Rural Livelihood Diversification in Semi-Arid Districts of Zimbabwe: An analysis of Muzarabani, Gokwe and Mwenezi districts

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Abstract

This study focuses on rural livelihood diversification and improvement in dry districts of Zimbabwe during the period from 2000 to 2010. It establishes and documents livelihood activities and interventions in three semi-arid districts in Zimbabwe, analyses evidence for rural livelihood diversification and improvement and related challenges, and analyses institutional and policy issues that determine rural livelihood development in the politically charged period from 2000 to 2010.

Rural livelihood diversification and improvement is not a recent phenomenon. For years, rural people have diversified their livelihoods for different economic reasons. Despite several studies on rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe, no similar studies have been done to determine the types of livelihood diversification that occur in a politically charged environment and whether they improve people’s livelihoods. The study was guided by both the sustainable livelihoods framework and the actor oriented approach. Qualitative methodology was used for the overall data collection. Firstly data was collected ‘from the top’ through in-depth interviews with officials from government institutions, non-governmental organisations and community leadership structures. Secondly data was collected ‘from the bottom up’ through selected participatory methods in study areas.

The overall study findings show that despite having increased livelihood interventions in all semi-arid areas, the politically fraught atmosphere constrained livelihood improvement and poverty remained. Although evidence for livelihood diversification is undisputed in the study, the extent to which it contributed to
livelihood improvement was limited. The extended period of political constraint reversed some of the livelihood improvement gains recorded by external interventions. As most of the support was targeted at addressing the immediate food needs of the poor in semi-arid districts, this affected the number of long-term interventions targeted at sustainable livelihood development.

The study found that the changing policies and institutional arrangements constrained and limited the potential of some of the livelihood strategies adopted during the period under study and as a result most livelihood activities were limited to survival strategies.

The study shows that despite a decline in agricultural production during the period under study, it remained the major livelihood activity. Agricultural activities such as cotton and maize production and livestock rearing experienced a decline, but were partially revived through external support from both the government and nongovernmental organisations. Agriculture as a livelihood activity largely benefited from external interventions that rehabilitated irrigation infrastructure and the provision of agricultural inputs during the period. However, despite the dominance of agriculture as a livelihood activity in semi-arid areas non-farm livelihood activities, both locally initiated and externally fostered, played a significant role in supporting rural livelihoods. Poaching and wild fruit harvesting provided food for immediate consumption, whilst gold and diamond panning, wood carving and the commercialisation of non-timber forest products generated cash income for rural livelihoods. Non-farm external livelihood interventions identified resulted in a number of rural livelihood development models important for future rural development. These models were developed around the commercialisation of non-timber forest products for cash income generation, rural human capital development through vocational skills training and rural small livestock asset development.

Human capital resulted in the development of rural industry in the form of community based enterprises. Indirectly it also contributed to migrant labour that sent cash and goods back home.

The study shows that it is evident that in a politically charged environment livelihood diversification has a range of positive effects. The re-emergence of the barter
exchange economy in rural communities contributed to livelihood diversification although sustainability was limited. It is also possible for both barter exchange and the cash market to co-exist in a politically charged environment. The study also shows that traditional leadership and local authorities in study areas became more politicised and militarised and this diverted them from facilitating and supporting rural development and inhibited rural livelihood development efforts by different rural players.

The study found that rural livelihoods are not static, and they adapted as best they could in the face of exogenous trends and shocks. Rural areas underwent deep transformations as a result of political dynamics, local livelihood initiatives and external livelihood support. Rural livelihoods changed as rural people devised combined livelihood strategies that went beyond farming. However, in contrast to the widely accepted argument that diversification plays an important role in poverty alleviation, this was clearly not the case in Zimbabwe’s politically charged environment.

This study contributes to the development debate with a case study on the type and extent of livelihood diversification strategies possible in a politically charged environment. Methodologically the study contributes to the possible application of a dual data collection system where data is collected from the top using different methods from those used to collect data from the bottom. This enriched the data at triangulation phase during analysis. The study also contributes to the understanding of the political economy, the type of rural livelihood development possible in politically charged environments, and to how rural people in Zimbabwe react and behave in an endeavour to survive. There was an increased role played by external interventions in livelihood diversification but the extent of their contribution to positive livelihood outcomes was constrained by the politically charged environment that prompted the interventions in the first place. The normal processes of policy development and implementation changed as the role of politicians in planning and implementation became evident and policy aims shifted from rural development to political party self-preservation.
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Map of Zimbabwe showing different regions and districts
Source: Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee Report
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Study Overview

This study focuses on diversification and improvement of rural livelihoods in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe under politically charged conditions during the period between 2000 and 2010. In particular it establishes and documents specific livelihood activities and interventions, analyses evidence for rural livelihood diversification, improvement and related challenges, and analyses institutional and policy issues that determine rural livelihood development in a politically charged environment. Sustainable livelihoods’ are defined by Chambers and Conway (1992:07) as

*The capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation, and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels in the short and long term.* (Chambers and Conway, 1992:07)

Ellis (1998:54) defines livelihood diversification as “the process by which households construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities for survival and in order to improve their standard of living”.

