood strategies" will lead to intervention designed to proliferate these strategies, ultimately ruining them for all when the market is flooded with the resultant outputs.

The idea that SLA presents as a methodological tool used to strategise ways to overcome poverty than as a theory to explain the livelihoods of people and their approach to poverty has great implications on the overall study. The study does not seek to come up with options for the poor aged people to avert poverty but rather tries to explain how livelihood strategies are

formulated in the fight against poverty at old age. By having a critical analysis of the factors such as social change, cultural constraints, gender, class, markets and issues of power and politics the study aimed to come up with a coherent argument to explain how these factors affect construction of livelihoods and the overcoming of poverty. The integration of SLA with other constructs has merits. This can help to critically problematise the concept of “livelihood strategy” which is the way poverty can be tackled. What this study offers to the theoretical development of SLA is the conceptualization of change processes which can be addressed through further developing the concept of “livelihood strategy”. As the interface between household and context, the concept of livelihood strategy could be used to define the action taken for changes to occur. Although the term livelihood strategy is used widely in the SLA literature, it is not used consistently, referring alternately to the analysis of resource use or livelihood activities, with varying degrees of attention paid to motivation and choice. The Chambers and Conway (1992) definition implies that change occurs as a result of shocks or stresses, but does not define a change process.

5.9.5 Criticisms of the principles of SLA

According to DFID, the core principles of SLA are that it is people-centred, holistic, dynamic, sustainable, participatory, focuses on macro and micro linkages and is also the building block of partnerships between the public and private sectors. Although SLA highlights such principles various criticisms have been directed on some of the perceived arguments around the principles. The principles of SLA are problematic in the sense that if we take participation as an example, the literature shows that participation may be interpreted in very different ways (Estrella and Gaventa, 1998; Estrella, 2000; Holland and Blackburn, 1998). DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets (DFID, 2000) state that the aim is to have interventions in which beneficiaries are empowered to play a significant role in the design, monitoring and evaluation of interventions. This is the point at which there may be

significant divergence between rhetoric and reality. Institutions may not be flexible enough to cater for the required dynamism and flexibility of fully participatory interventions (Guijt and Gaventa, 1998; Guijt, 2000).

There is also an ongoing tension between the value of increasing participation and the desire for scientific rigour, and in a similar vein between the need to generate rich locally specific data and universally comparable information for policy level analysis (Gaventa, 2000; Carney, 1998; Macqueen, 2001). Questions arise concerning who decides what level of participation is acceptable. Although participation is a good factor for inclusive development, organisations need to be prepared for the pitfalls of using participatory methods in that they can be very time-consuming. In fact it is too easy to set unrealistic targets and to underestimate the need for feedback and follow-up (Guijt and Gaventa, 2000).

Of course, participation has been a fashionable development issue in recent times and the literature relating to its foundations and practices is diverse. Some commentators in Tanzania have suggested that in fact SLA is merely an extension of participatory methods (Kamuzora and Toner, 2002). It appears that what constitutes a participatory ideal actually incorporates all the core principles of SLA. Participatory methods are often characterised as a panacea for previous errors of top-down interventions. However, some critiques are emerging. Contributions by Cooke and Kothari (2001) challenge the universal rhetoric of participation, which promises empowerment and appropriate development. They point out that how participation as practised by consultants and activists can actually lead to the unjust and illegitimate use of power. One particularly interesting comparison can be made between Hildyard et al's contribution to Cooke and Kothari (2001) and Hobley (2000). Hildyard et al are very critical of the local forest management bodies in Tanzania that constitute

participation by local people, claiming that they have been hijacked by certain groups. In contrast, Hobley's (2000) report refers to the success of the same groups and how the structures described might be used as a model for participatory forest management. In view of the current study on the livelihoods of the aged people, the principle of participation cannot really be traced when putting into consideration the role played by civil society organisations. Participation entails the inclusion of the affected groups in mapping a way forward towards eradicating poverty. However from the study it is noted that there is no form of participation by the aged people because what they only received are packages of aid that come from NGOs and political parties. The distribution of food aid to aged people trapped in poverty does not show any form of participation. Rather if emancipation and development projects could be formulated with the input of the affected and their inclusion in the implementation, this can go a long way in assisting aged people attain food security and even sustainable livelihoods. Even when such organisation leave the local community, aged people can continue to cater for their needs because of the knowledge they would have gained from their participation in their own development. Therefore all these arguments surrounding the principle of participation leaves the approach as a developmental blue print that is good on paper but in real practical terms fails to implement some of its core principles.

5.9.6 Issues pertaining sustainability

The issue around sustainability has also become a talking point within the SLA. It is particularly instructive to consider the treatment of 'sustainability' in the sustainable livelihoods approach. There is little direct analysis of sustainability within the literature beyond the reiteration of Chambers' (1992) definition, so there is some need to clarify the concept in relation to the management of interventions (Neefjes, 2000). Ansell (2000) raises an interesting question concerning the distinction between livelihoods and lifestyles and the implications that this has for sustainability. 'Livelihoods' has connotations about being

focussed on basic needs, but as Ansell (2000) states people have aspirations to different lifestyles. This demonstrates a challenging point about the concept of livelihoods. The poverty-focus of sustainable livelihoods literature reflects the greater aim of global poverty reduction, but it produces an unfortunate side-effect in that it appears to suggest that only the poor have 'livelihoods', which they try to sustain over their lifetimes, whilst the non-poor have lifestyles, which can evolve and alter over the course of their lives. A more complete discussion of sustainable livelihoods, as demonstrated by Chambers and Conway (1992), does not really tackle this problem. On the other hand, Chambers and Conway's definition posits that a livelihood can be considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base. Results from the study show that it is really difficult to measure sustainability in the sense that although aged people have been able to meet basic needs, questions arises if their livelihood outcomes do not sustain them in the future. Most of the results indicated that the life span of the outcomes from the livelihood strategies is short lived and cannot really cover them in the future. Even for those that receive remittances and other external help, such intervention only address current problems rather than the future. This therefore means that the future of aged people in Zimbabwe is bleak unless concrete measures are in place to ensure sustainability at the present moment and in the near future. Considering the situation in most developed countries and a few developing countries, aged people have the assurance and guarantee that their livelihoods are catered for because of the presence of life assurances that are presented by availability of concrete pension services and grants. Therefore it can be said that although sustainability can be a core principle for SLA, its applicability in other contexts is ambiguous in the sense that some livelihood strategies and interventions either from the state or civil society do not guarantee sustainable livelihoods.

5.9.7 Methodological and practical difficulties

Adopting the SLA for poverty reduction raises some difficult methodological and practical issues. Firstly, it is believed that the goal or rationale of SLA is poverty alleviation. According to recent research, poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which cannot simply be reduced to economic deprivation. This raises the question as to how the SLA identifies the poor people. It is imperative to have an understanding of what constitutes poverty before assuming people to be in poverty. According to Krantz (2001), the poor may be identified in so many ways. One could select a geographical area where there is widespread poverty and assume that most people living there are poor by any reasonable standard and refine the selection by adding other poverty criteria such as distance to roads, ethnic minority status, etc. In a counter argument Agrawal and Gibson (2003) are of the view that poverty is rarely uniformly distributed within an area and as such communities usually do not represent such homogeneous collective social units as most development projects or programmes tend to assume. In every community some people are better off than others and even if it be so that the social or economic differences are not clear to an outsider, they do exist and the poor are living side-by side with more affluent households. Therefore simply to assume that people are poor is to miss the point; there is a need for a concerted effort to really identify who the poor before targeting interventions. DFID (2002) reports that, what constitutes poverty and who are the poor in a locality should not be predetermined but should emerge from the very process of analysing livelihoods according to the framework. To that end the whole battery of methodological tools should be applied in conjunction with the process, e.g. social analysis including participatory poverty assessments, gender analysis, stakeholder analysis, institutional analysis, etc (Krantz, 2001:28). The use of these approaches will ensure the acquisition of basic understanding of the overall economic, social,

cultural and institutional situation in a locality before the identity, characteristics, and particular circumstances of the poor can be established with any certainty.

5.9.8 Gender Aspects

Patterns of power are influenced by marked inequalities that often exist between men and women within a community. The SLA has been criticised for being less gender-sensitive. It is well known that its endeavour is to analyse the causes of poverty in rural areas and the expected procedures to alleviate it. However, women who are considered vulnerable have just been subsumed within the discourse of poor people in general. Methodological approaches such as Participatory Rural Appraisal have been advocated as ideal to conduct livelihood research, but, as Krantz (2001) argues, these have not been able to involve women to the extent necessary to get a satisfactory picture and representation of their situation. It is of great importance to ensure that gender is addressed, in principle, to make sure that women express their genuine perceptions, interests and needs in relation to specific livelihood issues in practice. Problems emanating from the SLA are that public events tend to attract only certain types of public knowledge which, by social definition, are generated by men and not by women (Mosse, 1994). Humble (1998:19) further alludes to the fact that appraisal methods often do not allow sufficient time for continuous dialogue and critical reflection with the women concerned. It is however necessary that women express their views on crucial issues freely. SLA does not address these difficulties and this put women at a disadvantage. Krantz (2001:29) continues to say that another potentially significant constraint of the SLA is that it tends to take the household as the basic unit of analysis. Thus most of the attention is on how different categories of households relate to different types of assets, to the vulnerability context, to markets, organisations, policies and legislation. In other words, the livelihood concept directs attention to the household as the decision making unit since it is at this level that various economic activities are combined in particular livelihood strategies. The risk is

that intra-household inequalities in economic control, interests, opportunities and decision making power, which often have gender as a basis, are not given sufficient attention. Thus, women might figure among the poor only if they are heads of households and not when they are vulnerable, socially and economically subordinate members of households. Therefore, it can be said, it is not sufficient to just take the household as the sole unit of analysis but that there is need for disaggregation into men and women of different age groups so that all vulnerable people can be identified.

This section has tried to present the limitations of the SLA. Although SLA has been a successful developmental approach, it has failed to address some of the critical issues that underpin the construction of livelihoods. It is evident that many questions remain unanswered about the practical complexities and contradictions of the sustainable livelihoods approach. Its failure to address the issues of social change, the definition and measurement of capital assets, issues of governance, power, politics and citizens rights has implications on the overall development process. The highly praised principles of participation and sustainability have been heavily criticised for being rhetorical concepts rather practical orientations.

5.10 Conclusion

The sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) is characterised by DFID (2000) as an improved way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities of development that will better meet the needs of the poor, both at project and policy level. The approach can be discussed on three different levels: as a set of principles, as an analytical framework, or as an overall developmental objective. Ellis (2000) has characterized it as a version of the assets-mediating processes/activities approach that is utilized in various guises by researchers, development practitioners and change agents for poverty eradication, sustainability and building

livelihoods. It recognises the need to look at the causes of poverty and how best it can be eradicated in certain contexts. SLA has been focused upon in this study as it has managed to outline the paths which rural people take in building their livelihoods. It was noted in this chapter that assets are fundamental. Access to all forms of capital present rural people with a chance to combine and use them for sustainable livelihood outcomes, that is, the combination of land and finance forms an agricultural strategy that has the potential to generate income and also to guard against food insecurity. Analysis of the vulnerability context presents the various factors that affect the outcomes of livelihoods. Institutional and organisational processes have the capacity to enhance or hinder livelihoods. Though SLA has been a success, it nevertheless has faced such criticism and calls for its review to incorporate certain aspects critical to tackling poverty.

Chapter SIX

Research Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the methodological requirements of the research. It looks at how the research was undertaken and introduces the design used to collect the data for the research. It also explores the research instruments used by the researcher in the collection of primary data, the sampling method, data collection procedure and the analysis of the collected data. In this study qualitative research was adopted and applied. The chapter also gives a brief overview of the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of qualitative research and outlines the utility of and reasons for choosing this method over other methodologies. The research follows an exploratory approach as it aims to explore the livelihood strategies or activities of old aged people in Mubaira. The reason why the researcher has chosen an explorative study is because literature in Zimbabwe has not extensively focused on what the elderly people in rural areas do to attain a living. In the absence of formal social security systems a lot of questions have gone unanswered on how the elderly are surviving in a hyper-inflationary environment and changing social networks. Therefore by exploring deeper into the issues on the ground this study has shown how the elderly in Mubaira have approached poverty in the absence of social security systems.

The use of the qualitative methodology is based on the work of Marshall and Rossmans (1999:2) who argue that qualitative research is a broad approach that seeks to study social phenomena to gain a deep understanding of the activities and perceptions of the people. The methods of data collection that were used are in-depth interviews with old aged people and people from organizations or social groups offering help to the aged people. Life narratives

were also employed as a data collection method and their utility for the study will be outlined in this chapter. For the analysis of the research results, the chapter uses the sustainable livelihood approach to gain a deeper understanding of the themes emerging from the research.

6.2 Justification for the use of an Inductive approach

The study of rural livelihoods has been a major issue in the past two decades. This is entirely because the rates of poverty have been increasing at an alarming level in most rural areas and therefore this has alerted researchers and development practitioners to try and come up with ways in which this problem can be addressed. Research on livelihoods has been carried out using different methodological approaches which include participatory methods, large household surveys, ethnographic studies and longitudinal approaches. Scoones (2002) echoes these same sentiments when arguing that a range of conventional survey tools potentially can combine with appropriate qualitative methodologies and participatory rural appraisal techniques to form a ‘hybrid’ methodological approach, with sequences of methods designed to explore the livelihoods of the poor people. According to Whitehead (2002), the subsequent divergent elaboration of academic approaches to livelihoods has depended partly on the geographical or situational context. The geography and the situational context determine the appropriate research methods to be used in the study of livelihoods.

This research on the livelihoods of the aged people in Zimbabwe cannot be isolated from the whole approach of studying livelihoods. The situational context of the study has heavily informed the choice of the methodological approach to be used in studying livelihoods. Firstly, it should be indicated that the researcher took an inductive approach in trying to understand the livelihoods of the aged people in Zimbabwe. This can be justified by a consideration of various factors. Available literature has shown some inconsistencies in

addressing the concerns and plight of the aged people in Zimbabwe. In the absence of formal social security systems to cater for aged people no attempts have been made to understand how aged people in Mubaira, one of the poorest communities in the country, survive. Available literature has rather focused more on the plight of aged people in the urban areas and how they respond to effects brought about by retirement from formal employment (Nyagura, 1994).

This study has sought to explore how the ageing are attaining a living in the absence of formal help from the state and how they have been living in the past. Unlike in other countries like South Africa and Lesotho where old age pensions have been assisting aged people make a living, household surveys by (Nyangulu, 2007; Quigley, 2003) were used to try and show how they make ends meet. The situation in Mubaira demanded a qualitative approach to explore the various strategies that aged people employ in their pursuit of better livelihoods. The main organising idea for exploring livelihoods is derived from Scoones (2000) who suggests that the options open to rural people belong to three broad clusters: firstly those of agricultural intensification, in which more output per unit area is obtained either through capital investment or using more labour, or of extensification, through putting more land under cultivation; secondly, diversification of income sources, including, but not confined to, coping strategies; and, thirdly, migration - which can be local, national or international. Exploring these options implies attention to processes and institutions as well as to households.

Whitehead (2003) furthers the argument by saying that relations, processes and institutions may also get lost because livelihood approaches imply research methodologies of considerable complexity and scale. The complexity and interrelatedness of livelihoods, their links with wider institutions and processes, together with the focus on people as agents

making decisions, albeit constrained, have revived a number of methodological issues about how rural processes are to be researched. One value of a livelihoods perspective is that it sees rural individuals and households engaging in a portfolio of activities to meet multiple objectives that secure not only immediate well-being, but also the capacity to maintain this well-being over time. Therefore this has led to a renewed interest in older qualitative approaches such as life histories, oral histories, longitudinal methods, ethnographic approaches and various approaches to case study material. These methods present a more detailed account of the livelihoods perspective. Arguably, they represent a renewed approach to exploring livelihood dynamics that can be compared and contrasted with the participatory approaches that currently dominate some of the poverty research for policy purposes being undertaken in Africa (Scoones, 2000). Therefore with such evidence on the utility of qualitative approaches to explore livelihood perspectives, the researcher saw it fit to adopt an inductive approach as opposed to a deductive one which seeks to test hypotheses and theories.

One of the important points to note in this study is that the research does not seek to test a theory or approach (SLA) but rather with the help of an available theory explores the livelihood strategies of the aged people in Mubaira. This can be supported or justified by what Pentt (2007) says in his discussion on the “Research on the Basis of Earlier Theory” where he argues that, “many of the problems and limitations of exploratory research can be avoided if the researcher can start with a model developed in earlier studies which he/she uses to understand phenomena. This model can either consist of cases (holistic model) or concepts (analytical). As indicated before in this case SLA, which is used as a model to analyse rural livelihoods, assumes this duty. Pentt (2007) further argues that the existence of a tentative model helps in selecting the logical structure of the entire research project and planning it. The model helps to decide which material has to be collected (empirical data),

from which techniques (instruments), cases or specimens and about which attributes or variables of these cases (samples of the population). This is particularly true when applied to this study because the SLA model has greatly influenced the process of constructing the instrument for the study and the analysis of the empirical data. Hence arguments by Pentt (2007) above justify the reason why the researcher used an earlier tentative approach or model in exploring the livelihoods of the aged people.

Furthermore, geographical and the situational contexts were further principal reasons for the choice of an inductive and qualitative research method. One thing that needs to be understood is that the subjects of the research are old aged people who have different capacities and literacy levels. Although Zimbabwe is one of the African countries with high literacy levels, this cannot be generalised for all the people. Due to the factors of colonisation most aged people failed to get adequate education that can enable them to read or write. The absence of proper educational structures and infrastructural development means that most aged people are illiterate and for that sake the use of quantitative methods like a survey cannot really be able to produce the desired results. Evidence from the study indicates that most aged people live alone or with their little grandchildren who cannot read or write making the filling of the questionnaire a daunting task for the aged people. The response rate from such a research will be very poor and this will end up jeopardizing the whole research process.

Another problem linked to illiteracy is that Mubaira is a rural area where most of the people live in communal areas without clearly marked streets, residential and house addresses. Rather people just stay in a village. Services such as postal services are only available in the main economic activity centre in the growth point. Usually it's not the village people who have these postal mail boxes but rather schools and other business people. Therefore to say that quantitative methods such as mailed questionnaires could be used is just a waste of time

because it will be difficult to trace them since most village people access their mails at the nearest schools to them. This usually results in most people losing their mails and as a result for this study it becomes a problem to implement such a method. Therefore given mass illiteracy and lack of proper numbering of residential addresses in Mubaira community, it seems that a qualitative approach which utilises face-to-face in-depth interviews would be most appropriate. Thus the interview gives the researcher the chance to explain not only the aims and objectives of the study properly to the respondents but also the questions they are supposed to answer. The advantage of using such a methodological approach is that it allows for flexibility. Flexibility can be achieved in the sense that the researcher can probe for more specific answers and can repeat a question when the response indicates that the respondent misunderstood. According to Bailey (2000), there is a great response rate when the researcher uses face-to-face in-depth interviews. The interview tends to have a better response rate than the use of questionnaires. Persons who are unable to read and write can still answer questions in an interview and others who are unwilling to expend the energy to write out their answers may be glad to talk.

Another paramount reason why the researcher preferred a qualitative approach to the study of rural livelihoods of the aged is that, there was need to understand how the process of social change has affected aged people in their attainment of livelihoods. Old aged people have gone through a series of stages in life. Change is evidenced from a shift in lifestyle from being independent to being dependent on other people. In the livelihoods perspective, change is discussed under what is termed as 'livelihood trajectory'. According to Bagchi (1998) 'Trajectory' in the livelihoods perspective is taken to mean a path through time. Describing and explaining the direction and pattern of this path for individuals and groups of people was an explicit research aim. The term 'livelihood trajectory' refers to the consequences of the changing ways in which individuals construct a livelihood over time. So the life history (an

individual's own 'story') becomes a central concept and component of the research methodology of this study. Those larger scale and longer term changes affecting people's livelihoods (e.g. population growth, economic and political factors, environmental changes, etc.) constitute the conditions under which livelihoods are constructed. Government policies may affect these indirectly or directly; they too have to be considered, so that changing livelihoods can be understood in context. The major research implication here is that historical data at the level of the individual, household and local community are vital, but must be linked to long-term change and the broader context, of which government policy is a part. Therefore the ability of such a qualitative instrument to extract information on social change and how it affects the aged people cements the reason why the researcher opted for an inductive approach to the study and understanding of rural livelihoods of the aged people.

This study has followed steps in which a pure inductive approach has been applied in the understanding of rural livelihoods. Various scholars have used the same approach in the field of livelihoods and poverty. Whitehead (2002) looked at changes and similarities in the livelihood strategies of farm families in the Bawku District in north-eastern Ghana over a period of approximately fifteen years. The case studies were derived from a longitudinal comparison of household data collected in two distinct periods of anthropological fieldwork in 1975 and 1989. Whitehead (2002) further argues that in the period of fieldwork he collected sustained oral history accounts of livelihoods or life histories that captured these changes from an actor perspective. The methodology derived from the restudy format 1989 fieldwork, in which he traced individual households from 1975. The effectiveness of this method depended on the intrinsic quality and scope of the original data, as well as the efficiency of the tracing. Using this approach together with the qualitative interviews and observational material characteristic of anthropological fieldwork the study was able to

explore changes in livelihood strategies. Its objective was to examine emerging socio-economic differentiation in a kinship-based society that had conventionally been described as egalitarian because of its acephalous indigenous political organisation. Therefore approach by Whitehead (2002) supports the use of a pure qualitative approach in the understanding of rural livelihoods.

In a similar case, Makamu (2008) undertook a study to analyse the livelihoods of the Muyexe community located along the Kruger National Park in the Limpopo Province. The study was aimed at investigating the issues and dynamics inherent in this particular area. This investigation attempted to determine the extent of the benefits of the interventions by SANParks on the livelihoods of this mentioned community. The social impact assessment of these conservation strategies were analysed in view of how the community perceived them, and were based on the variables of human, social, financial and natural capital. Of importance, the study was mainly of a qualitative research design nature whose findings were informed by a series of in-depth focus group discussions, participant observation, structured and semi-structured interviews. The main findings of this study revealed that, to a larger extent, a preservationist approach, in trying to protect flora and fauna, invariably leads to conflict and a general impoverishment of the community. A participatory conservation strategy to uplift the livelihoods of the affected community was recommended as a sustainable approach to both meet the environmental and human developmental needs. Therefore the implication of this study is that it adequately supports the use of a pure qualitative approach in understanding rural livelihoods of the aged without combining with other quantitative approaches.

Moreover, in another study on livelihoods, Kgatshe (2008) explored the Livelihood activities in female-headed households of Letlhakane village. In this study's attempt to examine how these activities are organised, maintained and diversified, it analysed the challenges in carrying out the activities and the possible solutions to these challenges at the household level. The study concerned itself with the views of female heads on the livelihood activities done in their households. For this study a qualitative methodology was used to gather information on the livelihood activities and composition of households and the contribution of the members to the survival of the household. In-depth, follow-up interviews were used as the research instruments. The informants of the study were female heads from female-headed households. This was supplemented by observation by the researcher on the activities and the physical surroundings of the village. The general findings from the study indicated that, first, female-headed households in Letlhakane village are a diverse group in terms of the activities they embark on and the composition of their households. They share a common aspect which is that their livelihood activities are not sufficient for the survival of their households. There were few or no activities for household survival, even for those households that have been female-headed for a long period of time. As compared to single household heads, female heads with partners were better off when judged by overall returns from the activities. The activities in the households studied were keeping goats, fowls and domestic animals such as dogs and subsistence agriculture in the form of growing maize, melons, cabbages, spinach, beans and fruit gardens.

From the above examples the researcher can therefore argue that a pure qualitative approach derived from inductive reasoning was the right one for this study as qualitative approaches in other earlier studies proved worthy in understanding livelihoods. In other words, it can be argued that this study is in line with other approaches that have utilised an inductive approach to understand and explain rural livelihoods. The geographical context of the study coupled

with the illiteracy of the population of the study enormously contributed to the choice of an inductive approach. The ability to use life history narratives which are qualitative in nature allowed the researcher to trace the process of change in the lives of the aged people, an aspect that cannot be achieved if deductive methods such as applying surveys were used.

6.3 Approach to Livelihoods Research

Livelihood research is a core and substantive area of research that has developed its own research lens to help in data collection. The study utilizes a composite of known livelihood research approaches to gather data in such a way that the intrinsic issues in livelihoods strategies of rural people are captured in a correct and representative manner. Livelihoods research is best for the understanding of rural poverty. It seeks to reveal the actual rather than hypothesized activity portfolios of rural people and how these are changing over time. This helps in the formulation of support or policies that facilitates and strengthens emerging rather than declining patterns of activity. Ellis (2000) argues that research on livelihoods is relevant for poverty reduction purposes in a particular location and for knowing how poor people's livelihood strategies differ from those of the better off.

According to Murray (2002:490), there are two key questions in livelihood research relating to how it should be done and why it should be done. To address the first question Murray (2002:490) says that methods may be broadly grouped into two approaches; (1) those that look around at the moment of time (circumspective approach) and those that seek to reconstruct change over time (the retrospective approach). All livelihood research incorporates both approaches and recent livelihoods research has been mainly directed to more effective policy making for the future. The emphasis on the future therefore reveals the (prospective approach).

From the above we can see that livelihood research is based upon three approaches respectively defined as the circumspective, the retrospective and the prospective approach. Murray (2002:492) posits that the circumspective (looking around) approach concentrates on the empirical investigation of combinations of modes of livelihood at moment of time, with the present being typically construed as embracing 6 months or one year prior to the moment of investigation. Its goal is to open up questions about the relationship between different socio-economic activities and their meanings. The retrospective (looking back) approach involves pushing to the limits changes that have taken place over a much longer timescale. Murray (2002:491) contends that central to its effective application is serious pursuit of longitudinal comparison. The principal and most effective method for achieving this is the use of panel studies or repeated cross-sectional studies of the same population over time. Also, longitudinal comparison maybe achieved in a loose (or primitive) sense by reconstructing significant change through the approximately complementary use of different surveys and the use of intersecting life-histories or narratives. The paramount objective of the retrospective approach is the analysis of households or family trajectories of accumulation or impoverishment over time and particular matrices of vulnerability.

Livelihood trajectory patterns trace change over time and this helps to understand the current or present livelihood status. Linking with the life course approach that seeks to understand social change in the life of a person the retrospective approach gives the real picture of how history shapes our present and future. Old aged people have passed through different life stages that have seen them accumulate ideas, assets and skills that can help them make a living. By studying their livelihood patterns using the retrospective approach comparisons can be made about their past strategies and their current livelihood strategies. Thus the retrospective approach is very important in the study of aged people's livelihoods.

The prospective (look forward) approach concentrates on the distillation of past experiences for future policy. It places much emphasis on project monitoring and evaluation, on analyzing the success or failures of past policies, on influencing official and other mind-sets, and on specific practical interventions. Murray (2002) posits that its key objectives in the field of livelihoods research might be described as the building of alternative conceptual frameworks for facilitating opportunities to improve livelihoods and more effective planning and coordination across sectoral boundaries such as those of conventional economic analysis (agriculture, industry, formal, informal) or government departments and nominally discrete responsibilities. This approach is therefore of course identified by development practitioners as the most important of the three approaches. One of the fundamental objectives of this study is to give practical policy recommendations to prospective policy formulators on how best they may address the livelihood needs of aged people in Mubaira and also how best to minimise old age poverty. Therefore the prospective approach also plays an important role in this study and has been adopted to act as a tool towards helping aged people make better livelihoods.

In this study both the circumspective retrospective and prospective approaches were used to gain a deeper understanding of the current livelihoods of the aged people in Mubaira, the changes that have taken place in their lives and how this change has shaped their present and also determine what can be done by them and other social partners to ensure that their needs are met. I agree with Murray's (2002) argument that the combination of these approaches is necessary to achieve a better understanding of changing livelihoods over time. Each of these approaches informed the data collecting instruments as well as the manner in which the research was conducted.

Of importance in the study of livelihoods is that credible research should involve serious empirical investigation over a sufficiently long-time period to qualify as longitudinal, in a strict sense that would probably discover livelihood trajectories that have proved sustainable over that time period for certain individuals or households. These three approaches to livelihoods research form the foundation and core of the study and provide the reference point for the content and nature of the methodology and the data which was sought and gathered. They were not seen as separate, but as a composite approach forming a continuum of the past, present and into the future.

6.4 Research design

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:74), a research design is a plan or a blue print for the conduct of the research. In this study the researcher used a quasi -phenomenological approach relying heavily on in-depth interviews and life history narratives to explore the livelihoods strategies or activities of the aged in Mubaira.

6.3.1 Quasi-Phenomenological research design

In order to understand and to interpret the livelihood strategies or lived experiences of the aged in Mubaira community the researcher made use of a quasi- phenomenological research design. Lester (1999) argues that phenomenological research is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, thus bracketing taken-for granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving. Groenewald (2004) presents phenomenology as the science of pure phenomena that is meant to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or to refrain from any pre-given framework and to remain true to the facts. Welman and Kruger (1999:198) also argue that phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved. In this study it is the elderly who

are the people concerned and faced by a situation of poverty that can be minimised or eradicated by their engagement in different livelihood activities. Livelihoods are based on coping, adapting and resilience to risks and shocks. Lived experiences in old age are traced through the life course which presents a detailed picture of what they did before and what they are currently doing to mitigate the effects brought about by old age poverty in the absence of a social security system.

In this study a quasi- phenomenological research design is utilised to assist in the understanding of the livelihood activities because it reveals the lived experiences of the people (Greene, 1997). Quasi-phenomenological studies may be equated to what Weber calls the *verstehen* approach, a research method in which the researcher puts him/herself in the shoes of the actor to understand actions or behaviour rather than to explain them. Laster (1999) argues that a variety of methods can be used in phenomenologically-based research including interviews, conversations, life narratives or oral history, participant observation, action research, focus meetings and analysis of personal texts. The role of the phenomenologist is to view human behaviour as a product of how people interpret their world. His/her main concern is to capture this process and interpretation to grasp the meanings of a person's behaviour. To understand and interpret the behaviour of the subjects from their perspective the phenomenologist becomes more than just a participant and deliberately attempts to put him/her self in the shoes of the people under study.

Having described these methods it can be said that the phenomenological theme is central in qualitative research, effective for bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives and in so doing, challenging structural or narrative assumptions (Laster, 1999).

6.5 Qualitative Research

The roots of qualitative research lie in phenomenological foundations which view human behavior as a product of how people interpret their world. According to Babbie et al (2001), qualitative research is a broad methodological approach to the study of social action. The term is used to refer to a collection of methods and techniques which share a certain set of principles or logic. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:22) say qualitative research methods can be described as naturalistic, anthropological and ethnographic 'inquiries of knowledge. The term naturalism reflects a concern with the normal course of events and how a qualitative researcher is as non-intrusive as possible in the study.

The point of departure in field research is to take an insider perspective on social action. The overall objective is to understand social actions as they occur, to describe and give them meaning. Qualitative research enables the researcher to gain a broader understanding of the elderly people's views and feelings about old age and how they are coping to make a living and to combat old age poverty. The chief characteristic of qualitative research is that it tries to get to the heart or nucleus of an issue to understand it (Mouton& Marais, 1990:175). It is also based on the assumption that the researcher can obtain extensive empirical in-depth data from ordinary conversations with the subjects (Gubrium & Sanka, 1994:7).

A chief characteristic of qualitative research is that it takes an inductive approach to the study. Rather than to begin with an existing theory or hypothesis, the qualitative researcher begins with immersion into the natural setting, describing events as they occur and slowly but surely building second-order constructs, a hypothesis and ultimately a theory that will make sense of the observations (Babbie & Mouton,2001). The emphasis of qualitative research is to develop and build inductively based new interpretations and theories in terms of first order

descriptions of events rather than to approach the social actors with deductively derived research hypothesis. Since this study is purely qualitative in nature it follows an inductive approach as it tries to explore the livelihoods of the poor in the Mubaira community. Rather than being based on assumptions and guesses, it seeks to explicitly outline the lived livelihood experiences of the aged by approaching them in their social setting in a natural way.

6.6. Data collection Instruments

The following were the data collection instruments that were use to collect empirical data in Mubaira.

6.6.1 In-Depth Interviews

Qualitative in-depth interviews and life histories were used to gather information pertaining to the livelihoods of the elderly. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001: 289), in-depth interviews are basic individual interviews frequently used for data gathering within the qualitative approach. What makes them unique and different from other types of interviews is that they are open so as to allow the subject of the study to speak for him/ herself, rather than to provide the respondent with a battery of predetermined hypothesis-based questions. By utilizing in-depth interviews in the study the researcher was able to give the aged people a chance to clearly describe their experiences as aged people and what they are doing to attain a living. As noted before, the ageing process is beset with many challenges, such as socio-economic isolation, health problems and loneliness. The researcher was able to explore and gain in-depth understanding of how the process of social change had affected aged people and how they were responding (coping) to the changes in their life.

According to De Vos (2000), the purpose of in-depth interviews is not to get answers to questions nor to test hypotheses or to evaluate in the usual sense of the term. But their main purpose is to elicit the underlying meaning of processes, behaviors and actions of the subjects. Such interviews have been the tools used to answer the research questions of this study by outlining the livelihood strategies of the aged, the challenges they face in their pursuit of livelihoods and also the various people, groups or organizations that are working with aged people in the Mubaira community. The advantage of in-depth interviews in this study was that it allowed the capturing of huge amounts of in-depth data.

6.6.2 Life Histories

Although face to face in-depth interviews were successful in exploring the livelihood experiences of the aged people in Mubaira, they did not sufficiently account for the social change which aged people have gone through. The life course approach, takes it that events in early life have a bearing on later life and so gain an understanding of the history of aged, which is imperative. The researcher made use of life histories in order to understand how past experiences have shaped and informed their current livelihood status. According to Plumer (1983), a life history is a full length account of one person's life in his or her own words. Shaw (1980) argues that the literature provide insights into the complexity and variety of individual lives and social relationships and enables us to identify patterns and issues of greater generality. The study made use of life histories as they offer thick descriptions of the social actions of individuals. As indicated before, the study was based upon livelihood research approaches such as the circumspective, the retrospective and the prospective. The retrospective approach (looking back) seeks to trace the path of social change or household trajectories. Murray (2002:495) indicates that life histories form part of the tools meant to trace the history of accumulation, vulnerability, poverty alleviation mechanisms because it uses a looking back approach, that is, past events. In their advanced years, elderly people

have a history to tell that shaped or defined their current status. For some, the success or the failure they are experiencing is due to events that happened in the past. For example successful livelihoods have been built upon proper accumulation of assets and finances during the employment period.

Important for this study is the capacity of life histories to trace social change. According to Plumer (1983), it is the strength of the life history method that it allows the researcher to move continuously between the changing biography of an individual subject and the social history of the same subject. By giving accounts of their life histories, aged people were able to outline how events in their earlier life contributed to their current livelihood status and also how they have gone through change both biologically and with social context. In livelihood research, the livelihood trajectory is used to analyze the pathways of change in livelihood patterns over time. According to Murray (2002: 496), a trajectory is a path through time and refers to the consequences of the changing ways in which individuals construct livelihoods over time. Livelihoods are not constructed overnight but rather through time and space.

The idea behind using life histories as a tool for data collection gains support from Murray (2002: 496) who says individual life histories assume a significant place in methodologies used to achieve a better understanding of livelihood trajectories. It is true that household surveys or in-depth interviews can be used to study livelihoods, but life histories in livelihood research give background information on how past experiences have contributed to present or current livelihood status. Moreover, an exploration of livelihood trajectories generally provides insights into the changing welfare and capabilities of individuals and groups. Livelihood analysis starts from daily life experiences (circumspective) but moves on to explore not only how people make history but also the constraints (stresses and shocks) that

limit their functioning and capabilities. Shaw (1980) observes that life histories allow us to understand socio-economic changes in a more qualitative and in-depth manner through an appreciation of the relationships in which the elderly gained their livelihoods.

6.7 Unit of Analysis

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), the unit of analysis refers to the what of the study, what object, phenomenon, entity, process or event the researcher is interested in investigating. For this study the unit of analysis was the individual old aged person who engages in different livelihood strategies to ensure survival. Research on livelihoods is guided by the sustainable livelihoods framework and according Scoones (2000:6) this framework can be applied to a range of different scales – from individual, to household, to household cluster, to extended kin grouping, to village, region or even nation, with sustainable livelihood outcomes assessed at different levels. This assertion by Scoones (2000) justifies my selection of the aged people as the units of analysis. One could argue for the use of old aged households as the units of analysis but it should be noted that an analysis along that line tends to gloss over aspects such as gender, thus missing some important aspects of activities in our case, older women. Households analysis usually focuses on men, rather than women and this is why this study is as much concerned with the activities of elderly men as of elderly women in the Mubaira community.

6.8 Population and sampling

Babbie and Mouton (2001:175) define a population as that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected. The population of the study is comprised of the elderly in Mubaira aged 60 years or more. This is the nationally accepted age for one to be called an 'elderly' person in Zimbabwe. The study utilized purposive sampling to select of the respondents. De Vos (2000) presents purposive sampling as a valuable kind of sampling used

in exploratory research. Its use and application is based on the judgment of the researcher and cases allows for selection with a specific purpose in mind. The reason for the use of a non-probability sample was to generate 'rich and thick' descriptive data. Non-probability sampling gives the best chance to get 'rich' qualitative data (Babbie, 2007). Interviews with selected elderly people were employed to capture the narrative views of the respondents. Therefore the researcher sought to engage with elderly people aged 60 and above (both men and women).

Respondents were selected according to the following criteria:

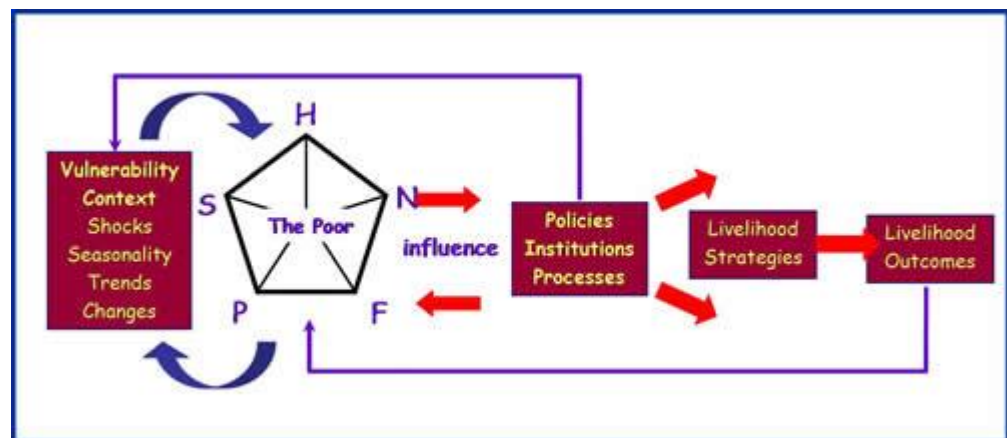
- Willing participation;
- Informed consent;
- Old aged people from the age of 60 for both men and women
- Self expression in any language preferred (especially their vernacular language, Shona).

Key informants such as local traditional leaders helped in the identification of aged people in Mubaira. The researcher started by studying one elderly who was interested in the problem, and then continued studying a gradually growing number of elderly people until it became apparent that he has exhausted the problem. The researcher stopped when the data reached a "saturated" state since new items or cases no longer revealed new interesting information pertaining the livelihoods of the aged. At the end of the study the researcher had a total of 15 elderly people for in-depth interviews and 10 for life histories. From this sample the researcher was able to gain a thick description of the livelihoods of the aged in Mubaira. Two organizations gave evidence of their support of aged people in building livelihoods. From the data generated from interviews with the aged people and the representatives of support organizations, the researcher was able to address the research questions informing this study.

6.9 Qualitative Data Analysis

Proceedings in the field were all tape recorded with consent from the respondents. The raw data was transcribed into texts for later analysis to trace emerging themes. Through qualitative data analysis the researcher was able to give meaning to the data gathered in the study. Notable is that in the analysis of data the researcher made use of the sustainable livelihoods model to trace the emerging themes. The framework which was developed by DFID for analyzing livelihoods in rural areas is ideal for the analysis socio-economic data and it always points the data to the livelihoods issues the study sought to explore. Thus the data was analyzed in terms of; the assets of the people, the livelihood strategies the vulnerability context and the outcomes the aged people of Mubaira have experienced. The following diagram outlines the Sustainable livelihoods model.

Figure 6.1: Sustainable livelihoods model: Adapted from Scoones (2000)



6.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the methodological design used in the study. The study follows an inductive approach in exploring the livelihoods strategies of the aged people in Mubaira Community. The study utilised the circumspective approach that seeks to study

current events, the retrospective approach that seeks to trace the processes of social change or trajectory paths and the prospective approach that gives recommendation for policy formulation and also for future research on livelihoods of the elderly. In-depth interviews were used which to probe for information as to current experiences of the elderly in Mubaira. Life histories were utilized to trace the past experiences of the elderly and to see how these have shaped their current livelihood status. By utilizing the SLA the researcher was able to address the questions informing this study. In-depth interview questions centered on the assets accessed by the aged, the activities they engage in and the challenges they face as defined according to under the vulnerability context of the SLA. The framework was used to analyze the themes emerging from the study. Having discussed how the study was carried out the following chapter presents the major findings. It discusses how access to natural capital assets has helped elderly people in Mubaira to make a living.

Chapter Seven

The contribution of arable land strategies, natural resources and animal husbandry to rural livelihoods in Mubaira

7. 1 Introduction

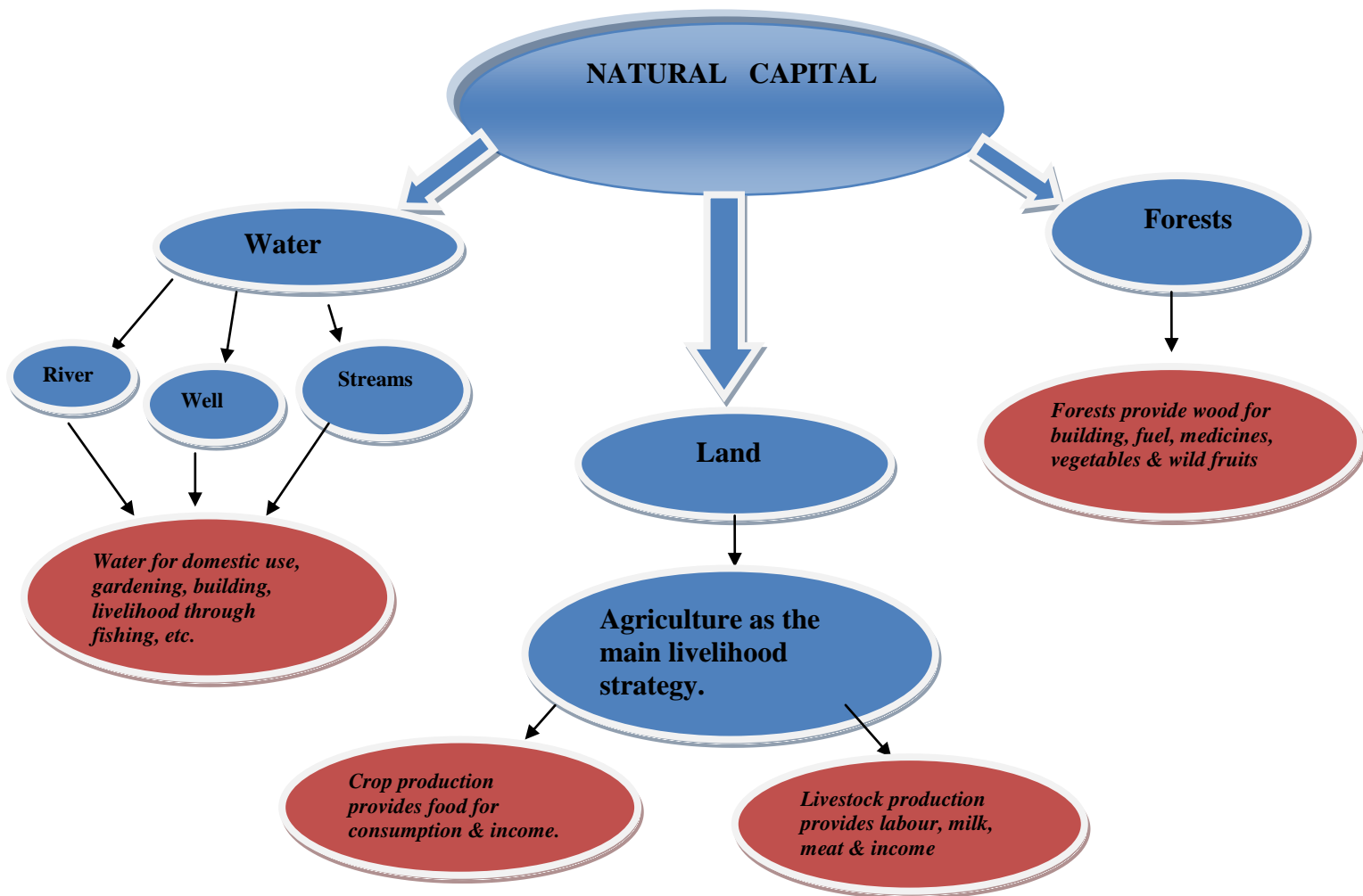
“We have an abundance of natural resources in our community. Water, forest and land are man’s primary needs. Without these, life is not possible” (In-depth interview no 2, June 2010)

A large number of rural households are still dependent on natural resources for a range of basic living requirements (Shackleton et al, 2000). This chapter shows from the in-depth and life history interviews how natural resources have contributed to the livelihoods of the aged people. Using the SLA, the focus of this chapter is on the main livelihood activities employed by the aged in Mubaira community and on strategies used in the process of engaging in agricultural activities. The insights of the SLA, the continuity and activity theories which point towards sustained continued livelihood activities by the aged go a long way towards providing food security and income security in rural communities such as Mubaira. This chapter outlines the main livelihood strategies which aged people in Mubaira community rely on to make a living. Using in-depth interviews and life history narratives, the study indicates that about 90% of the interviewed aged people in Mubaira rely on agriculture as their main livelihood strategy and it is the land cultivation or livestock farming that provides a livelihood to them. Natural capital assets, like water sources and forests have been beneficial to the aged in Mubaira as they get a living from them.

Scoones (1998) indicates that agriculture is the mainstay of rural communities as people take advantage of the free availability of natural resources to make a living. Chambers and Conway (1992) state that, assets are the initial elements in the construction of livelihoods and this chapter will show how natural capital assets have been utilised to make a living for the

aged people. Importantly, a wide range of the resources that people have and access to the process of composing a livelihood is fundamental to an understanding of sustainable rural livelihoods. Derivation of livelihoods from access to natural capital assets in Mubaira by the aged people may be summarized by the following livelihood tree model:

Fig 7.1 Livelihood Tree in Mubaira



7.2 Natural Resource-Based Livelihood Activities/Strategies

Natural resources around the villages in Mubaira are used for livelihood purposes in so many different ways. Rural areas are endowed with plenty of natural resources, also called natural capital. Whereas it is financial capital that dominates in the construction of livelihoods in urban areas, it is natural resources that set the platform for living in the rural areas. According to Lent and Hebinck (2007:133), natural resources in the rural context are common property,

easily accessible to rural dwellers. The study revealed that in every village in Mubaira the elderly depend on natural resources for many purposes. Across the villages, the most accessed and utilised resources include land for agricultural purposes, forests for firewood and fencing, wild fruits, herbs or medicinal plants, wood for utility items, grazing for livestock, thatching, clay and sand, water for domestic use and for gardening. It is important to note that access to natural resources is based upon several factors, including institutional controls, population densities, cultural preferences and personal choices. The results from the study indicate that it is mostly the extremely poor elderly who rely on the natural resources as they cannot accumulate other essential assets needed for livelihood construction. One aged person related her ordeal;

“Besides land I don’t have anything that I have to sustain myself so I only depend on natural rainfall for crop farming”. (In-depth interview no 3, June 2010)

While some aged people could build their livelihoods around a diverse pool of resources others had to rely on natural resources such as land, bio-air and rainfall in order to pursue agricultural production. Chambers (1995) said natural resources are assets in the sustainable livelihoods approach and can be utilised for the construction of rural livelihoods since they are common property accessible to rural people. It is of vital importance to explain in detail how these resources benefit aged people in Mubaira and also to assess their utility in the construction of better sustainable livelihoods for aged people. Table 7.1 gives an overview of the natural resources/capital utilised by aged people in different villages in Mubaira community.

Table 7.1: Natural Resources in Mubaira

Natural Resource	Frequency of Use between Sexes	
	Males	Females
Land(for agricultural purposes)	High	Moderate
Water from (rainfall, wells, boreholes, streams)	High	High
Vegetation(for consumption, herbs, medicinal purposes)	Moderate	High
Forests,for firewood, building material, fencing purposes	High	High
Veld grass for roof thatching,	High	Low
Soil (especially clay for pottery)	Low	High
Edible fruits	Low	Low
Weaving reeds	Low	High
Wild animals	Low	Low
Insects for food	Low	Low

The above table gives an overview of natural resources as used in Mubaira community by aged people. The availability of such resources has seen aged people in Mubaira community transforming raw materials into different products to enhance their living. Each and every asset or natural resource has a benefit for the aged people in Mubaira. Noteworthy is the fact that the utilization of natural resources is gender based because asset use is associated with a particular sex and the frequency of use by either sex differs dramatically. Ellis (2000:139) posits that gender is a critical, integral and inseparable part of rural livelihoods. However, some natural resources were accessed equally by males and females for their livelihoods, for example, land. Ellis (2000:32) argues that natural capital is enhanced, or its productivity capacity is seen, when it is brought under human control and by the application of different skills and strategies in order to bring about outcomes that improve the livelihoods of rural people. The following section will try to assess the value of natural capital in the betterment

of the living conditions of aged people from Mubaira. Both old men and women revealed that they depend mainly on natural resources for their livelihoods and it is therefore necessary to understand why and to what extent this has been so.

7.3 Direct-use value of natural resources for old aged rural households in Mubaira

Natural resources are found in the form of land, forests and water bodies such as rivers, wells and streams. The study has found that old aged people in Mubaira have been enjoying free access to these natural capital assets and that they have been very crucial to the building of their livelihoods. These resources have been utilized to ensure household economic and social security. The following sections clearly show how each of the natural capital assets has been helpful in the construction of the livelihoods of the elderly people in Mubaira.

7.3.1 Forests

According to Bradley and Dewees (1993:13), trees play many roles in the lives of rural people with low incomes in Zimbabwe and in other African countries. This was certainly confirmed by the outcomes of this study. The aged people in Mubaira do make use of forests in the construction of their livelihoods. Forests provide cooking fuel, timber for construction, materials for tools and household items, wild fruits, vegetables and medicines. Traditionally in most African societies, it is believed that women do the cooking. In the absence of electricity in the rural areas, firewood alone will meet their need for cooking fuel since other resources such as coal, solar energy and other fossil fuels are difficult to access. Women therefore take it upon themselves to gather firewood for household purposes. Old aged women in Mubaira indicated that they have been dependent on firewood as a source of energy for a very long time as this was the only accessible resource for the purpose.