Following both definitions, this study aims to contribute to the development debate and inform policy related to the challenges and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods in politically charged environments. The study of rural livelihood diversification in dry areas of sub-Saharan Africa has become increasingly significant for development theory and policy in recent years. This is because as global warming has been accepted as a reality, its impact on the livelihoods of populations in this region is predicted to be drastic. The ways in which rural societies adapt to conditions of drought provide important indicators of resilience. ‘Sustainable livelihoods’ in this context becomes the critical theoretical framework for understanding whether rural societies are going to be able to survive.

As argued by Chambers and Conway (1992:23), the livelihood framework that emerged from the debate on sustainable rural development is useful in analysing rural development practices in marginalised areas as actively constructed household strategies. Among the
many theories of rural development, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is appropriate for studies of this kind, as it provides an overview of the evolving inter-relationships between capabilities and capital that exist at household level and the institutions and measures that interact with them and the wider political, economic and social context. It is a theoretical tool which accommodates analysis both of the economy (at household level) and of the institutional context within which households function. The use of the SLF thus contributes to the progression within development theory from the ‘modernisation model’ of the past to an understanding of the multi-level, multi-actor and multi-faceted nature of development. It contributes to an understanding of how mono-functional households are being transformed into multi-functional enterprises. Chambers and Conway (1992) argue that the modernisation paradigm has reached its intellectual and practical limits. This study contributes to the understanding of sustainable livelihoods as a heuristic device that represents a search for new futures and reflects the agency of the rural population. It goes beyond modernisation theory, according to which problems of agriculture were considered ‘resolved’ by technology.

The study thus also aims to contribute specifically to an understanding of Zimbabwe’s political economy, the type of rural livelihoods that can develop in politically charged environments, and how some groups of rural people in Zimbabwe react and behave in an endeavour to survive. This brings to the fore the issue of sustainable development. Sustainable development as defined by the Brundtland Commission (1987) “is the development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. The adopted SLA is appropriate tool for exploring sustainable development within the field of rural development. Sustainable development as argued by Viederman (1994:84) is “a participatory process that creates and pursues a vision of community that respects and makes prudent use of its entire resources- natural, human, social, cultural among others. It is a human centred construct, aimed at ensuring a safe, healthy, high quality of life for current and future generations.” The use of the sustainable livelihoods framework potentially addresses the deficiencies of traditional approaches to rural development and broadens our understanding of how rural people in marginal areas make a living.

It also offers a theoretical tool for critically understanding the nature of development policies and their implementation under such conditions. “Any development policy seeks
to promote a sustainable society that can persist over generations, one that is far-seeing enough, flexible and wise, not to undermine either its physical or its social systems of support,” (Meadows, 1992:7). Thus, the analysis of development policies needs to be premised on whether they are sustainable in this sense.

Bryceson (1999:3) contends that rural livelihoods in southern Africa are in crisis, in sharp contrast to a few decades ago when the region was the breadbasket of the continent, economic reforms were generating growth and investment, and hopes of the democratic transition were expected to show quick dividends. However, during those years of economic development the region was hit by its worst food crisis in memory, particularly in the early 1990s, with over 14 million people reported to be at risk (Bryceson, 1999). Southern Africa in the main has not benefited from economic reforms and globalisation, and evidence from several studies on livelihoods in the region raises questions about the nature of the current livelihood crisis, its origin and potential solutions, many of which remain unanswered (Institute of Development Studies, UK, 2003). Most of this literature is linked to global changes without considering political dynamics at a local level, and this is the gap that this study seeks to fill by looking at livelihood changes under politically charged conditions.

Zimbabwe was one of the countries that showed promise in the 1980s as the 'breadbasket' of southern Africa, but it was faced with a number of challenges that brought rural livelihoods into crisis. Research findings by the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Zimbabwe (2006) relate livelihood changes to the dynamics of power politics and policy changes, and to challenges in finding solutions in management and technical support. Global level changes including economic reforms, market trends and climate change pushed the semi-arid districts of the country, already poverty-stricken, into further crisis. Poverty in these districts is pervasive and seems to be on the increase. Past prescriptions appear not to be working, and new offerings, though acknowledging some of the failings of past efforts, have been criticised for not being radical enough to confront the enormity of the rural livelihood challenges in dry districts of Zimbabwe. This has thrust rural development policy into crisis.

Sachikonye (2004:31) outlines how Zimbabwe’s economy declined rapidly during the period 1991 to 1997 due to the country’s political crisis and a policy called the Fast Track
Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). The period covered by this study, 2000-2010, presented opportunities for and threats to rural livelihoods, which were vulnerable to these structural and economic changes. Sachikonye argues that combining agriculture with other livelihood activities, including a range of off-farm work, is an effective survival strategy to counter the collapsing rural economy in Zimbabwe. The question posed in this study therefore is whether combining agriculture and non-farming activities provides a solution to rural livelihoods development in politically charged conditions.

This study is guided by the sustainable livelihoods theoretical framework used by researchers concerned with poverty reduction, sustainability and livelihood strategies, as well as by the actor oriented approach of Long and Long (1992), which presents rural poor people, despite their economic and social position, as actors in their own right. The two theoretical frameworks apply to both urban and rural survival strategies. According to a Department of Foreign International Development publication (DFID, 1999:21) "sustainable livelihoods connotes a multi-dimensional perspective on poverty, an asset based approach to development and a focus on institutions and policies, participation and empowerment". This theoretical framework is compatible with the selected qualitative methodology which involves both participatory methods with the rural poor and interviews with key informants from different institutions.