“I have to gather firewood in the nearest bush so that I will be able to cook and since I live alone I have to do it regularly as it is the only available source of energy to me’.” (In-depth interview no 14, June 2010)

Firewood, then, has ensured that the elderly can prepare their food for consumption since they cannot access other forms of energy. Unpublished research in urban centers reveals that urban dwellers have also been relying on firewood as their cooking fuel since much of the time electricity is not available in these areas. Although they make use of firewood they get it at a higher price than in the rural areas where it is freely accessible. Foley (1986:14) argues that wood from the forests has two broad purposes: fuel and construction. In Zimbabwe as in other African countries, firewood for day-to-day use accounts for the greater part of a household's annual consumption of fuel and also for the construction of different buildings. Most of the rural dwellers rely on this source of energy as infrastructural developments such as electricity power stations have bypassed them. Wood is also used for the building and repair of wooden structures at the homestead and in gardens and fields. Houses, animal pens, fences, furniture, agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, musical instruments and other implements all are constructed of wood. Old age males in Mubaira have excelled in making products useful to them and their households using wood. Due to the availability of wood, the elderly have been able to build houses for themselves and kraals for their livestock. In most rural societies the building materials differ from those used in urban areas, such as bricks and steel bars. In rural areas people rely on clay, wooden poles and grass (for thatching). By ready access to forests the aged people have managed to provide safe living quarters to stay and support their livelihoods. One of the fundamental needs of life is to have shelter. Maslow's hierarchy of needs puts shelter among the lower needs that must be met in order to satisfy higher needs. Although the elderly have been able to barely meet these needs through their access to natural resources such as wood, grass and clay, they however feel a sense of security and safety, knowing they have somewhere to live. Thus, through the building of physical structures such as houses, kraals and traditional silos for maize storage one can see the utility of forests as sources of livelihood for the aged in Mubaira. Without the forests

these people might be living in poor shelter made of card boxes and plastics. Apart from being sources of cooking fuel and building material forests have also provided sources of income for the aged. The availability of natural capital in the form of forests and straw grass has been advantageous to old aged men who have developed income earning activities based on these assets. Rural housing is usually built of wood and straw grass for which there is a high demand. Some of the aged in Mubaira have been making a living by building such houses for local people. One of the elderly people indicated that by being involved in such activities he has a reputation of excellence in building traditional houses. The skill and art of building such houses has been passed from generation to generation. Building is not only limited to houses but also includes the construction of accommodation for domestic animals such as cattle, goats and chicken. Although very few aged people have eked out a living through building kraals for cattle and fowl runs for poultry projects, one aged person indicated that through engagement in such activities he has been able to take care of his sick wife and grandchildren. The study noted that this kind of activity was carried out by the poorest people for their survival. One male respondent indicated the following;

“My life has been centered on building kraals and houses for people in this community and this has helped me so much to educate my grandchildren and also get food to eat”. (Life Narrative no 4, June 2010)

Currently Zimbabwe is in a serious financial crisis that has forced the country to cut power supplies to both urban and rural people or organisations and institutions who must resort to the use of firewood as an alternative source of energy. The abundance and free access to resources has seen aged people taking advantage of this to make a living by firewood sales both at the Mubaira growth point where people used to rely on electricity and also in small towns close to Mubaira. Most of the sales are to the new farmers who require firewood for curing and drying their tobacco plants and the baking of bricks. Public institutions such as boarding schools and hospitals have seen old aged people supplying firewood for energy as

they battle to try and avoid the exorbitant electricity prices and power cuts. One age person said that:

“I still feel very strong and for that sake I have a contract to supply a cart of six loads of firewood after every fortnight at Rio Tinto High School as it provide catering services for its pupils” (In-depth interview No 6, June 2010)

This shows how important firewood is to the elderly people as it lets them generate income. Firewood has many uses even in the brewing of beer, and on special occasions, such as funerals, fires are kept alight for long periods for a large number of guests. Forests as sources of livelihood have added to household incomes as aged people sell firewood derived from them. Table 7.2 gives a summary of the uses of forests/ wood in Mubaira.

Table 7.2: Wood Uses by aged people in Mubaira

Domestic Uses	Construction	Income
Cooking and heating	House roof	Sales to individuals especially urban people
Funerals	House doors	Sales to Schools
Spiritual ceremonies	Granaries	Sales to Hospitals
Beer Brewing	Grain racks	
	Chicken coops	
	Homestead Fencing	

Given these uses of firewood, it is clear that forests are one of the most important assets for the aged people in Mubaira as they have achieved much by their use. The elderly in Mubaira have built their livelihoods and their households by the full use of this natural capital asset to their benefit. Different water sources too have helped the elderly in maintaining livelihoods.

7.3.2 Water

Availability of water is important to our day to day living. Mubaira community has many water sources – rivers and streams, wells and boreholes. It also receives, in normal years, rainfall adequate to replenish water resources, and to meet the needs of the people in the pursuit of their livelihoods. Water as a natural resource serves so many purposes that include domestic (drinking, cooking, washing and bathing) agricultural purposes and building. The main economic center, Mubaira, is a growth point where piped and tapped water is available although the majority of poor people who live in the villages get water from streams, wells, river, rainfall water and boreholes for those who have money to drill them. Since the majority of the aged rely on agriculture for their livelihoods they depend on rainfall. Rainfall patterns in Mhondoro Mubaira follow a steady sequence and as elsewhere in the country the rainy season is from late October to April. This allows farmers to plant crops such as maize, groundnuts, sorghum, millet, sunflowers, sugar and soya beans. With dwindling economic opportunities, a decrease in income leaves the aged people with agriculture as the main source of livelihood. However, agriculturalists argue that without proper rainfall it is difficult for farmers to enjoy the benefits of this activity. Lack of infrastructural development in the area means local farmers do not irrigate to substitute for low rainfall. The availability of steady rainfall patterns in Mubaira allows the aged to plough their land and keep their households from food insecurity. Table 7.3 shows rainfall patterns of the agricultural regions in Zimbabwe, Mubaira falls under region three.

Table 7.3: Agro-ecological zones of Zimbabwe and the recommended farming systems in each zone (Vincent and Thomas, 2006).

Natural Region	Area (km ²)	Rainfall (mm yr ⁻¹)	Farming system
I	7 000	>1 000	Specialized and diversified farming
II	58 600	750 – 1 000	Intensive farming
III	72 900	650 - 800	Semi-intensive farming
IV	147 800	450 - 650	Semi-extensive farming
V	104 400	<450	Extensive farming

Table 7.3 shows rainfall between 650-800mm per season for the areas of Mubaira, which is enough to enable the rural dwellers to practice farming as a form of livelihood. Given the adequate supply of rain water in Mubaira community it is important to examine how the aged have been utilising water to earn a livelihood.

7.3.3 Inland Waters and their Utilities

Inland waters play a crucial role in rural livelihoods. According to McKenny and Tola (2002:243), inland waters include all surface and underground water not associated with the sea (thus estuaries and coastal lagoons are excluded). These resources may be permanent or temporary and include rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wetlands, inundated forest, flooded rice fields, irrigation canals, floodplains and aquifers. The elderly in Mubaira indicate that the availability of water bodies ensures a constant supply of the earth's most precious natural resource. Mubaira community is endowed with many sources of water near the homesteads of the aged including the main river, the Nyangwene that serves many purposes for the rural dwellers. Each of these water sources has a significant role in the building of livelihoods of the elderly.

7.3.4 River

Nyangwene River has contributed enormously to the livelihoods of aged people in the Mubaira community. Inland waters play a critical role in rural livelihoods by supporting the

dwellers with some of the very productive freshwater fisheries and providing sources of drinking water for humans and livestock. Not every elderly person owns a personal borehole or well for water use, instead they rely on the river. Unlike in urban areas where people access treated water from dams, rural people just access water directly from the river and do treatment on their own. The river has been a source of livelihood for the aged as they report that they get fish for consumption and receive income from the sale of fish. Although the number of aged people relying on fishing is small (30%), the few who do rely heavily on it for their living have benefited so much. Fishing is both for own consumption and selling to other local people who do not fish. Locals in Mubaira have been buying fish from the elderly as the price of fish is less than that of other meat products in and around the growth point. One aged person reported as follows;

“I learnt this practice when I was so young and over the years I have relied on it as a livelihood source. Although fishing is a seasonal practice, it has helped us get little cash as local people prefer buying fish than going to the butcheries to buy expensive meat. In times of droughts we have suffered so much as breeding of fish depends on the availability of much water in the river”. (Life history no 4, June, 2010)

Fishing has been an important strategy that has been employed by the elderly and many of them indicated that they have been practicing it for many years as a source of livelihood. Excerpts from in-depth interviews reveal some of the benefits of fishery in the Nyangwene River:

- Fisheries provide to the aged people with access to an income generating activity with very little capital investment
- Fisheries offer a diversification opportunity for the aged people's livelihoods in the event of agricultural failure and protects them against risks and uncertainties.
- Fisheries are there to optimise investments of their labour in different livelihood activities seasonally and keeps them fit and active

- Lastly, fisheries improve, maintain and sustain the nutrition of aged people as fresh fish represents a significant source of protein.

It can therefore be argued that the availability of fisheries in Mubaira enhances food security, supports income generation and helps livelihood diversification for the aged. Food security is achieved as aged people are able to vary meals rather than to be dependent on one type of food. It is usually those elderly residing near the river having the skill to fish who use this livelihood opportunity. The capacity to engage in many different activities because of the presence of natural resources has made it easier for rural dwellers to diversify their livelihoods. McKenny and Tola (2002) argue that many rural households subsist on a combination of agricultural and fishing activities, but, in most cases, agriculture is the primary strategy, fishing being a secondary or alternative activity. In Mubaira, given its arable land, its river allows the elderly to engage in a twin livelihood strategy to support the household survival. Failure in either of these activities is offset by the other. The presence of the river constitutes significantly to the well-being of the elderly in Mubaira.

7.3.5 Wells and Streams

Wells are a major source of water for many rural households in Mubaira. Wells are natural springs of water suitable for drinking. Unlike man-made boreholes, wells are easily accessible and frequently used sources of water for many rural dwellers. It was noted that 75% of the interviewed elderly revealed that they have a well nearby that enables them to obtain water for domestic and other uses. This has been important for them as they don't have to travel long distances to fetch water from rivers or streams. Aside from water for drinking and cooking one of the fundamental uses of water in Mubaira is for gardening purposes. Elderly people have taken advantage of the availability of water sources, such as wells, to have gardens at their homes where they grow vegetables for their daily consumption.

Livelihoods are centered on the availability of water and aged people indicated that they get drinking water for themselves and their livestock from the streams. Streams are narrow channels of water and these have been used by the aged to carry on different projects or crafts. The elderly in Mubaira, especially those close to streams, have taken advantage of their close proximity to these water bodies to mould hard bricks from clay soils which they sell to local businessmen, schools (for development projects) and better-off individuals

One aged person stated;

“Streams in this area have managed to supply us with water for making bricks and also for building purposes. By being so close to a source of water we have managed to keep our project of brick making a success. Not only does the stream supply us with water for brick making but also our livestock drink water from that source. Therefore I can say that the presence of natural resources in this community is a blessing to us”. (Life Narrative no 7, June 2010)

This allows us to conclude that water, as a natural resource, plays an important role in the construction of livelihoods. It is one of the crucial resources needed to fully achieve a better living. Its many purposes in Mubaira show how much it is helping aged people to achieve their livelihoods. Combined with other resources, water is essential to human livelihoods since nothing can be done without it. Activities such as agriculture are highly dependent upon the availability of water and its lack means failure to achieve the desired goals. That is why in some instances the development of irrigation systems has been an alternative for the absence of rainfall or other water bodies. Scoones (2000) reports that the combination of assets is important in the construction of rural livelihoods. Water and land represent the most important natural capital assets for rural dwellers. Through access to land and the availability of water old aged people have been able to gain sustainable livelihoods.

7.3.6 Land

A great number of the world's poorest people, especially in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, live in farming households and depend for their livelihoods and food security on the productive use of land. This is true too for the population of our study. In the communal areas of Mubaira, land-based livelihood strategies make significant contributions to overall livelihood well-being. According to DFID (2002), in both urban and rural areas, secure access to land provides the basis for investment in better livelihoods and improved living conditions. Land plays a crucial role in the lives of rural people as it is a key factor in poverty reduction. Though forests, rangelands and wetlands are important resources for the poor, especially in remote areas and in times of hardship, it should be noted that access to land and land rights are frequently the poor's most fundamental livelihood asset.

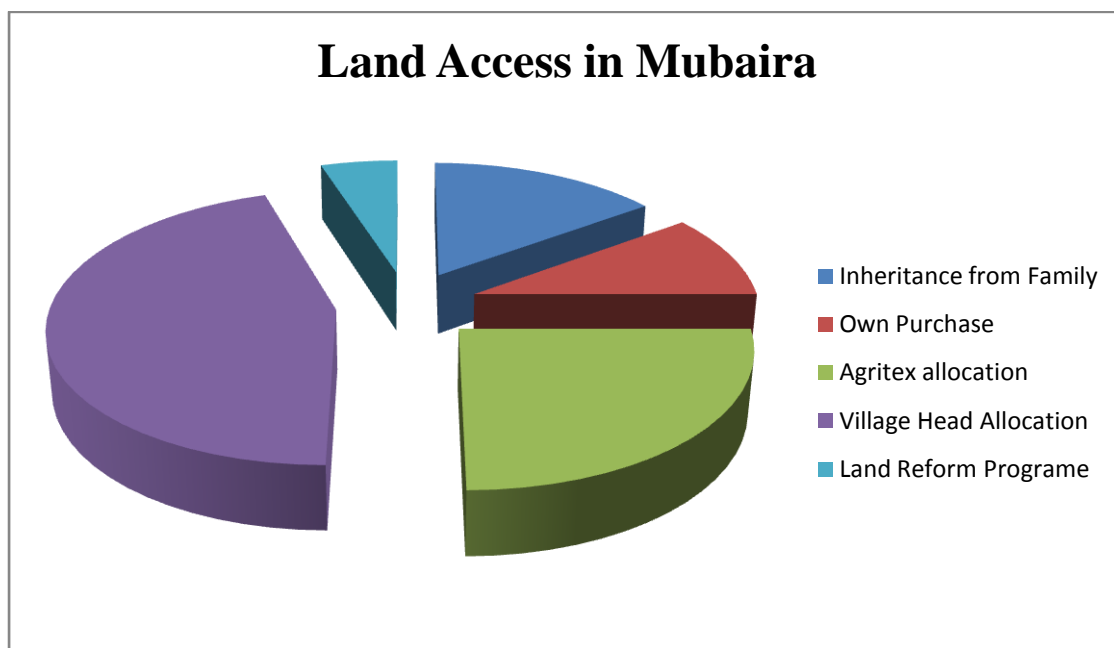
The study revealed that every old age household in Mubaira owns a piece of land to plough crops for consumption or for resale. The range of hectareage per household is between 0.5 hectares to 6 hectares for small scale farmers who plough for both consumption and for resale. Historically Zimbabwe's economy is agricultural based and in most areas of the country people rely on the utilisation of their land resources to gain a livelihood. Rural economies, including Mubaira are supported by land based activities as small scale farmers and peasants trade their commodities or products on local markets. Clearly old age people see land as their most important asset. Rural people have always believed that no other asset contributes to the people's survival as does land. This is echoed by the following in review statement;

“Land has been the most important asset for me as I am able to plough my crops for consumption. I don't have any money to buy food but through land I am able to make a living”. (In-depth interview, no3, June 2010)

Access and rights to land are important factors as they directly affect land use. According to the World Bank (2001), rights may be informal or formal; they may be wide-ranging or quite restricted. Formal rights do not necessarily provide greater security than do informal or customary rights. In Mubaira old aged people have different rights and access to land as a prime asset.

The following pie chart summarises the access to land by aged people in the Mubaira community

Figure 7.2: Access to land in Mubaira



The diagram above shows how elderly people in Mubaira have accessed their pieces of land. As noted, it is the duty of village headsmen and the Agricultural, Technical and Extension Service (Agritex) officers in Zimbabwe to allocate land to the rural dwellers. This show how access to essential resources is affected by institutional norms and arrangements as indicated in the SLA. Having full rights to the ownership of land gives one the total control over the asset. Most elderly people reported that they have full rights to the land allocated to them as

they have title deeds. Therefore it is important to analyse how access to land has helped aged people in Mubaira attain their livelihoods.

7.4 Land based activities: Agriculture the mainstay of aged people.

The prime utilisation of land is agricultural. About 90% of the Aged people interviewed in Mubaira indicated that although they might engage in different livelihood activities their main strategy or livelihood earning activity is agriculture. Interviews and life narratives confirm that rural dwellers rely on tilling the land for food security and other economic benefits. Access to arable land ensures that rural dwellers are able to derive a living from the natural resources. Various theorists have tried to nullify the effectiveness of agriculture in poverty eradication by propounding different discourses that show the surge of other alternative ways to tackle poverty in rural Africa. The following section refutes the claims of Bryceson (2002:729) about the decay of agriculture in rural Africa as rural dwellers favor more off-farm opportunities. It shows that agriculture still remains the dominant activity in rural areas as evidenced by the reliance placed on it by the elderly in Mubaira.

7.4.1 Demystifying the deagrarianisation and depeasanisation discourse

Bryceson (2002:730) argues that the structural adjustment and market liberalisation policies of the past 15 years have accelerated deagrarianization in sub-Saharan Africa. In most rural economies, agriculture has been the main livelihood strategy used by poor rural dwellers and it is key to the overall rural economic development. It is claimed by Mellor (1966:33), in his early writings on small farm-paradigm, that agriculture plays a key role in overall economic growth by providing labour, capital, food, foreign exchange, and a market in consumer goods for the nascent industrial sector in a low income country. Furthermore, UNEP (2008) contends that agriculture by its inherent multifunctionality has the potential to both influence and address the factors that contribute to food insecurity.

However, Bryceson (2002:732) posits that rural peasant producers have veered away from production of traditional crops as non-agricultural income diversification has taken precedence in the search for much needed cash earnings. Deagrarianization is a shift from depending on agriculture as the main economic activity for subsistence to non-agricultural activities, i.e. to a greater focus on rural employment. Bryceson (2004:620) remarks that the deagrarianization thesis holds that the once celebrated understanding of African farmers as strictly self-sufficient subsistence based producers has long become discarded or overturned. The image of peasant households producing subsistence and cash crops has become dated overturned by a new focus on off-farm activities. Although this cannot be denied for other contexts, for Mubaira it is clear that agriculture still remains the main livelihood strategy, not off-farm activities. Leading international donors, including DFID (2005) and the World Bank (2007) take an opposite view from Bryceson's by arguing that agriculture is the engine of economic growth and poverty reduction in rural areas. The majority of old aged people in Mubaira indicated that if it was not because of agriculture their situation would have been worse as they would have died of hunger and starvation. This was echoed by the great number of the elderly who were interviewed. In-depth interview remarks support the point as follows;

“.....I can say that for every household in Mubaira, agriculture has been the most practiced activity as people have land and the rainfall is adequate for crops. As rural people it's not natural for us to buy food like maize for papa but rather we plough in our fields and the little surplus we get we sell to other people or the GMB” (In-depth interview no 13, June 2010).

Clearly although livelihood diversification and other non-farm activities can be alternative strategies, agriculture still remains the primary economic activity that supports the livelihood of aged people. Bryceson's (2000:4) claim that agriculture and peasantization are dying forces in sub-Saharan rural areas does not hold for Mubaira. The availability of these natural resources coupled with access to other essential assets has seen rural people keeping to their traditional means of survival despite off-farm opportunities. The study therefore shows that

agriculture plays two important roles in the lives of aged people. These are the provision of food security and the provision of income. For Mubaira agriculture includes both crop production and livestock rearing.

7.4.2 Agriculture as an intervention to mitigate food insecurity and poverty in Mubaira community

The first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is to halve hunger and extreme poverty by 2015 (FAO, 2007). In sub-Saharan Africa hunger is prevalent and it is the poor people who are most affected. Agriculture plays an important role in promoting human well-being and sustainable development. In rural Mubaira agriculture has been used as a livelihood strategy to avert food insecurity and the impoverishment of the aged. Income and consumption concepts have it that there is a poverty risk when basic needs are not met such as the need for food. By engaging in crop farming, the elderly in rural Mubaira are able to avoid hunger and starvation. In general terms it is well known that agricultural production is practiced either for subsistence (consumption purposes) or for commercial purposes with the aim of gaining increased income. In Mubaira the reasons for agricultural production are also various. Of the total number of aged people interviewed, 80 % of peasant farmers practice agriculture for consumption, only 20% do so for commercial purposes since they might be having access to diverse assets. This is supported by Baiphethi and Jacobs (2009:16) who argue that the most common reason given for engaging in agriculture is procuring ‘an extra source of food’, which has seen an expansion over time at the expense of the reason given for engaging in agriculture as a ‘main source of food’ or ‘purely for subsistence’.

The failure to engage in more commercial activities is due to lack of other important capital assets such as finance, technology, human labour and marketing skills. In Mubaira community it is only the better off elderly once employed in better paying jobs who managed to accumulate more physical capital assets. Small-scale subsistence farming of fields and

gardens has been seen as the major approach to maintain food security in rural Mubaira. Elderly rural farmers engage in crop farming activities mainly to ensure food security. Fraser et al (2003) argues that if properly managed and well implemented agriculture can have a positive impact on poverty alleviation and food security. This has been the concern for the aged people who have been keen to see agriculture as the key to stave off poverty and ensure food security. Evidence from life history narratives supports the above statement;

“For us to live it’s because of our engagement in crop farming activities. The good thing is that we don’t have to buy food but we grow for our well-being. With the economic crisis in this country where would I get the money to go and buy maize meal every time in the shops? I have been a maize farmer for so many years and this has helped me. At times I also supply maize to my children in the urban centers. So as long as the rains are there I will continue farming” (Life history no 1, June 2010)

Clearly then, the production of crops alleviates food insecurity and poverty in rural areas and in this case in Mubaira. According to UNEP (2008), food security can be defined as a condition where “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. Young et al (2001) also say that food insecurity may cause irreparable damage to livelihoods, thereby reducing self-sufficiency. Furthermore, it is considered part of the process leading to malnutrition, morbidity and mortality. Moreover, a state of food insecurity directly contributes to destitution and damaged livelihoods in the long run. This is true for aged people in Mubaira who have been desperately clinging to agriculture to cover themselves against these consequences. Whereas urban dwellers rely on purchasing food from shops, for rural people peasant farming plays the role to ensure this security.

The understanding of agriculture as a strategy to alleviate food poverty addresses the objectives of this study. It shows that although old aged people are not being supported by the state with minimum cash transfers to buy basic needs such as food, they have not been idle

but have taken it upon themselves to be actively involved in the construction of their livelihoods. This has seen them being able to address the serious challenge of food security. The study shows that retirement from employment does not mean retiring from working for a living; rather, aged people in Mubaira community confirm the propositions of continuity theory of ageing by continually being involved in building their livelihoods and saving themselves from poverty. It is important to see what cropping practices they apply to avert such a problem.

7.4.3 Cropping practices on arable allotments in Mubaira Community

Unlike in urban areas where food for consumption is readily available at the market, rural dwellers must till the land and specialise in crops that bring food to the table. The elderly in Mubaira indicated that a major challenge they face is adequate food supply which through agricultural production they have been able to obtain. By specialising in crop production they have been able to meet their needs. The following table summarises the crops grown by aged people as they struggle to stave off hunger.

Table 7.4: Most commonly grown crops in the fields and gardens in Mubaira

Main Field	Garden
Maize (for mealie meal, samp)	Green vegetables(spinach, covo and mubora)
Beans (sugar and soya beans)	Tomatoes
Sorghum	Onions
Millet	Cabbage
Groundnuts	
Pumpkins	
Sweet potatoes	
Sunflowers	

7.5 Maize the main grown crop

The above table gives the summary of the various types of crops grown by aged people in Mubaira. In their endeavour to avert food crisis the elderly have concentrated their efforts on fields and garden production. These two have complemented each other to ensure that aged people at least eat well every day. Maize or corn is the most widely grown crop in Zimbabwe and in every old age household in Mubaira it has been the main crop grown. Ploughing for this most precious crop begins around the end of October when the first good rains are expected. Rural people do not wait for harvest time to use the outputs for consumption; rather, maize is consumed before it is harvested. The green mealies or cobs have become a common food product all rural people have relied on. Studies indicate that 1/3 of the total plantation of maize may be accessed as green mealies for both consumption and resale. It is these green mealies that help rural people prevent hunger and starvation before the actual harvest of the entire dry field. FAO (2007) reports that maize has been the staple food for many cultures in Africa. For harvesting, rural people use traditional means by bundling the crops in upright sheaves to transport them to their homestead using scotch carts or wheelbarrows. After drying the crop, it is shelled into grain and later converted to form maize meal. The study noted that on average the poorest elderly people get around 5 bags of a net mass of 50kgs and for those with bigger fields and with access to fertilizers and also equipment like tractors and other technologies, around 13-17 tonnes.

Maize meal is the ingredient that is used to cook the country's most eaten meal or thick porridge (sadza or papa in the local language). Aged people in Mubaira pointed out that even in ancient times their ancestors, even their parents, relied on the thick porridge as their main meal. This has been an important factor as the meal has replaced the commonly known breakfast of the urban areas that includes bread and a cup of tea. The elderly indicated that they cannot afford to buy bread anymore since it is expensive (R10 per loaf) and so they have

to make sure that they cook thick porridge (*papa*) in the morning and again later in the evening. The complementary roles of fields and gardens are witnessed in the preparation of daily meals. The elderly people indicated that they cannot take *papa* alone but must rely on green vegetables from the gardens to make a balanced meal. The lack of income and rising costs of food stuffs such as meat and canned products means that aged people have to rely on gardens as their only sources of food.

7.6 Home garden production and Consumption patterns

Seti (2003:36) found that food gardens are popular among rural Africans. In Mubaira, the shift from fields to gardens is mirrored in that 60% of aged people with fields have gardens. Vegetables are perishable products that need to be taken care of almost on a daily basis and since most rural people do not have access to irrigation the only place where they can plough is at their homesteads. The study revealed that a greater number of the interviewed elderly grow crops in their gardens to supply their own household needs. Since aged people are more dependent on the production of crops for their survival the main field which depends on rain water cannot sustain them for everything. Homestead gardens have played a complementary role in the livelihoods of aged people especially for adding consumption options. The main aim of food gardens according to the respondents is to improve nutrition and create livelihoods for the rural poor.

“Sometimes it’s good for you to have a diversity of consumption options, we cannot rely on the main fields for our food needs but home gardens have given us the option to grow vegetables and other edible products” (In-depth interview no 6, June 2010)

One cannot consume (*papa*), on its own it needs supplements of other more nutritious food containing inter alia meat, beans, vegetables, eggs and milk. Since the elderly have been facing difficulties in accessing funds to buy all these products they have relied on gardens to provide them with vegetables. The regular meal is thick porridge (*papa*) and green

vegetables. At times, when they have a little cash and, when they receive their food hampers from NGOs they are able to rotate their meals include to beans, rice and soya mince.

7.7 Crop diversification in Mubaira

Apart from maize as the most commonly grown crop in Mubaira community there is a diversification into other essential crops. According to Ellis (2000), crop diversification refers to the addition of or a shift from one crop enterprise to others in a production system. Through systems of intercropping, aged people have been able to supplement their consumption patterns by growing other crops in one communal field. Monoculture which is the concentration of growing one type of crop is a thing of the past for the aged who have gained much in growing two or more different crops. As indicated in table 7.4, various crops are grown in Mubaira. Unlike in commercial farms where there are specified fields for different crops, in rural Mubaira crops like maize, pumpkins, groundnuts, sorghum and beans can all be grown in one field.

Among the limiting factors is lack of adequate land and lack of means such as organic fertilizers to treat the crops. Crop diversification has been a dominant practice in Mubaira as aged people try to enrich their crop output and consumption. Groundnuts have been the second most commonly grown crop as its many uses have benefited aged people. Aged people, especially women, have made a living from groundnuts as they make peanut butter from the crop. In the absence of cooking oil they have used peanut butter from groundnuts as cooking oil. In the same category along with groundnuts, are sunflowers that have been grown for consumption purposes. One of the respondents indicated that he owns a pressing machine that he uses to make cooking oil that he sells to local people and also uses it for his own consumption, thus obtaining extra money to buy from the shops. Crops such as millet

and sorghum have also been prominent in Mubaira as old aged people grow them to brew beer for their cultural rituals. Rituals such as rain making and thanksgiving after a good harvest require the use of opaque beer that is brewed from sorghum, maize or millet. For those elderly people who do not cultivate the crops for beer brewing they have to buy from others who grow for resale. Crops such as pumpkins and sweet potatoes have traditionally been consumed as breakfast food in the rural areas. With access to very little money old aged people can no longer purchase retail bread for breakfast but have tended to eat these crops as a substitute for bread. Such coping strategies have helped aged people as they cannot afford to buy expensive products from the market. Traditionally pumpkins and sweet potatoes are only grown during the rainy season and have been commended as they add nutritional value to their diet. Ageing is a social change process that one goes through and the elderly in Mubaira indicated that they can no longer access some of the food they used to get during their working years due to lack of funds. The result is that they have to adapt to new ways of living that are brought about by the ageing process. For some, agricultural production was not the main livelihood activity in the past as they relied on occupational income or other sources, but due to changes in life, coupled with the rising cost of living, agriculture now remains as the only accessible form of livelihood because of the abundance of natural resources in the Mubaira community. The theme of food security features prominently in the study as aged people fight for their survival. FAO (2007) reports that the most apparent function of agriculture is to provide food for the 800 million children, women and men who are malnourished or starving. That explains why Delgado and Siamwalla (1997:149) argue that crop production may alleviate food insecurity and poverty in rural, urban and national contexts in a number of ways, for example, by lowering food prices and increasing employment and real wages from farm income. This is true for Zimbabwe. Under SADC portfolios, Zimbabwe was responsible for food security and used to be the breadbasket for the

whole of Africa. Due to changes on the political and economic fronts, agriculture has lost its capacity to transform rural livelihoods costs and this has also affected poor peasant farmers in rural areas in their livelihoods. The most poor and deprived aged people in Mubaira revealed that their health status worsened not because of diseases or psychological problems, but due to a shortage of food especially of balanced diets. This is supported by the excerpts from the study;

“As you can see my health status has deteriorated as a result of improper food diet and at times I even fail to get something to eat”. (In-depth interview no 11, June 2010)

Although old aged people highlighted their diversification to other food crops, the study also noted that livestock rearing plays an essential role for their livelihoods. Livestock rearing has brought a lot of benefits to the aged and this will be highlighted in the following section.

7.8 On-farm diversification through livestock rearing

According to Adams et al (1994), a number of studies have investigated the role and importance of livestock in communal systems in Southern Africa. The rearing of livestock in the African context is important in many ways. In rural Mubaira it was noted that one of the benchmarks used to measure one's wealth is the number of livestock he/she owns. According to key informants in Mubaira, those households who did not own livestock were considered as poor, and the poor in the area do not take part in community activities. The rearing of livestock in Mubaira is made possible by the availability of rangeland or grazing areas in the villages. The abundance of grass ensures that the livestock are able to get food that will make them healthy and help to provide a livelihood for the rural people.

The study revealed that about 40% of the interviewed aged people own livestock whether cattle, goats, donkeys or chickens (road runners). Although a minority of households own

cattle, their benefits are more widely distributed through a number of mechanisms, including bride-wealth payments, loaning of animals, cooperative ploughing arrangements, meat and milk sharing, and hiring out and selling of goods and services. Thus, overall, cattle may have an important social and financial role to play in the community as a whole (Shackleton et al, 2000). For the aged in Mubaira, livestock ownership and production has many purposes with cattle serving the many purposes, especially in domestic use. Ownership of cattle has made it possible for old aged people to extract nutritional value as they get both fresh milk and sour milk for their consumption. Milk from cattle has been used as an alternative meal for many poor rural elderly people who cannot afford to purchase meat products and who also want a change from the exclusive consumption of vegetables. Cattle are also seen to be providing draught power especially in the growing of crops. Mostly it is the male respondents who say so, as in the following remark:

“I have been using my cattle as ploughing and cultivation mechanisms as I cannot afford to hire tractors. This has helped me so much as it makes my work easier and sometimes some people hire me to prepare their fields in exchange of food, clothing or money” (In-depth interview no 12, June 2010)

According to Hebinck and Lent (2007), the commonly used form of agricultural farming and land tilling is by draught power from animals. The majority of aged people in Mubaira indicated that they use their cattle for ploughing or hire when they don't own them. Cattle have also been used for cultivation of crops and during harvest time to ferry crops from the field to the stocking points. Livestock have also been sources of income generation for the aged. In times of stress and shocks the elderly have responded by selling their livestock to earn quick money to avert the negative situations. The elderly people with so many cattle can even sell them to local butcherries in times of unexpected stresses and risks. Therefore, it can be said that livestock farming has been beneficial to the aged people in Mubaira and has been

a source of livelihood through the provision of meat and milk and also as a source of much needed income.

Engagement into agricultural activities ensures that elderly people make their own living without being dependent on anyone and therefore refutes claims of dependency at old age. Most rural development approaches have focused on how the state and other development practitioners can lead in the attainment of sustainable livelihoods, but using the SLA, empirical evidence from Mubaira community has shown that, elderly people have fully participated in constructing their own livelihoods through engaging in agriculture and through access to other natural resources. What can be deduced from this chapter is that assets are very important in the lives of rural dwellers as they create a platform for the construction of livelihoods. Therefore, the chapter has attempted to address the core objective of the study, of trying to understand the livelihoods of the aged people in addressing old age poverty. Agriculture has ensured old aged people attain a living by guarding against food insecurity.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the various livelihood options available to aged people in Mubaira in view of their access to natural resources. This chapter meets one of the core objectives of this study by exploring the livelihood strategies of the aged. Using the SLA, the study showed that for old aged people assets are of vital importance in the construction of rural livelihoods. SLA gives a number of available capital assets for the construction of livelihoods but it is access to natural capital that has informed the main livelihood strategies of the old aged people in Mubaira. As a measure to guard against food insecurity and poverty the elderly engage in agriculture, specializing in crop production and livestock rearing. The chapter has shown that 90% of the aged people interviewed rely on agriculture as their main

livelihood strategy. This supports Scoones (2000) who pointed to agriculture as the core strategy for rural livelihoods. Scholars like Bryceson have tended to dismiss agriculture as an activity of the past stating that rural people are moving towards off-farm activities for their living.

However, this has been refuted for Mubaira where old aged people pin their hopes on crop cultivation to survive. The dominance of agriculture is attributed to the availability of arable land and adequate rainfall patterns that have allowed peasant farmers to grow a variety of crops for their consumption. Only 20% of the respondents indicated that they practice agriculture for commercial purposes. Besides access to land, the chapter also highlighted how old aged people are eking out a living from access to forests and water resources such as a river, wells and streams. Old aged people in Mubaira revealed that the local Nyangwene River has helped them with drinking water and fisheries. They have been able to sell fish from the river to supplement their income and also fish has enhanced their dietary options. Wells and streams have been beneficial as aged people use them for gardening and brick making. Access to forests has seen both women and men venturing into livelihood activities given this supply of cooking fuel and material for construction of houses and kraals for livestock. In short one may conclude that old aged people have been actively involved in the building of their livelihoods by the use of a wide range of resources. They have managed to achieve sustainable outcomes as prescribed in the SLA. Agriculture being the main livelihood strategy, old aged people also used alternative strategies to supplement the primary livelihood activity, agriculture, in the event of failure or as complementary activities. SLA presents livelihood diversification as another option available to rural people; therefore, the next chapter looks at how old aged people have diversified their livelihoods as a way to improve their well-being and also to combat poverty.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Diversification: An analysis of different Livelihood and Income portfolios in Mubaira Community

8.1 Introduction

The livelihoods prospects facing the poor are embedded in economic, political and social structures and processes, at both macro and micro levels (Start and Johnson, 2004). Rural economies offer many opportunities for diversifying livelihoods. Empirical evidence from Mubaira community shows that on-farm activities such as agricultural production are the dominant livelihood strategy employed by aged people. This is because of the ready availability of natural resources such as land, water, fertile soils and forests. Although old aged people have managed to earn a living from on-farm livelihood activities, it was found that old aged people have not only concentrated on these activities as the sole providers of a better or improved living, as they have diversified their activities to include what Ellis (2000:56) calls off-farm and non-farm livelihood strategies.

Cain and McNicoll (1998:105) argue that for many rural households farming on its own does not provide a sufficient means of survival. Rather, most rural households, including the elderly, depend on a diverse portfolio of activities and income sources. Ellis (2000) supports this statement by arguing that households who depend heavily on natural resources have little in the way of alternative sources of livelihoods and have comparatively lower incomes. Bryceson and Jamal (in Tefera et al, 2004) argue that 40-45% of an average African household-income is from non-farm employment and that this has increasing importance over time. The central theme here is diversification (Ellis, 2000), multiple livelihoods (Bryceson, 2000:9) or occupational multiplicity (Bremen, 1996:66). Various scholars, schools of

thought, development agents, and researchers use different terminologies to define diversification, but what is important to note is that all of them agree in principle.

Diversification is an umbrella term that denotes a number of activities or processes. According to Ellis (2000:57), livelihood diversification is the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in order to survive and to improve their standard of living. Start and Johnson (2004:40) give a slightly different definition in arguing that diversification may either refer to an increasing multiplicity of activities (regardless of sector), to a shift away from traditional rural sectors such as agriculture to non-traditional activities in either rural or urban space – i.e. sectoral change. The previous chapter focused on how rural people make livelihoods from a diverse access to natural capital and how they use their individual capabilities to engage in activities that improve their livelihoods. The asset discussed in the previous chapter was natural capital. In this chapter attention will be given to the role of other forms of capital discussed in the SLA to see how these are helping aged people to achieve sustainable livelihoods through diversification. As Bebbington (1999) says, assets also known as capital in the SLA, are not simply resources that people use to build livelihoods, they are assets that give them the capability to be and to act.

In this chapter the focus will be on relating the shift from agriculture by aged people to livelihood diversification. The study shows that although aged people in Mubaira are involved in agriculture they also engage in diversified livelihood strategies to improve their living standards and supplement what they obtain from on-farm activities. Most of the elderly interviewed (75 %) indicated that they are diversifying their livelihoods. Those aged people involved in agricultural activities are also involved in other activities to gain income. There is

a difference between livelihood diversification and income diversification. According to Lipton and Maxwell (1992:306), a livelihood is more than just income and income refers to the cash earnings of households plus payments in kind that can be valued at market prices. These might include, crop or livestock sale, wages, rents and remittances. Consumption of own farm produce, payments in kind (i.e. food) and transfers or exchanges of consumption items that occur between households in rural areas might count as the in kind component of income. Hence income diversification is an active social process whereby households are seen to engage in increasingly intricate portfolios over time. These two, livelihood diversification and income diversification will be discussed in more detail in this chapter as they are employed by aged people in Mubaira.

Scholars like Deborah Bryceson have written more extensively on the changing nature of rural livelihoods as rural dwellers shift from agriculture as the predominant livelihood strategy to more income oriented off-farm activities. Through discourses on deagrarianisation she has argued that rural economies are being transformed from being agrarian to being non-farm oriented. Occupational adjustment, income-earning reorientation, social identification and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly agricultural-based modes of livelihood have become the order of the day in rural economies. This chapter will highlight how aged people in Mubaira have depended on other activities besides agriculture and analyse whether these activities have been beneficial to them in their fight against old age poverty or not.

The chapter will also give an in-depth analysis of each strategy employed by the aged and give the motivations for such activities. Elderly individuals and households have experimented with new forms of livelihood, thus expanding their non-agricultural income

sources, while retaining their base in subsistence farming. It was noted that the nature of diversification differs according to 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, etc.), while the poor tend to diversify into casual wage work or into piece jobs to ensure survival. The chapter will differentiate between diversified livelihoods as pursued by both men and women in Mubaira

8.2 New Vistas: Diversified rural livelihood Strategies in Mubaira

Cases studies in most countries have noted that African rural livelihoods are going through a transformation, structural change with a focus on new and alternative ways of living (Bryceson, 2004:624). As already observed, traditionally agriculture has been the dominant mode of earning a living. However, a surge in non-agricultural income diversification activities has seen rural people taking on every opportunity available. The study has revealed that aged people do not depend on one livelihood strategy; rather, they employ different strategies to improve their standards of living. This was echoed by one respondent who said:

“I have been doing so many things to help me make a living. During the rainy season my main focus will be more on agriculture but in off-season I have to engage in other activities that can give me income rather than just stay at home and be idle. I would rather make hoes, wooden spoons and chairs which I sell so as to get extra money since agriculture on its own cannot fully cover all my needs”. (In-depth interview no 8, June 2010)

One might expect that in old age an elderly person disengages him or herself from all activity and focuses more on resting the ageing, frail and weakening body. However, structural constraints exerted by both external and internal factors have kept old aged people in Mubaira on their toes as they eke a living unlike in most developed countries where the role of cash transfers in the form of pensions and social grants has meant that aged people can freely relax and enjoy their benefits in the luxury of their homes without being engaged in labour intensive work. The poor elderly in developing countries especially in Africa cannot do so,

crises in the political, social, economic and environmental spheres have made aged people vulnerable to poverty such that it sparks the need to spread income generation activities.

Given the diversification discourse, one of the principal questions that arise concerns its motives. Ellis (2000) gives different typologies of diversification. Some of the literature is predominantly concerned with diversification as a matter of survival, emphasising the reasons for diversification as born of desperation (poverty, lack of assets, vulnerability and disaster). Other literature focuses by contrasts on diversification as a matter of choice and opportunity involving proactive household strategies for improving living standards. Therefore it is important to analyse the trends of diversification for the aged people in Mubaira in terms of these two typologies. It is usually believed that it is the most deprived poor and vulnerable people who diversify to ensure survival or to stave off poverty. On the other hand the better off are propelled by choice and the need to improve or supplement their income.

8.3 Diversification through Rural Home-based Industries

Old aged people have been involved in activities other than agriculture, that is home-based industries, as they seek to improve their livelihoods. To fully understand and track the trends of diversification in Mubaira community the home-based industry analysis by Scott (1996) will be adopted. Rural home-based industries (RHBI) have been seen as economical entities in the rural economy and have been considered generally better-off for rural households than for urban households (Scott, 1995). According to Liedholm et al (1994:1177), past empirical studies have revealed that they provide 20% to 45% of full-time employment and 30% to 50% of rural household income in Africa. De Janvry (1994) confirms this assertion, noting that off-farm rural incomes are necessary for successful income growth in Africa. They, are therefore, critical to the achievement of sustainable livelihoods for rural people.

Rural home-based industries employ a grass-roots approach to agrarian change by focusing on African cultural and economic institutions and by highlighting the multifunctional nature of the rural enterprise households. It is an alternative strategy to ensure reliable access to income and other basic human needs in the rural areas. In Zimbabwe, non-agricultural income is not only important, but has been expanding as people engage in various activities to boost their income levels. Scott (1995) argues that home based people like the neglected poor are experimenting with alternative strategies, on their own, to achieve household and community self reliance by innovative adaptation of traditional institutions, technologies, skills and values. This is confirmed by one of the aged people in Mubaira who said:

“I started venturing into small businesses after the realization that agriculture on its own does not really meet my household’s needs. I grow maize which I sell to the GMB, but the income is not enough to keep me going and in so doing I use the skills I have to make extra income so that I can educate my grandchildren. (Life history, no 3, June 2010)

Table 8.1 gives an overview of the various rural home-based industries undertaken by aged people in Mubaira. It is important to note is that the RHBI approach is gender sensitive, meaning that it analyses both activities as undertaken by both men and women. This section will discuss the various diversified strategies undertaken by elderly men and women in Mubaira through their access to various assets.

Table 8.1: Selected Home-Based Industries in Mubaira, Mhondoro Districts, Zimbabwe

Group	Activity Type	Activity Coverage Description
I	Metal working (blacksmithing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing hoes, axes, tubs, basins, pans, stones, ploughs, oxcarts, knives; and repairing tools
II	Clothing (tailoring)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sewing dresses, trousers, student uniforms; and repairing garments
III	Construction (building)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constructing traditional pole-and-dagga huts, kitchens, storage bins, and modern cinder-block buildings, office blocks, and schoolrooms
IV	Earthworks (brick making)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making sun-dried and oven-fired bricks and plaster for use in traditional construction
v	Butchery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling of meat (beef and chicken)
vi	Pottery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moulding of clay pots, cup, plates
vii	Weaving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making of traditional carpets, mats, baskets and chairs
viii	Carpentry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making of chairs, coffins, tables, desks and cupboards
ix	Repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycles, scotch carts and punctured tyres

The above table shows the various livelihood activities in which elderly people in Mubaira are involved. Elderly couples indicated that either they work together in their activities or do so individually. Non-farm activities are a form of self employment as the aged have total control over the capital inputs, processes and outputs of these activities. Both men and women have been engaged in various activities that bring income for their households through self-employment. The RHBI can be said to be self employment activities if we are to consider what Scott (1995) says. He argues that “RHBI are by nature individualistic, not requiring cooperation”. According to Bryceson (2002:728), definitions of work and employment are continually subject to misinterpretation especially in contexts of rapid change like that, as one being witnessed in rural sub-Saharan Africa at the presently. Voices from the study reveal that the aged defined self-employment as an activity that generates and supplements their income since income from remittances from their children or agriculture production is insufficient.

Old aged people in Mubaira venture into self business to increase their income and improve their livelihood and well-being. Livelihood diversification has many reasons; it can be both a way to coping or a thrive – in which case it is driven by a growing and more flexible economy. But the ‘coping’ dimension predominates where diversification is an enforced response to failing agriculture, recession and retrenchment (Davies, 1996; Scoones, 1998). Davies (1996) also differentiates between necessity and choice as he argues that necessity and distress cause involuntary diversifying. The aged people interviewed agreed by arguing that their involvement in self employment is not for pleasure or by choice but rather from necessity, from need that comes from pressing conditions. In the same manner Barrett et al (2001) agree by saying that multiple motives prompt households and individuals to diversify assets, incomes and activities. Push factors are used as risk reduction measures, reactions to a crisis of liquidity, etc. Social factors such as food security, health care, income for grandchildren’s education and many more have pushed the aged people to the limit to meet these demands. An extract from the interviews supports the above point;

“I am self employed as I seek to supplement my income levels. The little that I get from my children is not enough to take care of me. As one gets old numerous health problem emerge and so without money you cannot get treated. I also have grandchildren who need food, clothes, schools and other things, so if I just sit and wait for help from my children in the urban area I will starve together with my grandchildren. Although it is hard to get the income I have no choice but to work with my hands so that I overcome these challenges”. (Life narrative no 7, June 2010)

The above extract clearly reveals that external factors force elderly people to diversify their livelihood strategies as they seek to improve their total household livelihood. In terms of division of labour, both men and women engage in home-based industries and the distribution is relatively even, but generally the proportion of men doing so exceeds that of women. A clearer understanding of the diversified livelihoods of the aged would be obtained if livelihoods are studied in awareness of gender. It must be underlined that many livelihood diversification strategies are gender specific. Gender is an integral and inseparable part of

rural livelihoods. Gender relations are defined as the social constructions of role and relationships between women and men (Eliss, 2000).

From the study it was found that non-farm incomes are not just earned by men since women also engaged in their own activities to make a living. Krant (2001) notes that one of the weaknesses of the sustainable livelihoods approach is that it is not gender-sensitive enough because it glosses over women's issues. A significant constraint of the SLA is that it tends to take the household as the basic unit of analysis, not the individual as such. The study noted that both men and women in Mubaira are engaged in self-employment activities as they seek to enhance their livelihoods. The following section concerns the variety of self-employment engaged in by aged people in Mubaira.

8.3.1 Women in Craft business

Worku (2007:24) posits that women dominate many of the non-farm activities that grow most rapidly during structural transformation - activities such as food processing and preparation, tailoring and trading. They likewise hold a major interest in many of the declining rural non-farm occupations - basket making, mat making, ceramics and weaving. She furthers the point by arguing that rural women are involved in casual, informal and unregulated labour in income generating activities such as processing local beverages, selling fire wood, and handcraft, due to lack of resources (land, labour and oxen) and services (credit). The study found that old aged women possess different skills and capabilities helping them to make a living. In the SL approach capabilities or skills are important elements as they represent human capital.

Some of the critical capabilities and skills that have been shown by rural women in Mubaira are in the making of traditional clay pots for resale. As already indicated in the preceding

chapter, rural people are good at maintaining their cultural rituals. Ancestral worship is a dominant practice among the people in Mubaira and activities such as rain making, ceremonial cleansing of villages and thanksgiving after a good harvest are practiced. These rituals are graced by the drinking of traditional beer that is brewed using sorghum, maize or millet. Very big clay pots are used to brew and store the beer. Aged women are known for their skills in molding these clay pots and some who have been in this business reported that they have been able to make a living through their sale. Not only do they make pots for beer brewing but also for cooking. Elderly women have been able to use their capabilities to their advantage in constructing their livelihoods. This is supported by Sen (1997) who argues that possession of human capital not only means people produce more but more efficiently. It also enables them to engage more fruitfully and meaningfully with the world, and most importantly, to change the world around them. One aged woman revealed the following in the interview;

“I can say that I have been able to take care of myself at this age by supplementing agricultural produce with the income that I get from my craft activities. The skill of making clay pots and cups has given me a hope of life in agricultural off seasons as I can fully carry out my duties. I have managed to sell my products to local people for beer brewing and also as far as Harare for some tourists, especially white people. Though the income is little, it can help me cover some expenses.”(Life history no 4, June 2010)

Elderly women are also involved in the making of traditional sleeping or seating mats. These are made using reeds from river beds and have been common in rural areas where the availability of modern carpets and sleeping beds is limited to the better off. Poor people have depended on these for their sleeping and covering the floors in their homes. Elderly women have taken this activity to boost their income levels. This has enabled aged women to take care of themselves, their grandchildren and to cover any expenses that might arise in their households. Usually it is local customers who buy such products made by the aged people. Sales of these mats also take place in urban areas around Mubaira, such as Chegutu and Norton. It is not everyone who possesses the art and skill of making clay pots and seating or

sleeping mats. Elderly women indicated that these are skills that were not learnt by attending a vocational school or college but rather that these were passed on from one generation to another. Due to the modernization of today's world the elderly women noted that they could not pass these skills on to the younger generations who tend to focus on skills in different fields. What is important in the analysis of such livelihood strategies of older women is their capacity to improve their well-being. The income they get helps them obtain services and goods that need cash. Even though the elderly women indicated that the money might be very little, it gives them some reprieve and enables them to meet current needs.

8.3.2 Clothing (tailoring) Activities

Not only have rural women been involved in the making of clay products but they have also been involved in tailoring activities. Through the use of different skills which they learned in their lives, older women have been able to sustain their households and make a better living. Stein et al (1999) discusses the life course approach as important in the analysis of the current livelihoods of the aged. The argument is that a life course perspective sees later life conditions as caused not only by current circumstances, but also by earlier life events and contexts throughout youth and adulthood. Due to situations or influences earlier or later in life older women have been able to make a living by the skills they gained or learned whilst they were younger. The following life history extract reveals how one aged woman is making a living from tailoring;

“.....my husband managed to sell his products and bought me a sewing machine that I used to make garments, school uniforms and jerseys. It was difficult at first but as time went by things started to sharpen up. We continued doing our different jobs and I managed to buy two more machines including a giant knitting machine. This was the beginning of great things as I managed to open a sewing shop in the growth point that sold different ranges of clothes but most of the customers were parents who bought school uniforms for their children. Though my husband's business was home based we managed to work for the survival of our family and the betterment of our livelihoods. We had a total of five children who were all educated and bright in school. At the present moment we live alone as all of our children are married and living with their families. My first born son worked so hard that he was awarded a scholarship to study in Germany. He completed a degree in motor engineering and at the present moment he is working for Toyota in South Africa. This has made me so happy as I can recall the times I used to struggle with him but all my worries have been

turned to joy as I enjoy the fruits of his sweat. My personal business flourished as I managed to get customers in and around Mubaira, and most of my customers were parents who needed school uniforms for their children. I managed to upgrade my house and bought household furniture with the money that I generated from my sewing project. I also bought a few livestock that included three herds of cattle, six goats and chickens. In total our herds of cattle became eight as my husband had some prior to the ones I bought.” (Life narrative no5, June 2010)

From the narrative above, a lot can be said of old age people’s strategies. Through home-based industries the elderly person has been able to add income value in her household. This clearly shows that the acquisition of essential capital initiates and directs the construction of livelihoods. In this circumstance the possession of human capital in the form of tailoring or garment making skills and access to physical assets such as sewing machines, yields or results in the achievement of financial income that is able to support the livelihoods of the entire household. Ellis (2000) argues that assets are the basic building blocks enabling households to undertake production, engage in labour markets and participate in reciprocal exchange with other households. Assets at the disposal of elderly people have helped them to generate the means of survival for the household and to sustain its well-being. Therefore, by diverting from agriculture based strategies to more industrial approaches, the elderly person has been able to improve her livelihood. She proudly indicated that through sewing she managed to educate all her children.

Local markets have supported local home based industries. Scott (1995), in his analysis of rural home-based industries, says that the grassroots conceptualization of rural based industries aims to understand how households as the fundamental cultural units of agrarian society, empower themselves to meet their own households and community needs. Thus engagement in tailoring activities serves both the needs of the aged people and also provides a service to the local community in the form of school uniforms, clothes, other garments and thus saving rural dwellers from travelling to other towns or cities to buy such products.

8.3.4 Carpentry and metal working

Males too have engaged in livelihood diversification. Rural home based industries include such activities as carpentry and metal working. Aged people have been found doing technical jobs that require much skill. Local schools and individuals have benefited from products made by aged people, such as, chairs, desks and cupboards. The land reform exercise seems to also have opened business opportunities for local aged people involved in blacksmith activities. New farmers lack the capital to buy sophisticated machinery to plough and cultivate crops and so rely on the use of traditional implements such as the hoes and ploughs. In Mubaira elderly people have provided alternatives for new farmers as their products are cheaper as the following comment points out:

“I have been in this business for the past 20 years as I gained the experience since I was a young man. My business has seen a tremendous shift as from the year 2002 when newly resettled farmers came into our community. They have been our best customers as they look for cheaper products unlike the White commercial farmers who much preferred to use tractors and cultivators. For these new farmers things are still difficult for them and therefore cannot afford such kind of machinery”. (Life history no 9, June 2010)

This has been supported by Scott (1995) who argues that blacksmiths are in many ways the engine of agrarian change and the glue that holds rural communities together. They represent tradition, innovation and ingenuity, especially in their ability to improvise. Smiths use tools to make tools, farm implements and many other items that are used to increase the productivity of farm labor and the efficiency of transport.

Engagement in metal working has propelled some of the elderly into being pillars of the agrarian economy, as most of the tools used in traditional agriculture are manufactured by them. To their advantage they have been able to raise their income levels and sustain their households. Increased income levels mean that old aged people are able to stave off poverty and supplement their existing income from agriculture.