This is a useful approach for this study as it enables a magnifying glass to be trained on specific livelihood interventions being mediated by particular institutions and policies in each rural setup. Further, analysis of local institutions and policies that deal with rural livelihood diversification means we can train the spotlight on livelihood activities that are usually left out as unimportant, but in fact contribute substantially to rural livelihood diversification and improvement.

Within this framework this study therefore examines and analyses evidence of rural livelihood diversification and improvement, and the challenges faced by rural people and rural development agencies. The analysis is linked to the context of local institutions and policies at various community levels in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe over the past ten years. The ten-year period under review has presented many socio-economic and political challenges to rural livelihood development.
Elich (2002:78) argues that even before the period under review, in most semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe farming was increasingly failing to provide sufficient means of survival to rural people due to increasing droughts and shortages of agricultural inputs. This saw a number of rural development agencies calling for interventions that would support diverse rural livelihoods rather than focusing solely on agriculture. However, Elich does not show how development agencies supported rural people in developing rural livelihoods, only the need for intervention. This is another gap that the study covers.

A study by Ellis (1998:89) in southern Africa shows that small farm households engage in non-farm activities and move away from relying on agriculture as the sole means of livelihood. That study of the region was conducted under peaceful conditions and most of these countries were not in an economic crisis. This study, in contrast, looks at livelihood diversification under severe socio-economic and political crisis conditions.

According to Carter et al. (2003:203) rural development interventions by the Zimbabwe government are constructed around a particular narrative centred on the efficiency of the small farm. Decorn (1996:157) stresses that this development approach appeared to have worked in Zimbabwe in the early 1980s just after independence, when rural livelihoods were secure. Decorn (1996:152) notes that much of central Zimbabwe offers prime agricultural land, moderate temperatures and summer rainfall, which support a diversified base of food and cash crops. Maize output boomed as communal area farmers in new Zimbabwe started producing for the local market. The then ‘new farmer’ was supported by generous credit arrangements, a newly revamped extension system and parastatal marketing boards that provided guaranteed prices (Mlambo, 1995). The government had the capacity to support rural smallholder farmers to boost agricultural production for food security. However, this worked only in those districts that are part of central and northern Zimbabwe on a high plateau, 900m above sea level. Most of the low-lying areas hot and dry or hot and humid, with no winter rain and erratic and infrequent summer rain did not enjoy the same agricultural boom; neither did they enjoy the same government support for the smallholder farmer.

According to Moyo (1995:97) and Bryceson (2003:107) the government policy for semi-arid districts was different. It was characterised by the promotion of cash crops such as cotton, sorghum, groundnuts and smallholder pastoralism, and this was not
complemented by a market policy or product development. An agricultural boom for farmers in the prime land areas focused on maize and tobacco, and overshadowed the production of other crops in the dry regions. This government focus exacerbated the differences in poverty between high plateau and semi-arid regions, which by definition are already affected by poor rainfall patterns, dry conditions, poor soils, low agricultural potential, economic remoteness and drought. Over the years since independence, Zimbabwe has had a number of challenges that have increased poverty in the dry districts. The rural areas that are the subject of this study experienced socio-economic challenges over a long period before the decade under study. With minimal government support, rural people in the study areas became more vulnerable to various factors.

According to Moyo (1995:99-104) the country was hit by a drought in the mid-1980s that resulted in major declines in agricultural productivity and drastic cattle loss. The drought was followed by structural adjustment policies adopted at the insistence of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 1991. The policies reduced state service provision, including support to rural farmers. Lahiff (2002:73) and Bryceson (2002:68) emphasise that the people who were affected most were those from dry regions. Another drought hit the country during the 1991-92 seasons and further reduced the asset base of rural farmers, particularly livestock. An Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) introduced in 1991 at the insistence of the World Bank did not produce the anticipated growth.

The Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Report (2006:12) shows that by 1997 manufacturing production was 13% below 1991 peak levels. Inflation reached a peak of 231 million% in July 2008. These challenges adversely affected the livelihoods of the people in dry districts of Zimbabwe. This study differs from previous studies as it examines the livelihoods of rural people, whose living conditions were already vulnerable, as they adapted to the exceptional socio-economic and political challenges of the past decade.

As the economy declined, the government embarked on the FTLRP in 2000. Chambati (2004:17) notes that the land distribution processes had numerous mistakes that compromised the potential efficacy of land reform as a poverty alleviation strategy, including the fact that neither the newly resettled farmers, nor the people remaining in the dry districts were supported by agricultural inputs and services from the government.
Donors from Europe found it difficult to justify allocation of aid resources to the FTLRP in Zimbabwe.

Chambati (2004:24) contends that the government tried to improve livelihoods for its rural people by allocating them prime land (formerly white commercial farms) for agricultural purposes. However, a range of circumstances exacerbated livelihood challenges, and food shortages worsened as a result. Limited sanctions were imposed by donor countries on the Zimbabwean government elite and the potential of the FTLRP was limited. Poverty increased and was compounded by the HIV-AIDS pandemic. According to the UNDP (2006:17) an estimated 25-30% of the productive age group was living with HIV-AIDS by 2005. A year later the UNDP (2007) estimated that 3200 people would die from the pandemic every week between 2007 and 2009, and those from the semi-arid districts were more vulnerable to the pandemic due to poverty as a result of these challenges. Recent research has focused largely on FTLRP beneficiaries in new farming communities, ignoring where they came from. This study examines the livelihoods of rural people who remained behind in dry districts after the FTLRP.