8.3.5 Entrepreneurship for the better off

Rural entrepreneurship has been seen as fundamental to rural economies. Rural development agencies see in rural entrepreneurship an enormous employment potential and rural farmers see it as a way to improve on farm earnings (Petrin, 1994:83). Aged people have contributed to the rural economy by their engagement in entrepreneurial activities as they upgraded their own livelihoods. By definition, rural entrepreneurship is a force that mobilises other resources to meet unmet market demand, the ability to create and build something from practically nothing, the process of creating value by putting together a unique package of resources to exploit opportunities (Petrin, 1984:83).

The study found that aged people in Mubaira have taken advantage of market opportunities in the rural economy such that they have been able to earn sustainable livelihood outcomes. The slow pace of development in Mubaira has seen older people manage well, and accumulate both financial and physical assets in running entrepreneurial businesses. The principal motivation to diversify into such activities is not that of the poor who live in absolute poverty but rather due to their desire to remain active, enhance or improve their livelihood status and lay a stronger foundation for the young.

Scoones (2000:3) suggests that assets combined with capabilities and skills result in sustainable livelihoods. Evidence from the study shows that possession of assets is the key to successful livelihoods. This is supported by one of the life narratives that said the following:

“After my retirement I got a good package that I managed to convert into assets. I bought a car, four other heifers and I also managed to open a shop that sells groceries. I saw that the ideal way of keeping my money was to open a business so that the money would generate more cash. My wife is the one who manages the shop as I focus more on agricultural activities” (Life history no 8, June 2010)

In another case, an older woman who runs a butchery in the growth point found health and the livelihoods of the entire household to improve as a consequence. The death of her husband left her in possession of enough livestock to start operating as a butcher in the growth point. She initially slaughtered her own herds of cattle, but after accumulating enough capital she now buys goods in the rural villages and resells to the public. Such an initiative allows aged people to keep their businesses afloat making use of a wide range of assets. By not exhausting all her livestock resources this woman showed concern about the future. Retail shops which specialise in groceries and vegetables have also served to improve the livelihood of the aged. Elderly people have been able to set up these shops as a way to maintain their livelihood status. This has seen some making monthly profits of R5000 and to remit money to their struggling relatives and children, as the following life history statement illustrates:

For the shop operations I get a profit of around R5 000 a month. This has been enough for me to maintain my livelihood status and sometimes I help my children who might be struggling financially in the urban areas. I also have a credit facility for the locally trusted people who might fail to have cash at a particular time and yet need some goods from the shop or garden. This is just a way to keep relations and networks strong because if you are good to people you can keep customers at your door". (Life history no 10, June 2010)

A closer look at entrepreneurship activities such as shops and butchery operations shows that it is only the better off among the aged who are able to diversify their livelihood strategies in such a way. Their need is to maintain and improve their livelihood status.

8.4 Conceptualization of Home-based Industries: Analysing the viability of RHBI for old age livelihoods

According to Scott (1995), two contrasting conceptual models best explain the value of RHBI for old age livelihoods. The question is whether the above mentioned livelihood strategies employed by the aged in Mubaira are really economically viable or not. Scott (1995) says the economics of the firm model assumes that economic viability comes from economic

efficiency and productivity, maximization of profit margins, generation of income exceeding subsistence level, promotion of agricultural growth and diversification and the expansion of market areas to link up with the urban formal sectors of the economy through product sales and purchase of raw materials. The study's results reveal that aged people have been able to diversify into non-farm activities and this has proved to be economically viable because the aged people in Mubaira raise income for their survival and simultaneously contribute to the overall rural economic development. Scott (1995) further describes RHBI as the polar opposite of permanency and profitability by arguing that six main attributes explain the nature and status of RHBI.

Firstly, they are marginal and often intermittent because they are secondary to the main occupation of farming and are thus part-time and seasonal activities. This is true for Mubaira where the aged regard agriculture as their main livelihood strategy, the other strategies being secondary, to supplement, complement, and improve upon the gains from agriculture. Thus all the effort and capital is channeled towards the main livelihood strategy leaving other activities marginal and intermittent. The majority of respondents indicated that their main priority is agriculture.

Secondly, Scott (1995) argues that in view of the operators of RHBI, it is the working poor whose returns for effort are chronically low and who do not benefit significantly from the modest income redistribution that occurs to raise their household income to subsistence level. In Mubaira the aged reported that they are poor and do not command a strong capital base. Most old aged people revealed that their engagement in non-farm activities is driven by the desire to earn a subsistence income and to reduce poverty. Hence only a few reported that their involvement in other activities is by choice or to cement their livelihood status. The

elderly's income expenditure patterns in Mubaira indicate that most important for them is food, the care for grandchildren and their health.

One characteristic of RHBI in this study is that they are not regulated by the government and the entry for prospective participants is free. The SLA considers institutions which have an impact on the construction of livelihoods. It is notable that informal old aged people's activities are not regulated by local authorities; rather, they escape or bypass all the legislation with their businesses. It is only those who operate in the growth point such as butchers and retail shops operations that are regulated. Entry into diversified livelihood activities is by choice or necessity, or by push or pulls factors, as Ellis (2000) describes them. These factors indicate that the activities of the elderly are not based on the business ethics of profit making but are meant as survival options. Also home-based specialists tend to work alone rather than in groups, clubs or cooperatives. Home-based industries are by nature individualistic, not requiring cooperation. The aged people interviewed for this study confirmed this. However, in some instances older people worked together as a couple or a family unit and others in more strenuous work, such as, brick making. Scott (1995) suggested that RHBI products and services are targeted for certain people mostly members of the peasantry. This is supported by what one of the elderly people said:

“Most of my customers are local people who buy the products on cash or credit then later give me the money when they get it” (In-depth interview no 7, June 2010)

Scott (1995) discusses a second conceptual model that places RHBI among the grassroots efforts of rural households to meet their own basic human needs and to achieve and sustain a socially acceptable standard of living. This contrasts with the popular theory that the farm functions as a firm and that rural people, or farmers, depend entirely on agriculture and the sale of agricultural products for their household food security and annual income. This

argument supports the findings of this study which shows that not only agriculture can enhance, transform, sustain and improve the livelihoods of the aged rural people; rather, it is complimented by other non-farm activities which are able to provide income needed to meet some of the important basic needs and services. The elderly in Mubaira said that sometimes agricultural production may be enough to provide food for consumption like maize meal, groundnuts, sweet potatoes and pumpkins but for other essential services they often need extra help either through remittances from the children or one has to venture into RHBI income generating activities.

The central thesis of this model is that African agrarian economies are complex; they include many opportunities to generate non-farm income to meet basic human needs. The diversified livelihood activities of the aged are varied, they range from organised movements to individual efforts that have a collective or unifying effect, especially in terms of material culture. The income generated is particularly critical to the vitality and well-being of households and village committees. Pradervand (1994) called these grass roots efforts the silent revolution at the village level and said that it could be a great sign of hope for rural Africa in the absence of meaningful development from the state.

The grass-roots conceptualisation of rural home-based industries helps us understand how rural families empower themselves to meet their own household and community needs. Through engagement in diversified livelihoods aged people in Mubaira have been able to empower themselves in their fight against old age poverty. Self-reliance is a critical factor as identified by this study. Aged people feel that by diversifying to non-farm activities they learn to be self-reliant for their needs and so they debunk the widely held notion that the aged always depend on the state and their children's remittances. Dutton (1983) also argues that

the grassroots model suggests villagers to be mutually dependent and collectively self-reliant as their material requirements are derived from local natural resources and processed by local home based specialists, primarily for local usage.

According to Ellis (2000), diversification is undertaken as a result of many factors. RHBI points to concerted efforts by aged people to ensure household security. According to Scott (1995), the basic objective of RHBI is to accumulate enough money (cash and equivalents) to purchase basic human needs rather than to achieve a given rate of profit. This corresponds with the results from this study where aged people demonstrated that they are capable of generating income to supply their own basic needs and to make significant contributions to the vitality and well-being of their own livelihoods.

Moreover aged people indicated that RHBI or non-farm activities are strategies to counter environmental risks and economic and political uncertainties. From an environmental point of view it is noted that Mubaira is one of the areas that have suffered from severe droughts which left rural people without anything to eat as their crops were burnt by the scorching heat. The available option, for rural people, was to feed on wild fruits and seek help from well wishers.

Failure to harvest caused old aged people find other strategies to gain a living and by so doing they ended up not relying on one livelihood strategy, like agriculture. The country has been suffering from both economic and political crisis that has left aged people vulnerable. Real incomes have been eroded by a hyper-inflationary environment and jobs have been cut as one reaches retirement age. Therefore for aged people to counter such hardships and challenges the alternative is to spread their wings and to diversify to other livelihood

strategies. Clearly then the aged have diversified into meaningful activities that have enhanced their livelihoods. Society has always undermined and undervalued the contributions of older people and, as a result, perceptions of later life are tainted by the presumption that older people are largely dependent on their households, communities or the state. Undervaluation of the contributions of older people marginalizes them from development thinking and policy, just as it marginalizes other groups, such as women and children, and this contributes to the persistence of old age poverty.

8.5 Rental Income and livelihood provision

Non-farm income has not only been limited to the provision of self employment and remittances; rather, it includes rental income obtained by leasing land or other properties. Physical property contributes to the generation of income. Leasing of land and other properties has ensured an income flow for elderly people in Mubaira. Aged people who were once employed in the urban areas indicated that they have been getting a constant monthly income by renting out their houses in the urban centers. The high costs of living in the urban centers has seen most aged people relocating to rural areas where life seems to be cheaper and where they feel they can freely rest and do their own things. Not only has the renting or leasing of urban houses helped aged people gain extra income but it was noted that physical assets, such as shops in the Mubaira growth point, have also generated extra income. One of the respondents indicated how she was able to get a reliable monthly income through the rental from her late husband's shop, now leased to a local businessman. However, lack of financial and limited human capital led her to lease the assets and this has generated income for the past five years, enough for the education of the children and for other important needs at the household level.

Better off aged people with physical assets, such as, tractors, cattle, ploughs, and cultivators have rented out these resources to the poorer who do not have them. Not much is gained from such diversified income activities but the little they get does improve their income. Retrenchment and retirement packages helped aged people who worked in better paying jobs to buy assets such as lorries, mini buses and small cars which they have been able to hire out to organisations and individuals in Mubaira so that they can earn a living. This livelihood strategy is a way to improve income levels rather than a survival strategy. One of the aged people reported the following;

“.....I am also involved in off- farm activities that include a transport fleet that carries bulk products for farmers. Most of my clients have been farmers and NGOs that transport food aid to disadvantaged people. I started this business when I got the first lorry as a token of appreciation from the battery company. This has helped me so much as the income keeps my other businesses afloat” (Life history no 8, June 2010)

The aged in Mubaira have managed to convert physical assets into income generating assets by leasing and renting them out. Again Ellis's (2000) assertion that the accumulation of assets is very important to the generation of income is confirmed.

8.6 Rural wage employment

Wage employment is critical in generating income for people both in rural and urban centers. Bravemen (1995) posits that human labour power is critical in the capitalist economy as it ensures that work is done. Most elderly people at some point in their life time sold their labour power to gain a livelihood for themselves and their children. By engaging in labour the anticipated return for the worker are wages and/or a salary. The study reveals that the rural economy of Mubaira does not provide formal employment opportunities for aged people, rather young people compete for paid employment. Only 15 % of the aged people reported that they were involved in formal labour processes whenever they could. However, the only work available was in farming. Seasonal labour predominates in rural Zimbabwe where poor people seek part time or casual labour in exchange for money and, at times, food. Mubaira is

surrounded by former white commercial farms and during the rainy season labour opportunities are available as farmers seek to enhance their total crop production. The study noted that poor elderly women rely on this activity to gain a minimum level of living. Aged people have been preferred by farm owners as they do not demand high wages as do young people. Although seasonal labour has been an alternative option for the aged in Mubaira one must question its sustainability and its value to overall livelihood improvement and well-being. Conditions in farm employment can be harsh. The aged may work from 5am-5pm for less than what younger workers would get at the end of the week. The labour process in commercial farms is exploitative. The desire to survive and gain an income is the prime reason why aged people engage in such employment. Some of the aged people indicated that for working 70 hours they received \$US2 (equivalent to 16 Rands), or a bar of green soap and 2kgs of sugar.

Ellis (2000:56) notes that this type of diversification sees household members undertaking casual and low productivity activities with poor prospects. Ghosh and Bharadwaj (1992) refer to this as a last resort rather than an attractive alternative livelihood strategy. Such a livelihood strategy instead of helping the aged leaves them vulnerable to sickness as they work throughout the day without proper nutritious food.

Although aged people have tended to diversify their livelihood strategies, seasonal income opportunities are detrimental to the survival of the elderly leaving them exhausted and with little gain. There is no future benefit in such activities. They yield low returns that are consumed without livelihood improvement. It is a survival strategy only. Having discussed the various strategies that are undertaken by aged people as they seek to sustain, enhance and improve their livelihoods, it is imperative to turn to the other core aim of the study, the issue

of whether the aged have been supported in their livelihood activities and to what extent help is received by them.

8.7 The role of Social Capital in the livelihoods of the aged people in Mubaira

As the preceding sections of the study have pointed out, natural, physical, human and social capital are productive resources facilitating social networks between individuals, institutions and organisations in livelihood building. Associations in which people participate are very important as they provide support that contributes to their livelihoods. One of the key questions addressed in this study concerns the support services available to the aged people in Mubaira community. As already indicated, the elderly, in Mubaira are not formally supported by the government which causes them to face poverty. However the study does reveal different forms of supports by the extended family and civil society. In some instances such support services have become the last resort for aged people, when their own efforts fail to yield anything. The role of the family in providing remittances, and the role played by different civic organisations, will be analysed in this section.

8.7.1 The role of remittances

Apart from being engaged in RHBI, old aged people in Mubaira have relied on remittances from their children and other family members or relatives. According to Maphosa (2005:5), there is no agreed definition of remittances but a common one defines remittances as money or goods that are transmitted to the households back home by people working away from their communities of origin (Ratha, 2003). One of the most important investments made by aged people throughout their life time was to educate their children anticipating that at a later stage in life these children will take care of them. It is strongly believed that in most developing countries especially in Africa, the care of the aged is not the duty of the state but rather of their children and other close relatives. This is one of the principal reasons why aged

people in Zimbabwe have not been getting any assistance from the state. It dates back to the colonial period before independence in 1980, where only aged people of the white community received social security benefits from the government. The majority of blacks were believed to be cared for by their children and relatives. Aged people in Mubaira have reported how remittances whether in money or in kind have managed to keep them afloat in difficult times. According to Maphosa (2005:6), rural to urban and regional to international migrants have contributed much to the livelihood and survival of the poor rural people in Zimbabwe. Chimhowu et.al (2003) posits that there are three schools of thought that best describe remitting behaviour. These are the risk sharing, altruism and risk sharing/altruism schools of thought. According to the risk sharing approach, remittances are installments for individual risk management. As premium payments for future risks, remittances allow the remaining household members to secure their livelihoods in the event of external shocks, such as, loss of employment or drought.

Secondly, the altruism or livelihoods school views remittances as motivated by an obligation to contribute to household security. Remittances are sent out of affection and as a responsibility towards the family. In this scenario the remitter is simply part of a spatially extended household that is reducing the risk of impoverishment by diversifying across a number of activities. Finally, the third school of thought combines altruism and self-interest to explain remitting behaviour. Remitting behaviour is motivated by both self-interest and altruism. All these schools or approaches are reflected in the case of old aged people in Mubaira community. Their children or relatives have been driven by the desire to ensure old age household security and protecting the household against risks and shocks. The overall need is to ensure that aged people's livelihoods are maintained or improved rather than to see

them deteriorate. Remittances in cash and kind by family members living and working in urban centers and in other countries contribute to household food security.

8.7.2 Cash Remittances in Mubaira

The study found that cash remittances are more common than remittances in kind. In Zimbabwe where multiple currencies are operative, aged people have received cash from different sources. The vast majority of Zimbabwean migrants regularly send remittances in cash and/or kind to their loved ones. According to Tavera et al (2008), in recent years remittance flows have increased due to the growing number of Zimbabwean migrants who transfer cash and goods through both formal (e.g. banks, dedicated money transfer agencies and the Post Office) and informal (e.g. carrying in person or sending with a friend, relative or co-worker) channels. Aged people indicate that due to the economic woes facing the country a number of young people have migrated to urban centers across the country or have left the country for greener pastures in South Africa, Botswana, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. Although some of these might face problems in the host country, they have made efforts to ensure that they remit at least something for their poor aged parents. Cash remittances have played a crucial role in the lives of aged people. One of the aged observed:

“Our children have been so supportive such that they send us money every month. My son who is in South Africa every month sends me R1000-00 through Western Union money transfer and this has been so helpful to me as I can buy the basic needs for my household. All my children are aware that we have a small business we are operating but that has never hindered them from helping us. As a result of this continued flow of income I have managed to open a bank account where I save all the money that I will use later. This has helped us so much because when there is anything we need we simply go to withdraw money from the bank and when the agricultural season approaches we also take some money to buy fertilizers and use the other for land preparation” (Life narrative no 3, June 2010)

This observation shows how much remittances do help aged people in Mubaira. The fact that aged people are making a living by other means has not stopped their children from supporting them. This means that remittances are sent even for the better off aged people who can take care of themselves. In times of financial crisis capital remittances have helped aged

people kick-start their livelihood enhancing projects. They have mainly been used to provide for households' basic needs as defined by Sander and Maimbo (2003) including food, clothing, shelter, education of grandchildren and health care. Food security has been important for the aged and to that cause almost all remittance receiving households in Mubaira community mention food as one of the uses of remittances. This situation in Mubaira therefore coincides with what Hobane (1999) says about the precarious food security situation in the area where most of the household income is spent on food because harvests may not last to the next harvest season. Another important aspect raised by the aged people concerning their remittances was that they help them to purchase agricultural implements such as fertilizers, seeds and pesticides. Cash remittances have been complimented by non-cash remittances in the form of groceries, clothes, farm implements and other valuable assets.

8.7.3 Non-cash remittances

The elderly in Mubaira indicated how much they have benefited from non cash remittances from their children and relatives. The study found that the most remitted goods are foodstuffs such as maize-meal, sugar, salt and cooking oil, consumer goods and valuable assets such as clothes, blankets, bicycles, radios, agricultural inputs and building material. The economic crisis caused an increase in the remittance of food stuffs to rural areas when retail shops for months had empty shelves, both in urban and rural areas. The only option was to buy food on the black market at more than double the original price in the shop, or people with enough money started to import groceries from South Africa and other neighbouring countries. Maphosa (2005:6) adds that most non-cash remittances responded to the specific and immediate needs of their recipients. When Zimbabwe faced a shortage of basic commodities, particularly between 2002 and 2005, non-cash remittances in the form of food provided relief to the recipients. During holiday times children would pay their parents a visit in the rural

areas and bring them all sorts of goods to offset household insecurity. One elderly person indicated how remittances in the form of diesel fuel helps her to keep her business going in Mubaira. She said :

“One of my children makes sure that we have a constant supply of diesel for our grinding machine because at times our local service station might be out of supply”. (In-depth interview no 11, June 2010)

The aged in Mubaira have been helped in their livelihoods by non cash remittances received from their children. Clearly remittances are extremely important to old aged household survival in Zimbabwe. The study found that more than 60% of the 25 interviewed people said that the migrancy of their children has had a positive effect for them. Aged people regarded remittances as important for household food security and to providing for medicine and medical treatment. The importance of remittances can be determined by basic household expenditure analyses. Aged people in Mubaira perceived remittances to be vital to their livelihood needs.

8.8 Civil society to the Rescue

It is important to link the micro with the macro situations and to considering older people's individual strategies in the wider context of their community, society and state. The realization that the government fails to provide social security for its senior citizens was an important motive for this study. Aged people are among the vulnerable groups who should receive social protection from the state. The United Nations Principles of Older Persons (1991) encouraged governments to incorporate in their national programmes the principles of older persons whenever possible. Among them are; access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care through the provision of income, family and community support and self-help. Evidence from Zimbabwe reveals that social protection for the aged was last implemented by the colonial government before independence in 1980. Since then there was no policy for their care. Aged people in Mubaira indicated that the government has failed to

provide social protection, and that has perpetuated their suffering. As indicated before, countries that have old age pensions for their senior citizens have thereby reduced poverty levels significantly.

However, the study found that in the absence of state participation in the care of the aged, civil society has come to the rescue. NGOs and political parties in Mubaira have provided assistance to aged people in times of need. NGOs are part of the alternative development paradigm that arose in the 1970s as a response to the failures of mainstream development initiated by the state (Pokharel, 2000). Brown (1988) views NGOs as potentially critical catalysts for unlocking the energies and resources of the poor and voiceless in their endeavour to build pluralistic and democratic societies. Though NGOs' activities are broad, it was found that their focus in Mubaira is limited to fighting hunger. Aged people revealed that NGOs have come to their rescue in times of hunger after droughts destroyed their crops. NGOs like Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and World Food Programme (WFP) mainly focused on helping vulnerable groups such as the aged, widows and orphans to fight food insecurity. The services of these NGOs focus on the distribution of items such as rice, sugar beans, cooking oil and soya meat. This aid has helped aged people in times of hunger, especially in the year 2007, when the country experienced total crop failure. To the aged people, NGOs were their last hope for survival as other channels of aid failed to deliver, even the most reliable children and relatives failed to provide care for the elderly.

An analysis of the role of NGOs and political parties in Mubaira reveals that although these organisations have provided humanitarian assistance, their services are short lived as they only seek to avert a food crisis at a particular moment. Their assistance is based on the current state of affairs in the rural area. Improvements in crop harvest levels entail that these

organisations cease to assist aged people with food handouts. The danger with such interventions is that it leaves a dependency syndrome among the elderly that may cause them to become passive, idle and unproductive. Although the SLA acknowledges the roles of organisations in helping the poor to attain sustainable livelihoods, the evidence of the study does not really support its core principles. According to DFID (2000), the approach focuses on two main aspects which help to understand the complexities of poverty and includes a set of principles to guide action to address and overcome poverty. Looking at the help offered by civil society institutions it cannot be said that their activities are geared to ensure sustainable poverty eradication but, rather, it is only meant to avert a food crisis at a particular moment and the help is not beneficial in the long run. Sustainable interventions would entail assistance which would benefit aged people in the long run, for example by financing rural projects such as agriculture, poultry and small business. Since the SLA places people at the forefront, it is imperative for these organizations to look at how they can assist the aged to safeguard their livelihoods by engaging in different activities and using the assets at their disposal. Therefore, although civil society has been at the forefront in helping aged people, their assistance is short lived. One would consider it just as a survival strategy meant to avert food crisis. Livelihood activities which are resilient and adaptable to shocks and trends are the ones that produce sustainable outcomes.

8.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the various activities engaged in by the aged in Mubaira as they seek to increase their income levels. It noted a shift from on-farm activities to more economically oriented off-farm activities meant to improve the income of the elderly in Mubaira. As supported by SLA, livelihood diversification has been one of the strategies open to and used by rural dwellers. Diversification was seen to be either voluntary or forced depending on the status of the individual. To the majority of old aged people, diversification

of livelihoods was driven by necessity as more income was needed. For a few better off elderly people, diversification was by choice, to increase their economic status. For them absolute poverty did not threaten them as they could even remit back income to their struggling children in the urban areas. Agriculture was found to be insufficient for maintaining the desired livelihood of the elderly hence they had to adopt other strategies to gain more income. Aged people in Mubaira have been involved in many off farm activities that have given them some extra cash to sustain themselves and their households. Through the application of the RHBI approach it was noted that aged people engage in self-employments that benefit both them and the wider community. The chapter also noted the role played by remittances from urban areas and other countries. Remittances from children have allowed aged people to make a living. The role of civil society too has helped aged people to combat hunger even as the state remains dysfunctional. Although civil society has managed to combat the effects of shocks the concern is for the future of the elderly. Livelihood diversification and agriculture have been the dominant modes to sustain aged people in Mubaira in their livelihood in the absence of social security systems. These strategies have managed to contain food insecurity and have also improved the income earning capacity of the elderly, thus improving their well-being. However, although aged people have been able to progress in their pursuit of a better living the study found that they still face many challenges that, at times, impact on sustainable livelihood outcomes. Using one of the core concepts of SLA, the following chapter traces the context in which aged people have been operating to show how various factors have hindered them or limited them in achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Chapter Nine

Factors affecting old age livelihoods in Mubaira: An analysis of the Vulnerability Context

9.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have highlighted the various livelihood strategies that have been employed by aged people in Mubaira in the face of old age poverty. One of the principal objectives of this study was to explore the various challenges affecting old aged people's rural livelihoods. The SLA was utilised as the best framework for the analysis of rural livelihoods. One of its benefits is that it reveals the vulnerability context in which rural people construct their livelihoods. By utilising the vulnerability approach, the study was able to identify the various factors and challenges that have affected old age rural livelihoods. In the study, the elderly people revealed that political, economic, social and environmental factors have hindered them to achieve and maintain sustainable livelihoods. This chapter seeks to analyse the different factors that affect old age rural livelihoods in Mubaira and uses the vulnerability approach derived from the main theoretical framework. The vulnerability approach analyses each of the factors in detail and considers how they hinder or enhance achievement of sustainable livelihoods.

9.2 Analysis of the Vulnerability context of the aged people

Livelihoods are determined by the vulnerability context, the conditions and trends in the rural environment (Ellis, 2000). According to DFID (2000), the vulnerability context within which people pursue their livelihoods is an important factor. Challenges and stresses on the livelihood system must be analyzed and assessed. According to Ekin (2005), the study of vulnerability has a long history, especially in approaches to natural disasters, social

development, epidemiology and famine. It is believed that the vulnerability context of poor people's livelihoods is usually influenced by external factors beyond the direct control of the poor. These relate to wider institutions, policies and processes. Evidence from the study in Mubaira indicates that both endogenous and exogenous factors affect the rural aged in pursuing sustainable rural livelihood outcomes. Old aged people in Mubaira have been vulnerable to many factors that affect their livelihoods. The SLA has been critical on the understanding of rural livelihoods as it portrays the different contexts or environment in which rural people operate in as they pursue their livelihoods. According to Rakodi and Jones (2002), the context in which livelihoods are analysed may be economic, political, social and environmental. In each of them may be what Ellis (2000:38) calls shocks, trends and cycles.