Moyo (2004:112) outlines a humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe that required development interventions and local initiatives by people themselves to diversify livelihoods and ensure food security. The government felt it had no option but to accept development support although relations between it and development agencies were strained. However, the way development agencies intervened and the extent to which they improved livelihood development is not clear from the few studies conducted on the impact of the socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe. This study examines how external interventions were implemented and how they contributed to livelihood diversification and improvement. People themselves came up with their survival strategies, and which initiatives rural people engaged in and how they engaged in them is under the microscope here.

1.1 Statement of the Problem
Despite a range of strategies for livelihood diversification being adopted in politically charged and semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe, both by local people and by external actors, rural livelihoods have not improved, and in fact poverty has increased among the poor due to political control extended to government interference in NGO and household initiatives.
1.2 General Research Question
To what extent have local actions and external development interventions, policy and institutional changes in the past decade influenced, and achieved rural livelihood diversification and improvement in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe in a politically charged environment?

1.3 Research Objectives
The research study had the following objectives:

- To establish and document various livelihood interventions in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe in the past decade and to understand the extent of investment in rural development.
- To document and analyse evidence of livelihood diversification in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of changes on the ground.
- To understand and analyse institutional and policy issues that determine rural livelihood diversification in semi-arid districts.
- To capture and understand complex linkages between rural development interventions and local institutions in a politically charged environment.
- To draw relevant institutional and policy implications for changing, diversifying, and sustaining improved livelihoods in rural Zimbabwe.

These objectives were attained through field research in three semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe. The three areas selected for the study were Gokwe, Muzarabani and Mwenezi. Participatory methods used to collect data ‘from below’ were triangulated with key informant interviews that collected data ‘from above’ as presented in Chapter four.

1.4 Research Assumptions
The research study had the following assumptions:

- That Zimbabwe’s political situation will continue to improve as a result of the coalition government.
- Those rural communities will be accessible for research, with no political restrictions and violence.
- That the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) will be repealed to allow free gatherings in rural communities.
1.5 Organisation of the study
The thesis is organised into seven chapters. The second chapter is a literature review of selected studies related to rural development, livelihood development and related challenges. Despite a wealth of studies there exists little empirical research on rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe after the Fast Track Land Reform Programme and in a politically charged environment. Chapter Three presents the theoretical frameworks of the study, namely the sustainable livelihoods framework and the actor oriented approach mentioned above.

Chapter Four details the methodology used in the study (methods of investigation, recording and data analysis) and how data was collected using both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Chapter Five concentrates on the study findings and Chapter Six gives a discussion and analysis of the study findings. The study conclusions and recommendations for further research are presented in Chapter Seven.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses a selection of livelihood studies in the region and specifically in Zimbabwe and how they contributed to the field. While it is not exhaustive, it provides adequate background for the study. It examines the concept of de-agrarianisation and its links to rural livelihood diversification. It assesses the impact of land reform and agrarian change in Zimbabwe on livelihoods, the Zimbabwean government's rural development policies and how they enabled or inhibited livelihood diversification and improvement. It highlights key livelihood assets such as livestock production in general and in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe specifically. The chapter also assesses the relationship between livelihood diversification and social differentiation as well as the gendered nature of rural livelihoods in general and specifically in Zimbabwe.

2.1 Linkages between Livelihood Diversification and Poverty Reduction

According to the United Nations Development Programme:

*Poverty is a human condition characterized by the sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.* (UNDP, 1987:23)

Although this is a global definition it has to be noted that poverty is relative and can only be understood in a particular context. It has many faces, changing from place to place and across time and has been described in many ways. Almost anyone would want to escape from it. Scoones (1998:118) contends that in poverty reduction and livelihood diversification, the household is the basic economic decision-making unit in rural society. For the purposes of this study it is defined as:

*..a group of people who live and eat together and typically engage in joint economic activity. This group is usually based on kinship, and normally comprised of nuclear or extended family* (Scoones, 1998)

In the year 2000 the United Nations made poverty reduction the first goal of the
Millennium Development Goals to be achieved by 2015 by the international community. Ellis (1998a:61) contends that the high incidence of poverty in southern Africa is a result of a combination of factors including unemployment levels, limited access to productive resources such as land and capital, unresponsive rural development policies, poor governance systems, urban biased policies that leave rural areas looking less attractive, and economic policies that do not generate economic growth. This argument by Ellis (1998) has been generalised for the southern African region, where poverty is ranked the highest by the World Bank (2006:13).

Ellis’s (1998a:105) studies in India demonstrate that rural livelihood diversification has been promoted in recent years as a rural development strategy for poverty reduction. This diversification happens under conditions and influencing factors particular to each area. Ellis (1998:109) defines rural livelihood diversification as “the process by which households construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities for survival and in order to improve their standard of living”. This implies that this can happen under normal conditions as well as when facing severe economic and political challenges. According to Ellis (1998b:108-112) rural livelihood diversity results in complex interactions with income distribution, farm productivity, environmental conservation and gender relations that are not always straightforward but important for poverty reduction.