According to Start and Johnson (2004), a shock is a relatively brief active stress, such as, drought, epidemic, or a fall in output prices. It should be noted that their effects may be long-lived, or a series of individually minor impacts may ratchet up to form a major one over time. On the other hand, if a shock is more gradual it becomes a trend that include demographic changes, changes in the natural resource base, recurring seasonal changes, price changes or changes in employment opportunities. All these contexts exert different pressures and stresses on rural people, which have negative and positive outcomes in their livelihoods. Table 9.1 below summarizes the external factors that affect livelihoods.

Table 9.1: External factors that affect livelihoods. Adapted from DFID (2000)

Trends	Shocks	Seasonality
Resources	Natural	Employment opportunities
Technological	Economic	Prices
Governance	Crop/Livestock health	Production
Population	Conflict	Health

The main purpose here is to analyse how these four factors affect aged people as they construct sustainable livelihoods. Old age people reported different factors that affected their household's well being and increase their insecurity. To understand the vulnerability context one must know what is meant by the term vulnerability itself. Recapping what has already been said, vulnerability entails insecurity about one's well-being. Insecurity may affect individuals, households or communities in the face of a changing environment. As a result of such changes increased risk and uncertainty become apparent in declining self respect (Moser, 1996). Moser's point of view on change affecting the elderly links up with the view of social gerontologists who believe that the process of ageing is a process of social change accompanied by many difficulties and challenges such as loss of employment or regular income, health deterioration, etc. The changing global economics, politics, environment and social issues all impact negatively on the aged who struggle to maintain a living. Using the vulnerability context approach of the SLA framework, the following sections will discuss how these factors have affected aged people in Mubaira.

9.2.1 Economic crises

By applying both the retrospective and circumspective approaches to livelihood research the study was able to outline how past economic activities did affect the current livelihood strategies of the aged in Mubaira. Barrientos et al (2003) argue that economic adjustments

brought about by globalization, changes in labour market conditions, and especially social sector reforms, have adversely affected the livelihoods of older people. Zimbabwe's economic crisis which followed the controversial confiscation of land by the government in the year 2000, has had a negative impact on the livelihoods of ordinary Zimbabweans. The elderly in Mubaira said that the hyper-inflationary environment in the country did affect their livelihoods, especially their incomes. This view was expressed by one of the in-depth interviewees as follows:

Ever since the year 2000 prices of goods have sky rocketed as a result of the government's land reform. At time prices of basic commodities would rise two or three fold in a space of two days. This has resulted in many people failing to live the lives they once enjoyed. For me the non-cash remittance I used to receive from my children have dried up mainly because my children can no longer afford the high prices of commodities in the retail shops (In-depth interview 13, June 2010).

The major cause was production in the critical sectors of the economy, including industry, manufacturing, commerce, mining, tourism and agriculture which resulted in the increase of prices of goods and services. The Zimbabwean dollar lost its financial strength such that inflation rose to around 231 million percent (UN, 2008). The biggest threat to livelihood improvement is inflation and the price increase of food and other basic commodities, which, in themselves, are symptoms of fundamental macroeconomic disequilibria. The continued rise of prices of goods and services meant that people had to adapt to new livelihood strategies. Aged people indicated that the money that they had saved for later use became totally worthless. The failure to control inflation resulted in the government printing higher denominations of money. One of the elderly interviewees revealed the worthlessness of the valueless Zimbabwe dollar which could not even buy a loaf of bread. The pictures below show some denominations of the Zimbabwe dollar in notes that have been printed by the reserve bank of Zimbabwe in the past 10 years.

Picture 9.1 A selection of Zimbabwe Reserve Bank bearer cheques printed between July 2007 and July 2008 (now expired) that illustrate hyperinflation in Zimbabwe.

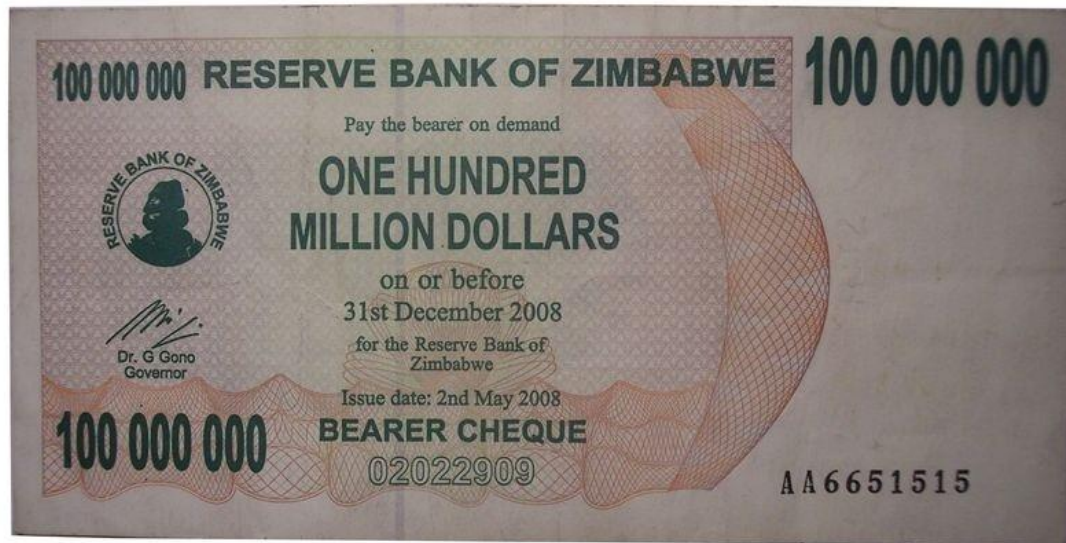


Figure 9.1: Bearer cheques printed in Zimbabwe as legal tender (2000-2009)

These notes, the interviewees said, had no purchase power to sustain their livelihoods. The situation was exacerbated in 2007 when the country faced food shortages in the shops, a situation that exposed rural people to food insecurity. The effects of recurring droughts meant that rural older people had to resort to buying food. This was not to be as food shortages were a double blow to the elderly who now faced starvation and hunger. The food crisis caused poor households to reduce food expenses and cut down on non-staple food consumption.

These coping mechanisms first affected the diversity (micronutrient content) and adequacy of diets, the size of portions eaten and, ultimately, the energy intake. This was compounded by cutbacks on other expenditures, such as health costs, which further jeopardized the health situation of the vulnerable (UN, 2008).

Because of the deepening economic crisis in Zimbabwe the new government of national unity that was formed after a coalition of the ruling Zanu PF and the two MDC parties restructured the monetary policy by scrapping the local currency. This saw the country adopting multiple currencies including the US dollar, South African Rand, British Sterling Pound and the Botswana Pula. One of the fundamental effects as indicated by the aged of adopting the use of foreign currency is that all their savings, investments and profits in the local currency came to nothing. Financial institutions, such as banks could not repay their losses in foreign currency as this crisis was national. Mubaira's elderly said this was a big blow to them as it affected all their plans. The fact that they were not employed and relied on income savings meant that aged people had to go back to the drawing board. The following interview comments reveal the concern of the aged about the switch to foreign currency;

- *“It all went wrong when the new currency came into circulation, it is difficult for you to get even \$1 in a space of three weeks”. (In-depth Interview no 4, June 2010)*

and

- *“The economic woes in this country have made life so difficult for the aged people. Even before the government officially introduced foreign currency in the economy, most businesses had already resorted to use foreign currency as the Zimbabwean dollar had lost its value way back in 2006. Resources such as building material, farm implements were sold in foreign currency and the prices were too high such that it became unbearable for us to buy them. Instead some companies resorted to barter exchange i.e. one tonne of maize was exchanged for a one tonne of fertilizer. This was perpetuated by the shortages of food stuffs in the country and at that moment maize was the most sought commodity”. (Life history no 1, June 2010)*

The study also found that after the switch to foreign currency the government stopped paying pensioners their benefits. This impacted negatively on aged people who were relying on their pension for basic commodities. The reason for non-payment of pensions was that the government could not pay pensions, as it was broke. The government froze all wages of public workers to US\$100-00 per month. A lot can be said on how the economic crisis caused the difficult situations to which Zimbabweans have been subjected, but it has seriously affected the livelihoods of the aged as their life savings were devoured by inflation. Clearly the economic context in which rural livelihoods are pursued has been a matter of great concern to aged people. The economic situation in the country can be attributed to the tensions within the political spheres. The following section discusses how the political factors are contributing to the challenges facing elderly people in Mubaira.

9.2.2 Political factors

According to Townsend (1999), the political economy perspective helps in the understanding of the interrelationships between polity, economy, and society, or, more specifically, the reciprocal influences among government, the economy, social classes, strata and status groups. One cannot separate the polity and the economy. The economic crisis in Zimbabwe has been widely blamed on poor politics by the government of Zimbabwe. Poor economic policies and human rights abuses attracted the attention of the international community such that they imposed sanctions on the country that have negatively impact on poor people. Mubaira's elderly people reported that they have suffered from political persecution through police brutality. They also report that at times they were left out in the distribution of food because of being affiliated to opposition parties. Voices from the study confirm this:

“The local leaders did not consider me to be among the beneficiaries solely because I support the opposition party. This really affected me as I do not have anywhere to get assistance. I wish I could also get the assistance which other elderly people are getting”.
(In-depth interview, no. 6, June 2010)

Such exclusion and discrimination had an impact on livelihood outcomes, as aged people were subjected to hunger and starvation. According to Bratton and Masunungure (2005), state repression has been one of the political tools that affected aged people immensely. In the year 2005, the government initiated a violent campaign both in urban and rural areas that was called Operation Murambatsvina (OM). From the government's point of view it was meant to restore order and sanity in human settlements by getting rid of illegal activities by the demolition of illegally built structures such as business premises and houses. The result was that some poor aged people lost their sources of livelihood, as informal businesses were shut down in urban areas and their houses demolished, as the city council considered them unfit for human habitation. This brutal activity by the state affected livelihoods both in the urban and rural areas. Those displaced in the urban centers relocated to the rural areas where they exerted more pressure on the already scarce resources there. The interview comment reveals the pain aged people went through due to the government's order to destroy houses;

“...It was a painful event as a lot of people lost their property. This was the reason why we had to relocate to the rural areas. My husband comes from Musinami village here in Mubaira so after our house was destroyed by Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Restore Order) we were left with no option but to relocate to the rural areas. Surprisingly we were not the only people affected in that village as some people who were in Harare had to return back to their roots after their shacks were destroyed”. (Life narrative no 3, June 2010)

So rural people had to compete with the victims of the operation in the scramble for scarce resources. SLA places state policies, regulations and processes in the institutional context that impacts on the livelihoods positively or negatively. OM placed aged people in jeopardy as it destroyed their sources of livelihood, their physical assets and their well-being.

Masanjala (2006) too notes that the vulnerability context and the sustainability of livelihood outcomes faced by a household depend in part on macro and meso-level institutions and policies as well as community-level institutions (i.e. transforming structures and processes). Government policies have had an impact on livelihood building for the aged people in Mubaira. The study found that poor government policies have impacted on aged people

negatively. In the year 2008-2009, the government of Zimbabwe through its Ministry of Social Welfare and Services ordered the suspension of all operations of all humanitarian organisations in the country. This was a political move sparked by the government's understanding that these humanitarian organisations campaigned for opposition parties through their distribution of aid. The withdrawal of NGOs from the rural areas exposed poor aged people to hunger and starvation. In the absence of support the livelihood security of vulnerable group such as orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), HIV/AIDS patients and aged people was threatened. Clearly political decisions meant to maintain the hegemony of those in power did really affected poor people who depended heavily on private assistance. Among the organisations that were affected were CARE Zimbabwe, Eyes for Africa, USAID, and SIDA. The elderly in Mubaira criticised the government for this move as it destroyed their livelihood sources provided by the services of these organisations. This was echoed by the national marketing officer of NANGO, an association that represents NGOs in Zimbabwe, who said;

“Banning the NGOs would jeopardize the livelihoods of millions of Zimbabweans to the point of being catastrophic. Millions of Zimbabweans depend on NGOs for food, medication, education, human rights and democracy support.” (www.newzimbabwe.com/2008/june)

Though the decision was later reversed, the damage had already been done as most of the NGOs who operated in Mubaira did not resume their services to the vulnerable groups. From a political economy perspective, it clearly shows that changes in the political sphere exert influence on the social front thus affecting the livelihoods of the poor. Economic sanctions against the country do not hurt those in power, rather, it is the ordinary poor men and women who suffer as life-lines for the impoverished in the country are cut off.

9.3 HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic has had a negative impact on the livelihoods of the aged in Mubaira community. Although the aged are not the ones infected by the HIV virus, they have assumed

the duties of caring for the grandchildren who are left behind by their parents who died of AIDS. The relationship between poverty and HIV/AIDS needs to be understood. Loewenson and Whiteside (2001) and UNAIDS (2002) reveal that the conventional view of the poverty-HIV/AIDS nexus is that, HIV/AIDS undermines livelihoods by eroding affected households' resource base, thereby increasing vulnerability to future collapse. The central argument being that the experience of AIDS by individuals, households and even communities can readily lead to an increase in the number of impoverished households and intensification of poverty among those that are already deprived. This was found to be true for Mubaira according to the interviewed. Due to the AIDS pandemic aged people have lost livelihood sources in the form of children and relatives who had been supporting them with remittances. As Masanjala (2006) pointed out the AIDS epidemic depreciates social capital in that death and sickness erode social networks. Social capital in the form of remittances has been a dominant source of livelihoods in the rural areas.

As a result of these deaths their income was reduced and they had to look for other options. Moreover aged people end up caring for the children left behind by their parents. It has always been believed that elderly-headed households or female-headed households are vulnerable groups of people in the first place. Care for orphans only adds to vulnerability where the elderly person has limited income ability skills and the orphan is too young to help provide for the family (Save the Children, 2004). Caring for orphans adds to the burden of the old aged household with limited income. Younger children put a strain on the household, both in terms of cost of material need, and requirements. Aged people struggled to take care of themselves and now they struggle to meet the needs of others in terms of health, educational, clothing and many other needs. Many studies in Africa have explored the impact of HIV/AIDS on the livelihoods of the aged. According to Save the Children (2004),

HIV/AIDS affects food security and livelihoods in very different ways for different households. The study found the elderly to be concerned about their care for orphaned children as they struggle to obtain food to meet their nutritional requirements. Elderly people can eat the same meals without changing their diet but younger children need a variety of balanced meals to ensure their health. This has caused aged people to look for other income earning opportunities. Lack of nutritious diets results in malnutrition for the children and, in turn to emotional for stress on the aged people as they fail to adequately meet the needs of the younger ones. One aged person said:

“....As an aged widow I face a major challenge of taking care of orphans who were left by their parents because of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I don’t have enough to take care of them and my only working son is doing his best but cannot end my problems....” (Life history no 9, June 2010)

Such an elderly person really finds it difficult to cope with the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in rural Mubaira. It should be noted that aged people have lost sources of livelihood in the form of remittances that used to be provided by their children, and now assume the burden of caring for the children left behind. HAI (2004) states the burden of care, often characterised by intergenerational links, is a major factor in determining vulnerability. Six million children in sub-Saharan Africa are cared for by grandparents in missing generation households, the poorest households in Africa (Kakwani and Subbarao, 2005). They fail to meet the nutritional needs of the young ones as they lack inadequate income. It is only the better off who are able to fully take care of the orphaned children, but the rest of the poor must find ways to improve their livelihoods.

9.4 Health issues of the aged people

Health (a component of human capital) is both a determinant and an outcome of livelihood strategies. The health of the aged people has been a concern in the construction of livelihoods. According to Rakodi and Jones (2000), good health, free from sickness, is one of

the fundamental aspects of human capital. Health and livelihoods strategies are linked, in that good physical and mental health are needed for production, reproduction, learning and participation. The formally employed retire at 65 because they are considered less fit for work. From a biological and physiological point of view, one is vulnerable to sicknesses as body cells become weaker and less functional. The elderly in Mubaira indicated that one of the inhibiting factors in their endeavour to construct livelihoods is their deteriorating physique. The study found that aged people in Mubaira have been vulnerable to sicknesses and illness due to lack of health care. They said that the implementation of economic reforms, such as structural adjustment programmes resulted in the government scrapping subsidies on primary health care, giving rise to user fees. Initially, since Zimbabwe's Independence in 1980, the Ministry of Health adopted a policy of Primary Health Care for All that expanded health services to the majority of the rural population. The components of a Primary Health Care system for the elderly included the following: pension, social security and welfare schemes; housing; nutrition; water; sanitation; rehabilitation and disabilities control and treatment of diseases; health education; and a demography and health information system (Ramji, 2000).

The introduction of user fees saw aged people paying for such services. Health care became very expensive for aged people who lacked the income to cover themselves. In developed countries aged people are fully covered and therefore are able to live long lives. Life expectancy figures in developing and developed countries show that in the latter aged people live longer than in the former due to good health schemes and better nutritional diets. As one aged person remarked:

“I have health problems, my knee has been swollen for a long-time and I cannot help it out as I do not have the money to go for an operation. One of my children managed to take me to the hospital and I was told that I developed a growth in my knee that needed to be removed by a specialist doctor in Harare. I cannot get the required \$5000-00 (equivalent to R47 000) for the operation to

take place. Sometimes I get herbs from a local friend to ease the pain but that does not stop it from swelling again” (Life narrative no 4, June 2010)

The study found that the health problems affecting aged people's livelihoods would be easily dealt with if they had primary health cover. Among most common problems are those of eye sight, arthritis and frailty. Such sicknesses hinder aged people in carrying out their livelihood activities or cause them to stay in bed rather than working. One aged person said that she had to leave her lifetime livelihood activity of tailoring due to poor eye sight. Due to the higher cost of proper health care elderly people in Mubaira have been relying on traditional medicine instead. Aged people in Mubaira have always believed in the power of traditional medicine as a source of healing. As already indicated from the life history narrative number (4) above, herbs from the forest are used to ease pain and to make one strong.

9.5 Absence of credit markets

Access to credit is essential for one to start a business. Poor people in Mubaira have not intensified their activities because they lack adequate financial, physical and human capital. For that purpose aged people in Mubaira mention this as a hindrance to social mobility. Since they lack collateral security banks will not lend to them financial capital. Ellis (2000) contends that the severity of this constraint is typically due to the poor functioning of rural financial markets in developing countries. That applies for the rural economy of Mubaira where there is only one small bank that only allows people to deposit and withdraw funds, not for the provision of loans. Rural areas in developing countries have always been neglected in term of infrastructural development and services. This neglect has really affected the elderly especially those who farm. Loans are needed to buy seeds, fertilizer, labour power, machinery and other requirements. Then too there is the poor development of proper marketing institutions. This has seen aged people failing to deliver their products on time. The Grain Marketing Board (GMB) is the only viable agricultural marketing institution

available in Mubaira. Rural farmers made mention of their failure to deliver crops like cotton because of the absence of a marketing board. This has really affected rural livelihoods as failure to deliver produce results in loss of expected income. The reason is that, at times, the aged fail to find transport to the nearest marketing depots. Poor road networks have seen most transport providers pulling off their fleets as they fail to repair them.

Organisational incapacity to deliver services has negatively affected the livelihoods of the aged people. This is shown in the failure to pay rural farmers their agricultural produce timeously. After selling their agricultural produce rural farmers may have to wait up to three months to receive payment. That affects preparation for the next farming season and jeopardises the whole livelihood construction process. In times of hyper-inflation the payment received after three months may be worth much less than at the time of the sale. One of the aged people reported as follows:

“There is a problem that I always face each and every season. Whenever I deliver maize to the GMB it takes months for me to receive my pay cheque. This is disadvantaging me as I rely on this cash so much. My job is that of a full time farmer and in so doing financial resource is the major aspect if you want to be successful. Sometimes a new season can start without even receiving the money for the previous year. The marketing of our products is a concern as the buyer fails to deliver its mandate. This therefore affects all my plans and also my livelihood. I have two workers who work in the fields and they also need to be paid. Without money I fail to buy food, clothes, blankets and access health care at the hospital.”
(Life narrative no 1, June 2010)

This short account explicitly reveals how the failures of marketing bodies have affected the livelihood patterns of the aged in Mubaira. The SLA framework recognises the impact of institutional processes on livelihood outcomes and here such institutions negatively affect aged people and contribute to old age poverty.

9.6 Old age poverty in Mubaira

Poverty is a multi-dimensional concept that may be measured in many ways. A closer look at poverty in Mubaira suggests that it is as a result of vulnerability and a cause of vulnerability. According to Butterfill (2005), vulnerability helps us to understand the dynamics of poverty. Populations, households, and individuals face various risks that can plunge them into poverty, and so societies take steps to reduce vulnerability and to cope with the effects when shocks do occur. Vulnerability indicates exposure to hazards and the likelihood that the welfare of an individual or household will fall below minimum consumption levels. The study found that exposure to trends and shocks such as droughts, economic crises and, HIV/AIDS leads aged people into poverty. As noted earlier, the 2006-2008 droughts left aged people in absolute poverty after crops failure. The Impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has affected social capital by disrupting the flow of remittances after the death of the children who used to remit. The study found that absolute poverty is present in Mubaira as some elderly people reported that they live under the poverty datum line of \$1US per day. They face food insecurity and have to rely on help from others. An extract from the study supports this assertion;

“I am facing a lot of challenges and the major being poverty (Nhamo). Personally I’m facing the challenge of a proper diet. I used to eat good food before I became an old aged person as I could fend for myself and used to get enough income. When one gets old he/she needs good food especially soft food because most of the aged people no longer have teeth. My diet is always defined from Monday to Sunday as I eat Sadza (papa) and vegetables in the morning and then eat the same meal in the evening. Usually when I receive food aid from the NGOs that’s when I can have a different taste as I get sugar beans and some other things. I wish to have a proper breakfast with bread, tea and even eggs but my situation does not allow that. So I can say that I am in dire poverty”. (Life narrative no 7, June 2010)

Clearly such a person struggles to make a basic living. Kannan (2004) argues that the high incidence of old age poverty in developing countries is due to the absence of old age social security. In South Africa, says Quigley (2003), the Old Age grant is known to have an important redistributive effect. This grant has been the primary source of income for older persons who would otherwise be living in abject poverty. It is estimated to have reduced the

poverty gap by 94 percent (Quigley, 2003). In the developed countries the combination of strong social security systems, well-developed capital markets, and small households has contributed to higher living standards for the elderly (Gasparini and Alejo, 2007). In consideration of these factors, one may conclude that the failure of the government to provide a social security system has left aged people in severe poverty. Not only is absolute poverty the dominant fear of the aged, relative poverty is also an issue. Life history narratives reveal that the aged people felt that they were in poverty for lack of essential assets needed to make a living, such as, livestock harrows, scotch carts, ploughs and land. Those who did not have such assets had to rely on those who did and this exposes them to poverty, as compared to others.

9.7 Effects of Climate Change

Climate change as an environmental issue is real and ongoing. The effects of climatic change such as rising temperature and changes in precipitation are undeniably already affecting ecosystems, biodiversity and people (Case, 2006). Mubaira community is no exception to climatic change as witnessed by recurring droughts in the area. Due to changes in the rainfall pattern, the community has suffered a series of droughts in the past 10 years. This has seen crops drying up before harvest time and vegetation and grazing pastures becoming depleted. There are strong links between climate and rural livelihoods. As observed earlier, rural people in Mubaira depend heavily on rain-fed agriculture, making their livelihoods and food security highly vulnerable to climate variability (IPCC, 2001). The study found that aged people have been greatly affected by poor harvests caused by droughts, resulting in food insecurity. In the years 2002, 2007 and 2008 the government, after thorough research in rural areas, declared a national disaster as millions of people were in need of food aid after the failure of crops. Failure to harvest crops means that one has to adopt coping strategies to combat the effects of hunger. For the aged people in Mubaira the situation was exacerbated

by shortages of food commodities in the shops and so aged people began to skip meals and eat fruits for supper. When the government banned humanitarian assistance aged people were left reeling in poverty and scrambling for food. Thus climate change has affected rural livelihoods in Mubaira. The spectre of poverty is a daunting one for the poor aged people there.

9.8 Conclusion

This chapter sought to outline the various factors which hinder older people in attaining sustainable livelihood outcomes. Using the vulnerability context as the model of analysis it was found that aged people are affected by both endogenous and exogenous factors whether from a political, economic, social or ecological point of view. These factors, some of which have been initiated and perpetuated by institutional processes (global and government policies) have negatively affected the construction of livelihoods in Mubaira. The most striking factor is the economic crisis that has seen aged people losing their life time savings as a result of rampant inflation. Loss in real income and deflation of their currency left aged people very vulnerable as they lacked social security. This resulted in food crisis, failure to provide health care and more deaths among the elderly population. The impact of persistent droughts had a negative effect on food security since aged people rely mostly on agriculture as their main livelihood strategy. The HIV/AIDS pandemic too placed an extra burden on the livelihoods of the aged who had to provide for the care of their grandchildren left behind by parents who died of AIDS. The chapter was directed at understanding vulnerability among elderly people in Mubaira and came to the conclusion that not all elderly people are vulnerable, nor can vulnerability be inferred from a well-defined set of risk factors. This is because aged people have different access to capital and are endowed with different capabilities. The better off aged people managed to ensure livelihood security but the poor who lacked assets were left to eke out a living in poverty. All in all, and in spite of all these

challenges presented by the vulnerability context, the study has demonstrated that by engaging in diversified livelihood strategies the aged in Mubaira have been able eke out a living. This key finding and other subsidiary results of the study will be further reflected upon in the conclusion of the dissertation which follows below.

CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter reiterates some of the salient findings of the study about the livelihood of the elderly in Mubaira Community in Zimbabwe. The study's aim was to try and explore the various activities or livelihood strategies used by the aged as they try to make a living or stave off old age poverty. The worsening economic situation, high risks of illness, the political crisis, and recurring droughts brought about by climate change and changing global trends in labour have led to the vulnerability of the aged people in Zimbabwe. Because of the absence of formal social security systems to cater for the needs of the ageing population, the elderly people in Zimbabwe struggle to construct a better living. Research in other countries like South Africa, Lesotho, Tanzania and Botswana shows that the presence of old age pensions and grants has managed to minimise and eradicate poverty at old age. This is because, cash transfers ensure that the elderly be able to meet their basic needs such as food, clean water, shelter and health. Lack of such kind of assistance in Zimbabwe prompted this study to be carried out with a view of understanding what activities or strategies are they employing to fight against poverty at old age. Sociological theories of ageing such as the activity and continuity theories have shown that despite reaching old age, the elderly people continue to be actively involved in their various roles to attain better livelihoods and failure to do so leave them into poverty. Using the SLA, this study came to an understanding that with the presence of various capital assets which include (natural, physical, financial, human and social capital) poor people are able to engage in various livelihood strategies that can help them attain sustainable livelihoods and also combat the effects of poverty. The core principles of the SLA are that it helps in the understanding of the complexities of poverty and

present a set of principles to guide action to address and overcome poverty. Therefore this framework has been the best in understanding how old aged people in Mubaira approach poverty at old age by engaging in different livelihood activities. Driven by a desire to have a deeper understanding of the livelihood strategies of the old aged people in Mubaira, the study used an inductive approach with a qualitative research focus. Qualitative research method was intended to answer the following key research questions of the study;

- 1) What are the livelihood strategies of the aged people in Mubaira Community?
- 2) Who is working with aged people for them to make a living?
- 3) What are the challenges facing old aged people in Mubaira?
- 4) What key issues and possible interventions or positive actions are required at various levels to improve the quality of life of older people?