Ellis (ibid) points out that a diverse portfolio of activities contributes to the sustainability of a rural livelihood because it improves its resilience in the long run in the face of adverse trends or sudden shocks. His research does not indicate whether the same argument applies under conditions of severe socio-economic challenges and political instability.

Boras (2006:7) argues that rural livelihood diversification in southern Africa is potentially one of the best strategies for reducing poverty, especially among the rural poor. This belief saw an increase in rural livelihood development and diversification interventions in the region, particularly in countries facing political and economic challenges and armed conflict. His study looks at livelihood diversification in post-war Angola. However, it cannot be assumed that the same results would be achieved in rural Zimbabwe, which has not been involved in armed conflict since 1980 and faces different socio-economic, climatic and political challenges.
This study examines livelihood outcomes in rural Zimbabwe based on specific political dynamics and community changes. Chambers (1997:56) argues that responses to poverty are better understood at an individual or community level, as poverty levels vary within a community. In other words, people living in the same village are economically different because they employ different strategies and may possess different levels of potential. Although different macro theories are used to understand poverty reduction strategies and policies, very little attention has been paid, according to Chekole (2006:3), to trying to understand what happens at the micro level in responding to poverty in southern Africa, and particularly in Zimbabwe, under severe socio-economic and political conditions.

The actor-oriented approach proposed by Long and Long (1992:29) emphasises the need to understand poverty reduction at household level so as to be in a position to come up with a clear picture of the local community dynamics of rural livelihood development. Where development interventions are introduced ‘from the top’ by development agencies, local people have different strategies of responding to them as they try to move out of poverty or gain an advantage over others.

Moyo (2000:113) similarly notes that land policies introduced during the 1980s failed to address the need among the poor for effective control of productive assets such as fertile land and other public services and natural resources. His study shows that in a context of a failing economy – which had been expected to trickle wealth down and reduce poverty – together with economic mismanagement and an unaccountable Zimbabwean government at all levels, other governments and development agencies evolved broad-based development strategies aimed at reducing poverty at household and community levels. Since 1991, poverty in Zimbabwe increasingly became an area of concern for the international community, donor agencies and civil society as the quality of life among rural populations, especially in dry regions, continued to deteriorate, indicating the failure of previous policies to bring about economic development.

The expectation associated with rural livelihood diversification is that encouraging more than one single income source will reduce the risk of income failure (Scoones, 1998). However, under severe economic challenges, the expectation is likely to be different because the opportunities presented to rural people are restricted. The decline of agriculture in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe put rural people in a vulnerable position.
According to Ellis (1999:12) diversification reduces both intra-year income variability by diluting the effect of seasonality in farm-based income streams and inter-year income variability resulting from instability in agricultural production and markets. Ellis’ study was conducted in India and the conditions influencing diversification could be different to those in this study.

If rural livelihood diversification happens under normal conditions it is regarded as broadly beneficial for poor and rich alike, reducing poverty among the poor (Ellis, 1999). However, Reardon (1992:65) notes that the desperation-led diversification of the very poor may sometimes result from the accumulation-led diversification of the rich, where the poor would want to increase their opportunities of accumulation in an endeavour to catch up with the rich. Such a diversification has challenges as it widens the inequality gap and may not be sustainable in the long run as it may not be supported by maximum access to and control of resources by the poor, as compared to their rich counterparts. This shows that rural social differentiation, as argued by Peters (2004:23), differently influences livelihood diversification for different people.

The capability to diversify is important for households with few resources to withstand unexpected shortfalls in the annual level of income required for survival (Collinson, 1981). The capability to diversify rests with the affected people themselves rather than external development agencies. This suggests that genuine initiatives by rural people themselves under normal conditions contribute to poverty reduction.

Development agencies complement government efforts to improve livelihoods in rural Zimbabwe in the face of the country’s economic challenges. Some of the initiatives in livelihood diversification were initiated by external development agencies, and this study shows how they contributed to livelihood diversification and improvement. For successful reduction of poverty among rural people it is necessary to understand their levels of access to and control of resources, how external interventions were designed and the role played by rural people in the interventions.

Increasing survival options of the rural poor in semi-arid districts is the major reason that many researchers regard rural sector diversification as an important goal of development policy. According to Reardon (1992:41) rural livelihood diversification has a significant
food security role at household level, by enabling the household to maintain food consumption in the deficit season before the harvest. The food deficit period for the study areas, estimated at five to six months by the Civil Protection Unit of Zimbabwe (2007), is long due to low rainfall patterns, low crop yield due to unsuitable crop selection for the climatic conditions, poor infrastructure and limited marketing options. It is therefore expected that livelihood diversification in rural semi-arid Zimbabwe would contribute to food availability and security. This study provides evidence for various livelihood portfolios and examines whether they contribute to food security.

The capability to diversify income streams is critical for the survival of the rural poor. This is especially true in semi-arid districts, which are vulnerable to seasonal and other risk factors. Different groups among the very poor have different methods and strategies of responding to seasonal and annual risk factors under different conditions. As an actor group they have limited access to and control of assets such as land, finance, education and skills, and possess little or no livestock. Without the capability to produce enough food, the poor are left with only the option to diversify income sources in order to survive and reduce poverty (Nareh and Titi, 1994). This argument from a livelihood study in Singapore shows that increased vulnerability of rural people leads to livelihood diversification. Similar studies from other countries indicate that livelihood outcomes from diversification are different based on the capabilities of the rural people involved.