Livelihoods are studied using a unique approach that tries to trace the current, past and future situations of the studied population. In this study the researcher used the retrospective, circumspective and prospective approaches to gain an understanding of the elderly's situation. The circumspective ('looking around') approach concentrated on the empirical investigation of combinations of modes of livelihood at the time the research was undertaken, with 'the present' being typically construed as embracing six months or one year prior to the moment of investigation. Using in-depth interviews the study was able to make it possible to understand the current livelihood status of the elderly in Mubaira and what they are currently doing to improve their well-being. The retrospective ('looking back') approach, which uses life histories, traced the livelihood trajectories or pathways through which old aged people have moved their lives. To gain an understanding of the current situation and the present activities engaged in by the aged people, one must trace trajectories of assets acquisition and processes of change over time. Central to its effective application was the serious pursuit of longitudinal comparison, that is the past and present livelihood situation of the elderly people

in Mubaira and through life histories such need was achieved. The prospective ('looking forward') approach helped to come up with future measures that can be applied by policy makers to improve the standard of living of the elderly people. In-depth interviews with both the elderly and other support organisations indicated how this could be achieved. Empirical evidence from the study revealed that, although the elderly in Mubaira community do not receive any assistance from the government, they have not been idle but, with access to various capital assets, they have engaged into various livelihood strategies that have managed to minimise poverty in their lives. With little external support from their families, relatives and civil society organizations, old aged people in Mubaira are making a living on their own. The core argument of this study has been that poverty, which is considered as a state of deprivation, is mostly concentrated in the rural areas and it is the least equipped with resources who are most vulnerable. But with access to essential resources poor rural people are able to find a way out of poverty by engaging in various livelihood strategies. The following section briefly discusses the core arguments of this study which is based on the empirical findings which revealed that engaging into different livelihood strategies ensures a way out of poverty for the elderly in Mubaira community.

10.2 Core argument

Old aged people in Mubaira defy the propositions of the disengagement theory of ageing that says the elderly should completely withdraw from all their roles and make way for the young and able bodied. In fact they adhere to the propositions of the counter theories to the disengagement approach which are the activity and continuity perspectives. The later theories propose that elderly people should continually be involved in their different social roles for them to avert poverty at old age. The SLA has been central in the analysis of rural livelihoods. The approach presents a better method of understanding how rural people can best achieve sustainable livelihoods and eradicating poverty. As already been noted, the

approach puts poor people at the centre of a web of inter-related influences that affect how these people create a livelihood for themselves and their households. Old aged people counter the vulnerability arising from high levels of risk and uncertainty through deploying tangible and intangible assets. By engaging and participating in different livelihood activities they ensure the long-term capacity to survive or maintain their well-being. From the SLA perspective, a living is made through engagement into a number of a portfolio of activities and in the aged people's case ensures flexibility and adaptation to a wide range of misfortune and external shocks. All livelihoods approaches are actor-focused and stress the tactical and strategic behaviour of impoverished people. Tactical and strategic behavior entails the full participation of the impoverished people in the construction of their livelihoods. The principle that SLA is people-centred therefore implies that, focusing on the aged people, their engagement and active participation in fighting poverty is essential.

One notable outcome of the study is that, sustainable livelihood outcomes will not be achieved unless operationalised in a participatory manner. SLA promotes people's achievement of their own livelihood objectives and this is 'established' through participatory activities in livelihood building. What it therefore means is that, for aged people to achieve their livelihood objectives there is need for them to be actively involved in livelihood construction. This has contrasted with other development approaches which are top-bottom in style. In such approaches poor people rely on external support to help them out of poverty without actively involving them in the process. With access to various capital assets, the aged in Mubaira have been able to engage in livelihood strategies of their own which have helped them to tackle poverty. The following gives a brief summary of the key findings of the study.

10.3 Summary and Reflection on Key Findings

Above all, the study found that livelihood activities of the aged require a stock of capital assets. These include natural, human, physical, social and financial capital. The life histories of the aged in Mubaira revealed that through the years the aged did accumulate various assets that assist them even now. As the life course perspective suggests events in earlier life do have a bearing on later life. Access to a range of capital assets helped old aged people to fully engage in livelihood strategies that ensure their survival and escape from poverty. The following section gives the summary of major findings.

10.3.1 Agriculture as the main livelihood strategy

The study found that the main livelihood strategy used by elderly is agriculture. This is due to the availability of arable lands and adequate rainfall in Mubaira. As in many rural African communities, here too agriculture has proved to be basic for rural dwellers in avoiding food insecurity and ensuring their survival. Debates on the utility of agriculture as a way out of poverty have been dismissed by scholars like Bryceson who argue that the processes of deagrarianisation and depeasantisation have caused rural dwellers to move away from reliance on agriculture to more off-farm activities. However, this is not so in Mubaira where the majority of the old aged rely on agriculture as their main livelihood strategy. Engagement in agricultural activities by the aged has helped them to survive the food crisis brought about by the worsening economy. Subsistence agriculture is the most practiced form of farming by the aged simply because their assets keep them from commercializing their activities. The most common crops grown by the aged include, inter alia, maize, groundnuts, millet, sweet potatoes and sunflowers.

The aged in Mubaira have not only relied depended on the gains from agricultural fields only but they have also been able to enhance their livelihood through homestead gardening. Home gardens have ensured that the aged have access to vegetables so as to be able to vary their

diet. These gardens have managed to improve the nutrition status of the aged people. Talking of nutrition, old aged people who have livestock have been able to get products like milk, butter and meat. Livestock rearing has been an integral part of the rural dwellers as they have used their livestock for many purposes. The study noted that old aged people in Mubaira have used livestock for farming and other domestic purposes, a move that has seen them improving their overall activities. Due to the fact that they do not own farm machinery, aged people have depended on these animals. Therefore the findings of the study follow the sequence of the SLA that proposes that the main strategy for rural dwellers is agriculture. Engagement into agriculture has ensured that aged people avert food insecurity.

10.3.2 Livelihood diversification

The second key finding in the study is that, besides agriculture old aged people engage in diversified livelihoods with the aim of increasing their income earning capacities. Livelihood diversification has been a dominant theme that has been coming out from the study. Using the Rural Home Based Industries approach the study noted that aged people have ventured into self employments so as to gain more income and better their livelihoods. The majority of the aged people indicated that they have different jobs that they engage in so to gain income. Agriculture on its own does not address all the needs of the aged people but since they do not receive any cash transfers aged people had to look for income earning opportunities. From the study it was noted that both women and men are engaged in activities such as brick making, clothing (tailoring), carpentry, metal works, weaving and pottery, ownership of shops and butcheries. Diversification has been a key principle of the SLA and in the Mubaira community it has helped old aged people to improve their livelihoods by increased income earning. The shortcomings from agriculture have been addressed by diversifying into different activities. The study indicated that it is mostly the poor aged people who diversify their livelihoods for survival. The better off aged people who have adequate financial and

physical assets have ventured into entrepreneurship businesses as a way to sustain their current livelihood status. This has seen some aged people remitting some of their profits to their struggling children. The elderly people also indicated that they add more to their coffers by leasing out some of their physical assets such as shop building, farming implements such as tractors, transport fleets, cattle, cultivators, etc. However, it should be noted that mostly it is the better off who are able to let out their property as they might be having other options or if they are the only ones with such assets. Some poor old men reported engaging in piece jobs such as land preparation, firewood collection with scotch carts, thatching of traditional houses and many other activities. These are usually done when they are not busy with agricultural activities. All these off farm activities have helped elderly people to survive and improve their livelihood well-being. Although there was an indication that they earn very little from such strategies, they have been able to make ends meet from whatever they earn.

Social capital has also played an essential role in the livelihoods of the aged people. One of the key research questions was on the need to analyse any support given to aged people for them to make a living. Social support services in the form of remittances from the family members of the elderly and other close relatives have assisted old aged people to attain better living. Cash and non-cash remittances result in old aged people being able to gain extra income to buy food, clothes, inputs for agriculture and many other things. This has also been complemented by the support from civil society. NGOs and political parties have supported old aged people in times of crises. Mostly the support from these organizations has been in the form of food handouts which have helped aged people to escape hunger. The year 2007 saw the country facing food shortages which resulted in shelves being empty in the stores. The support rendered by organizations is part of the SLA which recognizes that governments, NGOs and other community based organisations have a part to play in the livelihoods

construction. Since the SLA has been used to analyze rural livelihoods, one of its proposition was that migration is an integral part of the strategies open to rural people. However although the study explored such an area, it was noted that almost every one of the interviewed people did not support the idea of migrating at old age. Although the study noted that some few aged people migrated from the urban areas after retirement from work, they do not consider emigrating from Mubaira no matter how things might be hard for them. The main reason was that due to the high competition for resources all over their chances of starting a new life and competing with the young ones were very limited. They also indicated their current homes were so significant in their lives such that they attach a certain meaning and value to them therefore making it difficult to relocate. Their main desire is to continue farming and also hoping that the government can attend to their call for support. Therefore it can be said that old aged people in Mubaira have been able to fully engage in the construction of their livelihoods by utilizing all possible resources to their disposal and being able to improve their livelihoods. They have been able to adapt to various situations and to offer resilient responses after the effects of stresses, risks and shocks. This has been made possible by external help from their families and civil society organizations.

10.3.3 Factors affecting the livelihoods of the aged in Mubaira

Although old aged people in Mubaira have been able to engage in different livelihood strategies, the study indicated that various factors impinge on their efforts. Using the vulnerability approach, it was noted that external factors from the economic, political, ecological and social circles have affected the construction of sustainable outcomes and also have plunged aged people into poverty. From the economic point of view, the collapse of the economy saw many old aged people losing their life time savings as the government scrapped the local Zimbabwean dollar. The hype-inflationary environment witnessed from the year 2000 eroded the incomes, savings and investments made by the aged people throughout their

life. The local currency could not buy anything meaningful such that in the year 2009 it was replaced by the adoption of multi currencies in the Zimbabwean economy. Such a switch to foreign currency meant that all the savings in the banks were useless as no one was compensated for such changes. For those who had pension money it was ruined and this plunged them into poverty.

The dollarisation of the economy resulted in multiple currencies being adopted which included the South African rand, the US dollar and the British pound. Such economic factors affected old aged people in the sense that they failed to access the foreign currency since they were not employed. Poor government policies can also be blamed for the plight of the aged people. National policies banning the activities of NGOs saw a number of humanitarian organization leaving their support services in rural Mubaira, a move that resulted in many falling into poverty. Therefore the government can be blamed for the demise of the aged people's livelihoods. From a social point of view, old aged people indicated that the impact of the HIV/AIDS has seen many old aged people taking care of the orphans who are left behind by their parents who die of the disease. With little resources, old aged people indicated they are failing to meet the needs of the children ranging from food, school fees and medical fees. This has seen aged people looking for more livelihood opportunities to ensure the survival of their grandchildren. The study also noted that aged people in Mubaira have been affected by their ailing bodies such that they cannot fully complete some of their duties. Women at most indicated that at times they cannot spend many hours in the fields, a move that compromises their outputs. Climatic changes have also presented a burden upon the aged people. In recent years the recurring droughts have seen a lot of aged people failing to achieve greater harvests. This has affected the food stocks of the elderly who depend much on natural rainfall for farming. A surge in the number of humanitarian organisations has been

caused by food shortages in the rural areas brought about by droughts. Considering all these external factors it can be argued that the livelihoods of the aged people have been greatly affected by the context in which they live.

10.4 Implications for existing theory

The study has focused on exploring the livelihood strategies of the aged people in rural Zimbabwe in the wake of poverty at old age. Although it is believed that explorative research seeks to come up with new meanings or theories, this study applied the SLA in the analysis of rural livelihood substantiating and extending the understanding the knowledge of it. The study does not contradict with the core principles of the SLA but rather it gives a more elaborate understanding of how rural people have managed to make a living through adopting the main tenets of the framework. From the study it was noted that although external help has been offered to the elderly people in Mubaira, it is mainly their own activities or strategies that have ensured a living for them. Own strategies by the elderly people have concurred or substantiated one of the core principle of the SLA, that of being people centered. Prior development models that have been used placed much focus on what the state or any other help can transform the livelihoods of the poor, but SLA focus on what the poor can do for themselves to stave off poverty. Aged people's engagement in various livelihoods strategies has seen them being able to guard against food insecurity and also gaining more income from them.

The study has also widened knowledge and understanding of the existing theory by showing that other actors support the aged people in attaining better livelihoods and therefore agreeing with another core principle of the SLA that of being holistic. SLA acknowledges that people adopt many strategies to secure their livelihoods and that many actors are involved; for example the private sector, ministries, community-based organizations and international organizations. As the study revealed, elderly people are not solely dependent on one

livelihood strategy but they have multiple livelihood portfolios that help them attain a living. The failure or shortcomings of the main strategy have been complemented by other diversified livelihoods. More to that, the roles of family members, the roles of NGOs and political parties have reflected the holistic approach of the framework as it brings together different development actors to fight poverty and attain improved livelihoods for the poor people. A multi-sectoral approach to averting poverty has positive results in that the failure of one sector allows others to fill in the gap. From the study it was shown that in instances when aged people fail to make a living as a result of different circumstances, for instance in the case of droughts, private organisations have been there to cater for the needs of the poor elderly people. The latter point shows how the study has cemented the core principles of SLA in order to ensure the achievement of better livelihoods for poor people.

Closely linked to the partnership of different actors in improving the livelihoods of poor people is the focus of SLA on the micro-macro linkages. This is to mean that SLA examines the influence of policies and institutions on livelihood options and highlights the need for policies to be informed by insights from the local level and by the priorities of the poor. The study has clearly shown the implications of this assertion. Through institutional arrangements and organizational structures, SLA revealed that these have an impact on the construction and outcomes of livelihoods. Various laws, rules, norms and regulations hinder poor people from attaining or enhancing their livelihoods. The study has broadened the understanding of this proposition by showing that in Zimbabwe government policies have really impacted more on the livelihoods of the aged people. Economic policies to replace the local currency with foreign currency saw aged people who had saved for later life lose all their savings. Such unilateral decisions taken by those in power have negatively impacted on the aged people. Consequently remittances which were helpful to the aged people also dried up as their

families felt the impact of the economic slump. In addition, a national policy by the government to ban all humanitarian assistance for political reasons negatively affected aged people attaining a living from such services. Therefore the study can be said to have elaborated how micro and macro linkages need to be strengthened and be informed from the local level to meet the priorities of the poor because failure to do has serious consequences on the majority poor people.

An important factor that has been noted from the study is that livelihoods are not static but rather they are dynamic. This has also been a major principle of SLA as it seeks to understand the dynamic nature of livelihoods and what influences them. Using life history narratives it was shown that the elderly have moved on different pathways throughout their lives. As a result of changing environments livelihoods are bound to change over time. Old age theories have shown that ageing is a social change process which one goes through and this change is bound to bring a shift in the attainment of resources. The study noted that most of the elderly people disengage from their earlier livelihood sources, for example from employment when they reach the age of 60, and this has an impact on their overall living. Such a change shows that livelihoods are not static but rather they are dynamic. Using activity and continuity theories the study noted that the elderly have met this change by diversifying into different strategies. Therefore the focus of SLA on dynamism of livelihoods has been accentuated, more elaborated by the findings of this study. The study clearly shows that societies are going through a transition, a social change process that has implications on how people attain livelihoods. Earlier livelihood benefits which aged people used to enjoy may be limited and thus changing the whole livelihood construction set up. That is why the study noted that in times of unexpected risks and uncertainties poor rural people have turned to coping strategies.

10.5 Recommendations for Implementation

Although it can be said that the study has successfully attained its objectives, a lot can still be done to understand the livelihoods of the elderly in impoverished Zimbabwe. Literature has shown that not much has been done to study the issues pertaining to the elderly in Zimbabwe as they are not considered a policy issue. The failure of the government to formulate social policies for the aged when other vulnerable groups such as OVCs, the disabled and AIDS patients are given much attention shows that society does not consider their plight as a serious concern. Traditional cultural beliefs have convinced policy makers that children and families take great care of their ageing parents. The study has clearly shown that elderly people need more external support to ensure them to eke out a living. External factors have negatively impacted on the livelihood portfolios of the aged such that it leaves them vulnerable to risks and uncertainties.

One of the major findings was that during cases of droughts and food shortages, if it was not for NGOs and political parties, aged people in Mubaira could have starved to death. The majority of the poor elderly people in Mubaira indicated that if the government could assist them with a basic assistance allowance, this will go a long way to help them to attain the basic needs of life. This is true when we consider what countries like South Africa, Tanzania, Lesotho and Botswana have done to minimize poverty at old age. Research in these countries has shown that with a basic living allowance every month elderly people have been able to reduce poverty levels in their households and have also assisted other co-residents. If such policies are put in place in Zimbabwe elderly people will fully achieve their livelihoods and improve their well-being as the study has shown that they have the capacity and potential to be continually active in their roles. Government assistance added to their own efforts will ensure total cover against income and consumption problems that the elderly people face.

Some who are no longer able to work in the fields or diversify to other activities will greatly be assisted as they do not have too much to depend on besides the little they get from their children or other well wishers. The following summarises practical recommendation for the care of the elderly in Zimbabwe:

- The formulation and implementation of a national social policy for the care of elderly people
- The re-introduction of free primary health care for elderly people above 60 years
- The re-introduction of subsidies on agricultural implements to help aged people access them at a cheaper price
- Compensation for elderly people who lost all of their savings and investments after the government replaced the Zimbabwean dollar
- Government should allow elderly people over 60 years to freely board public transport
- A fair identification of beneficiaries for humanitarian aid
- Develop more income generation projects for the elderly in rural economies

These recommendations have been derived from what the elderly consider can be the best strategies to assist them. They believed that the state can play a major role in assisting them attain better livelihoods. From my own understanding implementing one of the core principle of SLA that calls for partnership of all development actors is the key to ensuring that elderly people overcome poverty at old age. The private sector has an important role to play in building the livelihoods of the elderly people. Through corporate social responsibility private organisations can contribute to the improvement of the well being of aged people by engaging them in development activities. However such approaches can only be successful if ageist tendencies towards older people are ended because they have been streamlined in social development as their activities are considered passive and unproductive. However the

study has refuted such assumptions by showing that through access to a range of assets elderly people contribute much to their well-being and have a great role in the rural economy.

The study has also enormously contributed for future research. Since much has not been researched on matters relating to aged people, the study has laid a platform for future research in this subject matter by revealing the major strategies elderly people are engaged in for them to make a living. It has also revealed the needs and support services for the aged and various factors that hinder or enhance sustainable livelihoods of the elderly in rural Mubaira. Since the study has given a well grounded picture of the situation of the elderly people in Zimbabwe, more elaborate quantitative studies, for example, household surveys, could be used to test whether each of the explored strategy is effective for the elderly people. The study revealed a number of RHBI which could be further studied using household income models to see their reliability in overcoming old age poverty. The methodology of the study did not allow for the full presentation of adequate data on the amount of outputs from agricultural production, income and expenditure patterns and to compare statistics of current income earnings and previous earnings. This can be further analysed through future quantitative studies that allow for statistical presentations.

10.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the major findings of the study. The problem of the study has been that the realization of the absence of social security systems to cater for the elderly coupled with worsening economic, political, social factors prompted the need to explore or investigate the livelihood strategies which aged people in poor rural communities are engaged in. The study confirmed that in the absence of old age grants the elderly in Mubaira have been continually active in the construction of their livelihoods. They were able to do so because of access to a number of readily available assets in their community or accumulated in their life

time. The elderly in Mubaira have been able to combat the impact of poverty in old age by fully engaging in agricultural activities, diversifying their livelihoods and relying on the support from their families and support organizations, such as, NGOs and political parties. The SLA which presented a platform for the analysis of rural livelihoods in Mubaira acknowledges that for rural people to achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes, they need to take centre-stage. Theories such activity theory and continuity theory helped to show that old aged people despite their age still have the capacity to work for their living as it is the only option since there is no formal social security to cater for their needs at old age. Engagement in these activities has helped them to make a living although various external factors make it very difficult for them.

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APPENDIX A

In-depth Interview Questions

A) Personal Information

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is your marital status?
- Gender(*through observation*)

B) Resources and Assets Holdings

- What are the resources (including natural, economic, human and social capitals) available in your community?
- How is access to these resources distributed among households and groups?
- Are there any problems that you encounter in trying to access these resources?
- Among the resources that you own, which ones are the most beneficial to you and if so why?
- What are the specific assets that you rely on for your day to day living?

C) Challenges facing Old Aged people

- What are some of the challenges that you are facing as old aged people?
- What do you think can be the causes of these challenges?
- To what extent are these challenges affecting you as an aged person?
- In your own view do you think these challenges can be overcome?

D) Livelihood Activities /Strategies

- Which kind of activities are you engaged into that ensure your survival?
- What is your main source of income?
- Are you employed?
- If yes, are you a casual labourer or a permanent worker?
- What is your weekly, monthly, or annual income?
- How do you normally spend your income?
- Do you think you are getting enough from your current employment?
- Besides working are there any activities that you do that give you an income?
- Do you think of leaving your current place of residence to another?
- If the above answer is yes, why would you want to leave your community?

- Do you think migrating to another place would solve all the problems you are facing?
- If you are to move away from your community will you be moving locally, regionally or internationally?
- Will you consider coming back or you will go for good?
- What any other comment can you give about the whole issue on livelihood improvement?

E) Social Networks and Support Groups

- Are you part of any formal or informal group, association, and network?
- If the above answer is yes which networks or groups do you typically rely on to resolve issues of daily life?
- Of what help do these networks or associations help you as an old aged person?
- Besides your own effort that you put to make a living, is there any help you are getting?
- If yes, who is helping you and how?
- Do you have any relatives or family members who support you and in what forms?
- Is there any assistance that you receive from the Government? If yes, in what ways and how is the assistance helping you?
- Besides the family, relatives and government is there any help that you receive from other people or organisations?
- Has been the support beneficial to you?

F) Pressing needs of old aged people

- What do you think need to be done both at local level and national level to ensure that old aged people attain a sustainable standard of living?
- What are the pressing needs that you have as old aged people which need to be urgently addressed?

APPENDIX B

Life Narratives guide for the old aged people in Mubaira

- 1) Can you give an account of the various challenges you have been facing as old aged people relating back to the time you started experiencing them and also indicating what you think might have been the causes of the challenges. In your account include your work history if you were employed before or the various activities that you were or you are engaged in that ensure your living. Also in your account include that various assets that you have accumulated in your life time and how these have been helping you to meet the life needs. Lastly indicate the various people or organisations that have been offering their services to you and indicate how that has been beneficial to you. You can as well share any general information pertaining the ways you construct your livelihoods.

APPENDIX C

Interview guide for Supporting Organisations

- 1) What is the name of your organisation/support group?
- 2) What are the main policy issues you have for old aged people?
- 3) What are the main duties of your organisations?
- 4) What are some of the essential services that you offer to the aged people?
- 5) For how long have you been offering services to the aged people?
- 6) Of what value and benefit are your services to the aged people?
- 7) What are some of the challenges that you face in rendering services to the old aged people?
- 8) Are there any strategies in place to ensure that you overcome these challenges and offer the best services to the old aged people?

An example of the Extracts of In-depth interviews depicting the aged people who are extremely poor and the better off.

Transcription of In-depth Interviews for Old Aged people in Mubaira

General Information

Sex: Female
Age: 73
Occupation: Unemployed
Location: Samasuwo village, Mubaira,
Date: June 2010

NB: Questions are in bold letters and interview responses in italics

A) Personal Information

What is your name?

Withheld for confidentiality purpose

How old are you?

I am 73

What is your marital status?

I am widow, my husband passed on in 1993

Gender (through observation)

Female [confirmed by respondent]

B) Resources and Assets Holdings

What are the resources (including natural, economic, human and social capitals) available in your community?

In this community I can say the major resources that we have are land, water bodies such as rivers, wells, streams, forests that provide us with firewood which is the main source of cooking energy since we do not have electricity. Every day , have to gather firewood in the nearest bush so that I will be able to cook and since I live alone I have to do it regularly as it is the only available source of energy to me. Personally I own 3 hectares of land that was acquired by my husband before he died, three houses (two of them thatched with straw).As for livestock I only have a few chickens left (road runners), I once had cattle and goats but the property was taken by my husband's kins after his death as they argued that it is a norm in their culture that the property of the deceased such as livestock should be taken by his young brothers after his death. So I was left without anything and I had to start from scratch but I could not rise back to the level I was before my husband died. I also have a few hoes for ploughing and a wheelbarrow. As it stands I stay alone because all my children got married and migrated to the urban areas.

How is access to these resources distributed among households and groups?

I can say access to essential resources in this community is not a difficult thing. If one wants to own land to set up his/her homestead it is the duty of the local village leaders (Sabuku) to ensure that you get it, but you have to go through a vetting exercise in which you have to be a descent of this village for you to get land. The reason for vetting is that the village leaders believe that there some people who come from other areas who should not be beneficiaries of the resources in our community. Resources in this community belong to the people under chief Mashayamombe so if you are not part of the Mashayamombe descent you are not entitled to benefit. We do not want strangers in our community who deplete our resources and cause confusion and fail to follow our culture.

Are there any problems that you encounter in trying to access these resources?

No I don't have any problems because I only have my own things at home and do not hustle with anyone for them. Though they are few I am proud to have them and I can utilise them to make a living.

Among the resources that you own, which ones are the most beneficial to you and if so why?

Land, land, land (she put more emphasis on land as the main source) because I can plough my crops and attain a living from them. It is also important to have a borehole in your yard as you can practise vegetable gardening than relying on the nearest river for water. I can also say the local forests have been important to us as we can use firewood from it for cooking and other uses.

What are the specific assets that you rely on for your day to day living?

All my assets are essential as I rely on land for food when I harvest and also the borehole serves as an essential asset as it provides me with water. Some people in this community rely on the nearest Nyangwene River for their day to day use of water but as for me it's a blessing to have it on my yard.

C) Challenges facing Old Aged people

What are some of the challenges that you are facing as an elderly person?

I am facing a lot of challenges and the major being poverty (Nhamo). Personally I'm facing the challenge of a proper diet. I used to eat good food before I became an old aged person as I could fend for myself and used to get enough income. When one gets old he/she needs good food especially soft food because most of the aged people no longer have teeth. My diet is always defined from Monday to Sunday as I eat Sadza (papa) and vegetables in the morning and then eat the same meal in the evening. Usually when you receive food aid from the NGOs that's when you can have a different taste as you get sugar beans and some other things. I wish to have a proper breakfast with bread, tea and even eggs but my situations do not allow that. So I can say that I am in dire poverty. If it was not of farming I could have died longer

back, at least I can get maize for mealie meal and my small garden provides me with vegetables. I can also say that I face health problems, I can no longer see properly and I always suffer from different sicknesses. If I go to the local clinic they just give me pain killers and say I have to go to Harare to see a specialist .It's very difficult for me because I don't have money for a specialist consultation.

What do you think can be the causes of these challenges?

Generally I think when one gets old he/she needs someone to take of you and with my situation I am just alone here as all my children are married and they stay with their families in the urban areas. So I have to make sure that I do everything for myself. The major cause for these challenges is the unavailability of money because with money you can do anything that you wish to do. Before the introduction of the foreign currency as the legal tender (in February 2009) I used to buy all these things and I could afford to go see a doctor when I fell sick because my children were giving me money. Since that time they have been finding it difficult to send me money because the new currency is difficult to get and also they have their family commitments. Life in the urban areas is difficult so I don't want to stress them asking for too much, with the little I have I will carry on till I die. On health issues I can say that some 10 years ago we used to get free medication at the hospital as long as you had your identity document because it was a government policy that all people aged 60 and above receive free medication. But that is now a thing of the past as the introduction of user fees left many poor aged people failing to get medication at hospital as they could not afford the escalating bills.

To what extent are these challenges affecting you as an aged person?

They are affecting me because I can no longer live the life I used to live before ageing and they cause a lot of stress as I try to think for ways to make a living. Sometimes I go for days without eating because there won't be anything in the house and leads to the deterioration of my health.

In your own view do you think these challenges can be overcome?

To be frank on that one I see no end to this suffering because the only hope I had was on the government but it seems as if it has distanced itself from the problems facing aged people. Help from our children is not sufficient as they are also suffering in the urban areas. As for me I am just waiting for the day when I die that's when these challenges will end.

D) Livelihood Activities /Strategies

Which kind of activities are you engaged into that ensure your survival?

Like I said before I rely on farming for my survival. As you can see I am an old woman and cannot do much work so I hire people to till the land and plant my crops and then my children pay for the services later. The only thing I can do is to work in this small garden were I put my vegetables. The land I have is too big (3 hectares) but I cannot afford to plough the whole areas as I do not have the resources and inputs to do so. When I was still fit I used to plough 2 hectares that produced a surplus of products such that I could afford to sell some to the Grain Marketing Board.

What is your main source of income?

Remittances from my children and at times I sell my chickens but the income is not reliable and sufficient at all.

Are you employed?

No

If yes, are you a casual labourer or a permanent worker?

N/A

What is your weekly, monthly, or annual income?

I rarely get money and on average I get \$6 (Us dollars) per month something that is too small for one to depend on.

How do you normally spend your income?

I usually buy the basic such as salt, sugar, and washing soap. As for cooking oil I usually get it from a local NGO that supplies food aid to aged people here in Mubaira. I also use part of the money that I get for maize meal grinding.

Do you think you are getting enough from your current employment?

N/A

Besides working are there any activities that you do that give you an income?

N/A

Do you think of leaving your current place of residence to another for the betterment or improvement of your livelihood?

I have never thought of living this place as it is my home and I will die here. Migration is not a common thing among the aged people but for the young man and women. Even though I am facing so many challenges I will remain stationed at my home were my husband left me.

Do you think migrating to another place would solve all the problems you are facing?

Migrating to other places I don't think it would solve anything because I believe even if you change environments you will still encounter problems. I can say this because my children thought that by migrating to the urban areas it would solve problems and better their lives but as I speak they are struggling in the cities. It could have been proper if they stayed behind and practice agricultural production as there is plenty of land in this yard. For those

practising agriculture here in Mubaira they are enjoying a good life as they can sell their produce to the GMB or a private buyer.

If you are to move away from your community will you be moving locally, regionally or internationally?

N/A

Will you consider coming back or you will go for good?

N/A

E) Social Networks and Support Groups

Are you part of any formal or informal group, association, and network?

NO

If the above answer is yes which networks or groups do you typically rely on to resolve issues of daily life?

N/A

Of what help do these networks or associations help you as an old aged person?

N/A

Besides your own effort that you put to make a living, is there any help you are getting?

Yes

If yes, who is helping you and how?

The only other help I am receiving besides the little I get from my children is food aid from a local NGO (CRS).It provides us with cooking oil(10liters),rice(10kg) and sugar beans(10kg).So this kind of help is assisting me to improve my nutrition levels and without this help I could have been a different person. The local NGO usually come after every three months. At least I have an assurance that after very three months I am able to get food that will help me for a long time. All in all what I am saying is that the NGO has showed concern for the aged people unlike our government that is full of promises that are never fulfilled. For you to get the assistance you need to have your identity document and also be registered with your local village by the responsible authorities.

Do you have any relatives or family members who support you and in what forms?

I do have relatives in this local village but they cannot offer me help because they are also struggling to make ends meet so it's all about individualism for you to survive unless someone remembers that you are existing. The only help I get from my relatives is the cultivation of my crops as I cannot do so in the field and also to carry my goods after receiving them from the local NGO despatch point in the township.

Is there any assistance that you receive from the Government? If yes, in what ways and how is the assistance helping you?

As for me I don't recall getting any assistance from the government. We were once promised in 2008 that we would start receiving old age grants in 2009 but that was a rhetoric promise as we were heading for the general elections.

Besides the family, relatives and government is there any help that you receive from other people or organisations?

N/A

Has been the support beneficial to you?

N/A

F) Pressing needs of the aged people

What do you think need to be done both at local level and national level to ensure that old aged people attain a sustainable standard of living?

There is need for the government to have a policy that caters for old aged people and at least give the aged grants of at least \$100 per month so that old aged people can meet their daily demands such as food, health and clothing. The government should complement the role being played by the local NGOs so that the livelihood of the aged people may be improved. I believe culturally it is a taboo not to take care of the aged people as they are there to guide the young ones and present themselves as role models of society. I also thinking that the government should re-introduce the policy that ensured that old age people receive free health care and also use public transport for free as they cannot afford the rising costing of travelling.

What are the pressing needs that you have as old aged people which need to be urgently addressed?

We need food, a balanced diet that will improve our health so that we live longer and also clothing especially in winter times we face difficulties in the cold weather. Health is an important issue for aged people they should be given the nod to get free medication.

Life Narrative Transcription for the better off aged people

Life Narrative Transcription

General Information

Sex: Male

Age: 63

Occupation: Businessman

Location: Mubaira Village

Date: June 2010

My name is(.....), I am 66 years old and I am now a retired man. I was born in Mhondoro Ngezi, 35kms from Mubaira growth point and I was born in a family of 8 children. My father had three wives and my mother was the last of my father's wives. I had three brothers but two of them passed away and two sisters remain. I did my education in Mhondoro and before I finished grade 2 my father passed away and my mother had to look after all of us. My mother was not educated and unemployed at the same time and so she had to engage in piece jobs so that she gets money to pay our school fees. By the time when I was grade five, I could work in the fields and so I joined my mother and brothers to work for other people in return of food, clothes and money. This was a hard time for us as a family as my father's property was shared and divided and none of my mother's family received anything because the elders claimed that my mother was illegally married and had been impregnated by another man whilst my father was still alive. My father had a lot of cattle, goats, donkeys and chickens, so it was painful to learn that I didn't get any part of his inheritance because of greedy people. Though things were tough we managed to sail through but as a result of the neglect and pain we endured my mother decided that we should relocate back to her native rural home where her relatives lived. We moved to Gokwe which is in the southern part of Zimbabwe, where I managed to finish my primary education.

As for my secondary education, my elder brother took me to stay with him in Bulawayo and after two years I had to leave school after he lost his job. I stayed for a year without doing anything up until a time when my brother said I should go back to the rural areas to learn there. I did not favour the idea and I sought for a job till I got one as a general worker in a factory shop that manufactured television sets and radios. I worked for the company for six years and never thought of going back to school to complete my education but rather I applied to be a police officer and in March 1978 I was enrolled as

a junior police man under the Rhodesia government. After working for two months as a police officer I got married. I worked the whole of my life as a policeman and I rose through the ranks until I assumed a position as chief inspector a position I held till I retired. I retired in the year 2007 after most of my children had completed their education. I have five children, the first born is working for the government and the three boys are all doing their degrees in this country and the last born stays with us here doing her form three(*equivalent to grade 10*).

Over the years I have worked as a police officer and I managed to achieve a lot. One major asset or investment I made was to educate my children and I feel that in due course all my efforts will be rewarded. When I worked for the radio company the only asset I bought was a small bed and a bicycle I used to travel to work. After I joined the police force I worked so hard and saved my finances such that I managed to buy house property that included 2 beds, 1 stove, a radio, 2 TV sets and so many things. In 1994, I got a residential stand in Chegutu where I managed to build a four roomed house that was completed after three years. I applied for a bank loan of about ZW\$30 000-00 which I used to buy a rural homestead in Mubaira Mhondoro. I always wanted to return to my roots where I was born and I was so much happy to get the place in Mubaira. Fortunately as a result of my excellent duties, I was transferred from Chegutu station to Mubaira police station to be the officer in charge of the whole of Mubaira community. This position gave me the opportunity to network with a lot of people and even politicians. The fact that I lived in Mubaira gave me the chance to upgrade my new rural home and later I had to move out of government's accommodation to live at my place. I had a government car that I used so it was easy for me to commute to and from work. The fact that I was now based in Mubaira gave me the opportunity to manage my resources so well and establish a strong foundation for my retirement. The social networks that I had helped me so much to accumulate resources and after 5 years of working in Mubaira I managed to buy 8 herds of cattle, 16 goats, chickens, a scotch cart and a lot of small items. My dividends paid so well in 2004 when I benefited from the land reform exercise. I managed to get a plot that measured 35 hectares of arable and grazing land. I had to hire people to clear the land as it was never used before and after leaving it for one year I then decided to start ploughing my crops. I managed to prepare 10 hectares which I am using for my farming activities. The reason I could not plough the whole area was the lack of substantial resources needed

to fully utilize the land. At the moment I use animal drawn mechanism for farming and at most times I hire farming equipment such as a tractor to prepare land and also a combine harvester for harvesting. In 2007 I finally decided to retire from my job as I saw it no longer worthy to continue working after realizing that I was getting more from my own activities than from formal work. The economy had depreciated and this had affected our incomes such that even my monthly salary was not worthy to buy food for just one week.

I started full time farming on my plot in the year 2005 and from that time up to now I have managed to deliver over 40 tonnes of maize to the GMB. At the present moment I am a full time farmer who is full based at the plot and during weekends I spend time with my family in Mubaira. Concerning the house in Chegutu, I have leased it and every month I get rentals for its services. During my late employment period and after retirement, agriculture has been the source of income for my family. It has helped me educate my children and send them for University studies. I support my family with money from the sales of the products and we also get food from our livestock i.e. milk and meat. The main crops that I plough are maize, groundnuts and sugar beans. As a new farmer I face challenges just like in any other business. The major issue is of agricultural inputs. I have a big area of arable land but I cannot utilize it as I don't have the necessary equipment to fully implement agricultural production. It will be very much difficult for me and very labour extensive to use traditional methods of farming of either cattle or donkeys to prepare land and plough crops. If I could get assets like tractors and combine harvester that would make my life easy and be able to plough the whole portion. At times I have to hire these machines and they will be very expensive such that I end up using my own resources. The other problem is the unavailability of fertilizers which in return affects my crop outputs. For the first season that is from 2005-2007 the government provided us with fertilizers and seed for our crops but after things started to get worse in the economy the subsidies were cut and we had to fend for ourselves. Since a number of people are into agriculture the demand for fertilizer is high and at most times prices will be very high. More to that, the poor performance of the economy affected us in a way that it was not worthy to sell your produce to the GMB as the payment was made in Zimbabwean dollars and the money was not valuable at all. So we ended up selling the maize to local people who did not have enough maize for food but the sales were not really good. This

prompted me to start a poultry project as I converted part of my maize into stock feeds. From that time things started to function so well such that I managed to develop part of my plot especially the houses with the money that came from the poultry project. I took advantage of the unavailability of meat in the supermarkets and I managed to secure a few tenders to supply dressed chickens in Chegutu and Norton shops. So at the moment I am running two small businesses that is farming and livestock rearing. The surplus maize that I get after harvest is converted into stock feeds to support the poultry project. The income that I get from crop farming and the poultry project keeps me into business and enhances my livelihoods such that I cannot complain as I am able to meet all the basic requirements of life. I managed to set a foundation for my later life and I am very happy that I am managing and coping to the challenges I meet as an aged person. If it was not of the plans and decisions that I made when I was working I don't think I would have been in this position at the present moment. When one gets old his/her capacity to make money is diminished as opportunities get limited. The social networks in society really helped me so much because they engineered the attainment of certain resources in my life. My daughter has been so helpful to me as she has assisted me so much in time of need especially when I face difficulties to attain inputs for my farming business. At times she used to link me up with authorities who had the resources such as fertilizers who sold at a very cheap price. This really helped me so much as it was difficult to get cheap products without the help of other people. At times when I did not have money to pay my few workers she chipped in with help.

In closing I can say that it is very important for an individual to make rightful decisions as from your youth through the middle adulthood course such that when you get old you won't have any problems. A number of old aged people are facing a crisis at the present moment because they did not plan well for this time when they had the capacity to work and raise income. The current generation of young people is very mobile and you cannot have a guarantee that there will be someone to take care of you when you get old. I wish the government can be able to formulate policies that can cater for aged people as I believe that it is not every one who has the same resources and opportunities as I have. Society has put a tag on the aged people such that it limits opportunities open to the aged people. It will be very good if campaigns could be made to enlighten and instill a sense of humor in people such

that they honor, respect and accommodate old aged people in their decisions as they have first experience of how life is. No one should be discriminated as a result of age, gender, sex, occupation, race, ethnicity and status. Let us all share the resources in our societies and see every individual important, whether young or old.

General Information

Sex: Male

Age: 62

Occupation: Businessman

Location: Mubaira Village

Date: June 2010

My name (.....) I am aged 62 years old. I was born here in Mubaira village where I did my primary and secondary education at Nyangweni and Rio Tinto high school respectively. I was born in a family of 8 children and I was the third eldest boy. In our family there were five boys and three girls. At the present moment everyone in my father's family is married and has children. For all my father's children, everyone is alive besides my parents who passed away in the year 1998 and 2002 respectively. I also have eight children three boys and five girls and only one of them is not yet married but the rest are married and working. I can say the journey of life has been a little bit tough for me but I thank God for wise choices that I made in life that have made me to be a person I am today. When I was doing my secondary education it was a must for every registered pupil to take one practical course either, building, agriculture, fashion and fabrics or food and nutrition. I chose to do building as my practical and it so happened that, it was the best subject that I was good in as I struggled in subjects like science, Mathematics, English and so on. I quickly grasped the art of building and when I finished my ordinary level I had only passed building with an A and commerce with a B symbol. As for the rest of the subjects I failed. Though I was hurt I was not distracted as I knew that I would pursue a career in building. I applied for work as a builder but I could not get a job because at that present moment the country was under colonial rule and jobs were very difficult to come by especially when you learned at a rural school. I spent three years being idle at my father's house without anything to do but to help my father in his duties and also in the fields. My luck came in 1972 when I got a place at Harare polytechnic to study building at a diploma level. I managed to do the first year and in the second year I was already working as an apprentice. During my period as an apprentice I got involved in love with the daughter of my boss for the construction company that I was working for and things got worse when she got pregnant. At one point in time I thought that was the end of my career as I had made a bigger mistake but he accepted my fault and I managed to marry

the girl who became my wife. The company was a South African owned one and so after I finished my apprentice work I got a permanent position as a brick layer for that company. After three years of working I was promoted and sent to South Africa to lead a group of people who were stationed there. At that moment South Africa was reeling under the cloud of apartheid and it was really difficult to work with white people. I worked in South Africa for two years before I returned home after the independence of our country. When I was working in South Africa I saved money and when I came back I was able to buy a house in Harare and also six heifers of cattle. This was a turning point in my life because at that present time it was prestigious to own a house in Harare. I worked for African Builders for 14 years before I left to join VB constructors as a project manager. After 1990 the government started a rapid urban development programme that saw urban centres growing so rapidly. The company I worked for had so many tenders to build factories and offices in so many towns. I managed to send my children to school and also to buy another house this time in Mubaira where I grew up. In my mind I knew that this was a stepping stone for my retirement as I knew that after I retire I would like to return back to my roots and be farmer. As I continued to work I bought a lot of assets as I prepared for my later life. I managed to buy more cattle, ploughs, scotch carts, wheelbarrow and two cultivators. I made big investments with building societies such that I had shares in three companies that were worthy thousands of Zimbabwean dollars. Though I knew that after retirement I would go back to Mubaira village my worry was that the house I bought was too small and the yard was not sufficient enough to practice farming. One of my brothers who stayed in Chegutu got an offer for me that resulted in me selling my house in Harare in exchange of a house and a farming field that measured 8 hectares of land and a borehole. This was a blessing for me as I knew that I would really practice farming after my retirement. My children excelled so much in school such that I was proud of them and with the investment that I made with building societies I sold my shares and managed to send my daughter and son for university education in Australia and Canada respectively. I felt that they deserved to be there among the elites as they had made distinctions in their advanced level. Right now as I speak my daughter in Canada is married and is medical doctor and my son is a civil engineer in Australia. This has made me feel great and honoured because if I look at the way I performed in my education I feel happy when my offspring make it in life through

education. I have always had an open policy for my children that everyone who has a desire to learn will be 100% supported and these two proved themselves and only the sky was the limit. At first I thought I was seeding the seeds of division in the family because some would feel neglected but they have supported each other and right now those who are abroad always send money to help with their family matters or their businesses.

I retired seven years ago when I was 55 years old after I felt that I had achieved what I wanted in life, all my children were educated and I had set a good foundation for my retirement. After my retirement I got a good package that I managed to convert into assets. I bought a car, four other heifers and I also managed to open a shop that sells groceries. I saw that the ideal way of keeping my money was to open a business so that the money would generate more cash. My wife is the one managing the shop as I focus more on agricultural activities. I am focusing more on vegetable gardening as I saw it as a quick way to get money. I specialise in farming tomatoes, cabbages, potatoes and green peas. My main market is Mbare musika in Harare and Chegutu supermarkets. The car that I bought is the one that I use to transport my products. On average I get around R5000-00 per month from my agricultural sales. The money that I get from gardening sales I buy pesticides and fertilizers because vegetables need so much cover from pests and for them to have high outputs they need both organic and inorganic fertilizers.

For the shop operations I get a profit of around R11 000 a month. For me this is something good and enough to pay my workers, pay my bills and to keep my business afloat. I also have a credit facility for the locally trusted people who might fail to have cash at a particular time and yet needing some goods from the shop or garden. This is just a way to keep relations and networks so strong because if you are good to people that is the same way how you can keep customers at your door. I still have the passion of building and when I am not really busy in my farming activities I usually take contractual jobs to build houses for people and also school renovations. The skill of building is still in me and I enjoy when I use it at odd times. At one point in time I had thought of starting my own construction company but the lack of capital injection hindered me to buy machinery and hire labour. My livelihood is well shaped and as an old aged person now on retirement I cannot complain as I managed to accumulate essential assets that are helping me to make a living. One of the most

important things is that when some of my children find it difficult in the urban areas they resort to us as we supply them with every desire. I am staying with my last born son and my three grandchildren who chose to live with me grandfather here in the rural areas. With the income that I got from selling my vegetables I managed to buy an electric generator that I use when there is no electricity. I wanted to venture into a massive poultry project but I realised that the competition here in Mubaira was so tense after the projects being run by the ruling party for women development. So I can say that the life that I lived during my middle adulthood shaped the way I am living today. It was ideal to invest in the future as now I don't have to beg or rely on someone for my living. Though I was not really educated I used the opportunities I had in life to make a good living. If I had not accumulated all these assets I was not going to fall into poverty because I made an investment in my children by educating them. All of them have given me so much praise to the way I raised them as they now see how much important education has been to them. I wish my grandchildren to follow the steps of their parents so that their lives can be built on a strong foundation. Economic woes in this country threatened the survival of my businesses as at one point in time we had to close the shop since we did not receive any supply of commodities. I saw it expensive for me to travel to South Africa to buy things for the shop, but we managed to pull through in hard times. Even when the currency changed though we lost a lot of money the banks we managed to cope and get back into business. With the help of capital from my children abroad I managed to reopen the shop and up until now the shop has been running smoothly. I don't feel any weakness in my body and in so doing I will continue to work.

In closing I can say that as an old aged person I am managing to do business and contribute to the survival of my family. Being an aged person does not mean that you have to be dependent but rather it's part of life. For one to have a fruitful and enjoyable life at old age one needs to work like a slave during youth and adult days and it also needs wise decisions and choices.

In-depth interview with Support organization

In-depth Interview with Project Officer of Catholic Relief Services Zimbabwe (CRS)

A) What is the name of your organisation/support group?

The name of the organisation is called **Catholic Relief Services** and it is an international humanitarian organisation that focuses on many areas that affect people's livelihoods.

B) What are the main duties of your organisations?

CRS is an international organisation that focuses on many issues. Our duties are more than helping people survive for the day. Our main duties are to approach emergency relief and long term development holistically, ensuring that all people especially the poorest and most vulnerable are able to participate in the very fullness of life. We have key areas that we focus on. The first one is on **Emergencies**, where we go to areas devastated by natural disasters and wars to provide water, food, shelter, protection from abuses and other basic needs. The second key areas are **Hunger and Food security**, where we take a multipronged approach to combat chronic hunger and poverty. The main focus will be to address a combination of pressing concerns by mitigating hunger, developing agriculture, improving water and sanitation developing sustainable work options, providing microfinance to support small businesses and providing a safety net for those who have no other means of support. CRS' Food Security system provides food to vulnerable community members, including the chronically ill, people living in institutions, old aged people and schoolchildren, so that they can meet their nutritional needs. The country program also implements a program called Food-for-Work in which vulnerable community members receive food for their households in exchange for work on community development projects, including the Market Assistance Program. By carrying out such activities we enhance the livelihoods of people.

In terms of **Education**, our mission is to ensure lasting improvement in the lives of the poor. Access to education for all particularly girls and women as well as improved quality are key components of CRS' work. **Health** has been part of our core duties and focusing on remote and underserved areas, CRS establishes community –based health care systems that give people the tools they need to manage their own health needs. Our community health programs focus on caring for those affected by

HIV/AIDS, orphans and vulnerable etc. **Peace building** lies at the heart of all we do. Conflict resolution, education and prevention are integral to our work of development and emergency recovery. So those are the key areas we seek to address and make sure that affected people get their normal life back on track.

C) What are some of the essential services that you offer to the aged people?

Aged people have been a concern in our activities and in this country we have designed different projects which cater for the needs of this group. However much of our activities for aged people have been focused on trying to ensure that they have food security in times of droughts. CRS has been operating in this country for so many years and has assisted aged people with food aid especially those from rural areas. However our focus on aged people is not only limited to the rural areas but also to the urban areas. There has been a realisation that aged people in urban areas have been left out as people believe that they are taken care of by their loved ones or families. In the year 2002, 2007-2010 CRS has assisted over a thousand of aged people with food after the country declared national droughts. We have set different centres throughout the country to see which parts were most affected by the droughts. Aged people fall under the category we call vulnerable groups and our teams have been focusing on all people who fall under this category. We have personnel that works in the rural communities ensuring that all areas affected by hunger receive food aid. At this particular instance their role will be to assess the beneficiaries of the food aid. The emphasis is on trying to come up with coping strategies for the aged people as an emergency issue since a lot of people are in hunger. Food aid is in the form of rice, bulgar, maize meal, porridge meal, cooking oil and sugar beans. The food aid is given after every three months till the area has been passed to have received sufficient rains which are able to produce a good harvest for the people. The situation was even worse in 2007 as the country was faced with shortages of food in the shops such that the only option people had was to rely on food aid. This exercise was carried out throughout the country in all affected areas.

D) For how long have you been offering services to the aged people?

CRS has been working in humanitarian assistance in Zimbabwe for more than 21 years now and the focus on hunger and food security has been a concern to those vulnerable people both in rural and

urban areas. Improvements in the crop harvest saw the exercise being stopped in some years but after 2007 we formulated a four year plan meant to cover all those parts in need of food unless things change. Usually the distribution of food aid is carried up four times a year that is after every three months and this has been seen as a viable means to maintain better food cover.

E) Of what value and benefit are your services to the aged people?

The distribution of food aid to the aged people have been a success story as this has helped them to improve their nutrition status since most of them relied on Sadza and vegetables. At least with this food hamper they can go a long way to rotate their meals and ensure that they have a balanced diet. It has been reported that households with aged people who receive food aid have benefited that much as in some cases aged people are the breadwinners. The services have also helped aged people without people to care for them and also those who are no longer able to work in their fields or get a job. By providing decent meals for aged people the services have been really commended as people get a livelihood in the absence of family and government assistance. Aged people have been able to rationalise the food aid and make sure that it covers the whole time until they receive another portion or hamper. For those aged people in the care of orphans the amount of food has been doubled to ensure that they are fully covered together with their dependence.

F) What are some of the challenges that you face in rendering services to the old aged people?

We have been facing logistical problems in trying to assess the areas that were really affected by the droughts and hunger. Some areas have been difficult to reach due to geographical positioning and also poor road networks. Another problem was to ascertain the beneficiaries of the programme as some aged people do not have any particular identity document. For administration purposes such kind of people are difficult to assist and yet they will be in need of food aid. Besides these problems I can say that the operation to feed the aged people has been so successful and really beneficial to them as they now have something to eat. Though the system is meant to be coping strategies for the age people to relieve them from hunger than a permanent thing of food provision, the danger that lies is that they become too dependent and can no longer do things to sustain themselves in the absence of help.

G) Are there any efforts in place to ensure that you overcome these challenges and offer the best services to the old aged people?

Yes efforts have been there to address these challenges. By employing local people in the distribution of food this has helped us to identify the most affected parts and also those beneficiaries in need. The advantage of employing a local person is that he/she will be invested with a lot of detail pertain the area of operation. We have also managed to install central collection points so that we don't find problems of getting into the villages with poor road networks. This has seen a smooth distribution of food aid as all beneficiaries come with their scotch carts, wheelbarrows or any other means to come and collect their food.