2.1.1 The Role of NGOs in External Support for Livelihood Development and Poverty Reduction

Sibanda (1994:09) presents the role played by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Zimbabwean rural development as a positive one. He highlights their complementary role to government and demonstrates that in most cases the government has neither the money nor staff to extend adequate services into rural areas. NGOs are able to secure resources from both within and outside the country and provide services to rural people. Otto (2007:05) similarly indicates that since the 1980s NGOs have helped to provide capital, materials, training, technical expertise, transport, energy and education, health, water and sanitation services.

Sibanda (1994:16) shows how NGOs mobilise and organise communities for development activities, play a watchdog role, give some communities a voice and further, that in some cases NGOs play the role of being innovators. Due to their relatively abundant resources and their desire to contribute to meaningful sustainable development they experiment and
come up with innovative ideas and approaches. Van de Ruit (2001:17) indicated that in the case of South Africa and Mozambique donors and NGOs were integral in the establishment of a micro-finance sector for rural people.

Sibanda (1994:09) identified three categories of NGOs, namely welfare NGOs; development NGOs that try to help raise living standards; and environmental NGOs that try to conserve, animate, manage or otherwise enhance natural resources. Lang (1995:211) shows that the NGO sector is heterogeneous and ranges from large bilateral funding agencies such as Oxfam, Save the Children Fund, World Vision and Care International to very small.

Lipton (1994:71), by contrast, emphasises that despite the growth of NGO activity in Zimbabwe from the early 1990s, there are questions regarding their effectiveness in achieving their stated goals. Otto (2007:05) argues that while developmental NGOs played a complementary role, particularly in the agricultural sector in the 1990s, this changed with the land seizures of 2000 that culminated in the destruction of the agricultural sector. He further demonstrates that prior to the year 2000 the NGO sector in Zimbabwe provided an estimated 45% of the country’s foreign exchange revenue and livelihoods for more than 40% of the population. Otto (2007:45) shows that after the FTLRP donors found it difficult to justify funding any programme in Zimbabwe that did not impact directly on poverty reduction, and therefore the role of donors declined after 2000 although NGOs continued operating in the country.

Paradza (2009:28-44), painting a negative picture of donor and NGO support for rural development and poverty reduction, argues that despite the complementary role NGOs play to the government, there are questions about whom they are in fact accountable to. She contends that both local and international NGOs have multiple accountabilities, such as their partners and donor agencies as well as the hosting government and, from a legal perspective, their board of trustees.

Lang (1995:223) in the same debate argues that the aim of NGOs is to impress donor agencies regarding the usefulness of their activity so as to garner further financial support rather than critically analyse their own strengths and weaknesses, and adds that there is increasing evidence that NGOs do not perform as effectively as had been assumed in terms of poverty reach, cost-effectiveness, sustainability, popular participation, flexibility and innovation. Nyoni (1987:33), a current ZANU-PF government minister and founder of
a local NGO, argues that NGOs have had a negligible impact upon hunger, poverty and political instability, and as a result development NGOs have ceased to have any meaning for the poor, who are tired of being mobilised for political ends with empty promises of increased food production, participation and a good life.

Lang (1995: 222) goes one step further and argues that development is often used in a way contrary to what it means to the poor, with leaders pretending to accept development, but not giving it any substance. As a result the rural poor are increasingly forced to become more and more dependent on NGO support to break the vicious cycle of poverty, hunger and powerlessness and to lead them to development. Chambers (1994: 23) argues that few development NGOs have been successful in fulfilling their mandate of poverty reduction and they rarely involve the poor and marginalised people when setting development priorities. Although this debate has shown the complementary role of NGOs to government interventions it is not evident how their interventions are implemented and how they benefit rural people. If NGO activities were failing to achieve intended development goals and reduce poverty when the political situation was no real issue, what then obtains in a politically charged environment? This is the point of departure in this study and the argument is that despite intensive external support to rural livelihood diversification in a politically charged environment, rural people have remained vulnerable and in deep poverty.

**2.2 De-agrarianization and Diversification of Livelihoods**

Bryceson’s major contribution to the understanding of livelihood diversification is her concept of de-agrarianisation, or decline in agricultural activities, which has stimulated wide debate. She defines it as a long-term process of economic activity re-orientation, occupational adjustment, social identification and spatial realignment or relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly agriculture-based modes of livelihood (1993: 56-67) and links it to increased engagement by peasants in non-farm livelihood activities. However, many scholars differ on what factors cause de-agrarianisation and influence rural people to adopt non-farm livelihood strategies, whilst others reject the concept outright.

Bryceson (1996) argues that the last two decades were a period of momentous change in sub-Saharan African economies as rural populations became more occupationally flexible and spatially mobile. This agrees with Banchirigah’s (1994:21) argument that African
countries that were identified as primarily agrarian are now developing towards a more modernised, industrial production base. Banchirigah depicts African post-colonial policies as being aimed at extending peasant production to raise their productivity and living standards as a foundation for industrialisation. However, Bryceson (1996:13) argues that despite these efforts peasants in sub-Saharan Africa are losing their economic capacity and social cohesion and their numbers are shrinking. She calls this ‘depeasantisation’, a specific form of de-agrarianisation leading to increased engagement in other non-farm livelihood strategies. This triggered a wide scholarly debate on de-agrarianisation and diversification of the African rural economies.

Hussein and Nelson (1998) stress that a large and disparate literature from a variety of disciplines concurs that rural people in Africa do not normally specialise in livestock, crop or fish production to the exclusion of other income generating activities. They argue that most rural producers have historically diversified their productive activities. The argument also suggests that whilst diversification of livelihoods is common it takes on a different nature in different contexts. Many scholars including Mortimore (1997), Ellis (1996), Dercon and Krishnan (1996) agree that motivations for contemporary diversification are multifarious, linked with a wide range of possible activities and associated with both positive and negative outcomes.

Carter (1997:16), following Bryceson, observes that diversification includes both on- and off-farm activities undertaken to generate income additional to that from the main household agricultural activities, via the production of other agricultural and non-agricultural goods and services, the sale of waged labour, or self-employment in small firms and other strategies undertaken to spread risk. Bryceson (1996) argues that rural non-agricultural employment is of increasing importance in sub-Saharan Africa. She indicates that this region is steadily becoming less agrarian (both as a long-term historical process and as an integral part of rural livelihood strategies).

Bryceson (1996:24) argues that de-agrarianisation in sub-Saharan Africa appears to be proceeding on the basis of individual diversification with limited intra-sectoral diversification. Occupational specialisation is largely missing. With this she shows that diversification is a historical process that is inevitably linked to de-agrarianisation since sub-Saharan African economies are largely agrarian. This analysis of diversification is
based only on changing economies in sub-Saharan Africa, and ignores factors such as the composition of rural households, age and ethnicity of rural people and the effects of political conflict and war. However, despite this limitation, the concept of de-agrarianisation has been widely adopted in the scholarly debate as integral to understanding livelihood diversification in sub-Saharan Africa and specifically Zimbabwe. It should be emphasised that de-agrarianisation is not homogeneous in African countries but it is context specific.

According to Hilson and Banchirigah (2009:36), the precipitous decline in the value of many export crops and the removal of subsidies on crucial inputs has made smallholder production unviable, forcing many farmers to branch out into non-farm activities to supplement their incomes. Bryceson and Ellis (2006:19) agree, adding that over the past 15 years agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa has become unable to support rural inhabitants economically and this is further aggravated by the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). Most scholars in the field agree that SAPs contributed to de-agrarianisation as they brought about private sector competition with parastatals, reduction in crop export taxes, devaluation of local currencies and – a death blow to many smallholders – removal of subsidies on vital crop inputs. According to Bryceson (1996:32-3), this inevitably induced a large-scale search for new, more remunerative activities outside agriculture, and she concludes that livelihood diversification is caused by de-agrarianisation and is not a matter of choice; it is forced by the decline in agricultural production, which itself is a result of government structural adjustment policies. It is unknown whether the types of livelihood diversification found are sustainable or not.

Hilson and Banchirigah (2009) observe that Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi and Zimbabwe experienced similar changes after the imposition of SAPs from the early 1990s. The adjustments in these countries amounted to drastic undermining of most peasants’ capitalised production through the removal of subsidies on improved inputs such as fertilisers, seeds and pesticides. SAP policies in this analysis dismantled agricultural marketing boards and parastatals that serviced peasants input requirements and controlled prices, and this reduced the significance of agricultural production in supporting rural livelihoods. This does not mean that agriculture collapsed completely; it continued to play a role but it was no longer adequate. Bryceson (1999:04), writing ten years earlier, argues that although people started engaging in non-farm activities, they retained the
security of an agricultural subsistence fallback.

Following Bryceson, Manona (1999), in his study of the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, contends that the way de-agrarianisation happened in South Africa is different from other sub-Saharan countries. He points out that South Africa’s peasants were subjected to de-peasantisation as their access to arable land was restricted when 80% of the national population was corralled into 13% of the country’s land area during the colonial era, and as a result the South African rural population was reduced to playing the functional role of a labour reserve. He concludes that rural people came to see wage earning as the main means of making a living, meaning that they are a rural proletariat rather than a peasantry. In the 1970s the implementation of South Africa’s homeland policy modified this dependency as the policy was intended to slow down massive emigration to urban areas. New industrial centres were located close to rural areas in line with the new industrial decentralisation policy. As a result an increased number of people remained in rural areas but were not engaged in agriculture and this was a form of de-agrarianisation. In this regard Manona (1999) foreshadows Bryceson’s (1996) argument that African rural economies have been shifting, but that nature of the shift determines how rural people diversify their livelihoods. Thus industrial policy and the colonial land policy in South Africa led to a different type of de-agrarianisation from the one influenced by SAPs in countries such as Zimbabwe, and wage earning became the major non-farm livelihood activity.

An analysis of de-agrarianisation and diversification in Sudan shows the same trend in a different context. Like Bryceson, Ibrahim (1994:11) contends that de-agrarianisation is a historical process. In his study of changing rural livelihoods in the Darfur region of Sudan, de-agrarianisation is associated with cyclical droughts and famines that result in a mushrooming of non-farm activities during the period between 1978 and 1995. Ibrahim (1994:11-15) argues that de-agrarianisation was largely a result of the collapse of agriculture rather than positive attraction of non-agrarian forms of livelihood. Rural people lost livestock to drought and famine, resulting in massive rural poverty which prompted them to adopt diverse coping strategies which implies a rural economic activity re-orientation. In South Africa diversification and de-agrarianisation resulted from a combination of enforced colonial policies and attractive wage earning created by the new industrial policy whilst in Darfur it was crisis driven as droughts and famine led to the collapse of agricultural production. In this regard the types of non-farm activities are
different, in other words diversification takes different forms.

In Nigeria a study conducted by Mustapha (1994:51-53) on diversification and de-agrarianisation shows that patterns of de-agrarianisation represent a conjunction of historical, economic and environmental factors. He argues that de-agrarianisation represents a deterioration of livelihoods patterns. Due to their low resource position and lack of access to high-value markets, small-scale farmers faced a decline in agricultural production as rising fuel prices and an escalating cost of living created further pressures on smallholder livelihoods. This perpetuated rural-urban migration, leaving fewer people engaged in agricultural production. Bryceson (1999) argues that Africa is fast urbanising without industrialising, forcing many people to seek employment in the informal sector. In Nigeria’s case Mustapha (1994) concludes that although de-agrarianisation and diversification are evidenced among the Hausa people, it is because of neither colonial land imbalances nor industrial policies; rather, socio-economic problems are spurring rural-urban migration. This study shows that diversification of contemporary livelihoods is determined by socio-economic and environmental experiences.

Tellegen (1994), in a study of diversification and de-agrarianisation in the Mchinji and Salima districts of Malawi, contends that de-agrarianisation takes the form of a re-orientation of economic activity in rural households. She agrees that pressure on arable land and frequent droughts force rural people to engage in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities in order to spread risks, but she argues that this economic re-orientation does not seem to take the form of realignment of human settlements away from rural areas. She concludes that although de-agrarianisation is happening in Malawi rural people are diversifying their livelihoods in their communities without any form of migration to urban areas in search of new activities. This shows that people are engaging in non-farm activities utilising the available resources and opportunities in the localities.

De-agrarianisation is not confined to the African countries referred to above, and reflects the situation of small farmers in many parts of the developing world. FAO (1997) contends that the small farmer the world over is neglected, under equipped and have no significant land, and are forced to resort to casual labour on large estates. FAO further shows the extent of inequalities in the agricultural sector. The sector is one of stark contrast where large scale farmers from favourable regions or developed countries produce millions of
tons of produce as they benefit from the green revolution, whilst hundreds of millions of small farmers with only basic hand tools, no seeds and fertiliser and with little land, produce less than a ton per household. The situation is therefore of huge inequalities of equipment and productivity and one of extreme poverty for millions of under-equipped, poorly located and sometimes landless farmers. This inevitably resulted in small farmer movements such as the Via Campesina in Latin America and the Ekta Parishad in Southern India fighting to make the small farmers’ voices heard. Such movements call for viable and sustainable measures for small farmers from around the world to fight against the root causes of hunger, economically forced migration and degraded environments (FAO, 1997).

An overview of the literature shows there is considerable emphasis on the factors influencing de-agrarianisation and diversification, but the studies mainly research and analyse contemporary livelihoods, and there is limited emphasis on the sustainability of the complementary livelihood activities. Most of the studies on de-agrarianisation and diversification are not focused at the micro level as they concentrate on the general trend of economic activity re-orientation, and there is limited discussion on the specific livelihood activities rural people engage in. Also missing is any discussion on the institutional constraints posed by political processes that take place at national or local level, although there is emphasis on the historical development of the economy.

2.2.1 De-agrarianization and Diversification of Contemporary Livelihoods in Semi-Arid Areas of Zimbabwe

Bryceson (1996), Gaidzanwa (1994), Berkvens (1997), Manyani 2010, Hilson and Banchirigah (2009) and Scoones (2006), all studying Zimbabwean trends, show that different types of livelihood diversification were influenced by de-agrarianisation and re-orientation of economic activity similar to other countries in the region. Workers experienced retrenchments in urban areas and returned to rural areas whilst government subsidies on rural agriculture were removed. As a result agricultural production declined because access to inputs became difficult. For Bryceson (1999) structural adjustment in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s triggered a huge unplanned income diversification response in most semi-arid communities, and peasants initiated an active search for viable income sources while retaining the security of their subsistence fallback. Berkvens (1997) observes that farming in rural Zimbabwe is considered a “cultural way of life, and a domestic task more than a professional occupation”. This analysis contributes to the
understanding that despite a broad de-agrarianisation trend, in rural Zimbabwe people do not branch out of farming completely.

Manyani (2010:21) questions the continued importance of agriculture in semi-arid areas given a trend of increasingly diversified portfolios in her study of rural Gwanda. However, she argues that agriculture is still important though not much income and production has been derived from it in the past decade of economic decline and droughts. She agrees with Berkvens (1997:36) and Bryceson (1999:18) that rural peasants in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe are unwilling to entirely move away from the farm despite the challenges agriculture faces. The major contribution of these studies is the understanding that all livelihood diversification in rural Zimbabwe since the early 1990s is characterised by partial branching out from agriculture.

In Zimbabwe de-agrarianisation was partly due to SAPs in the early 1990s but Manyani (2010) points to a new set of factors emerging from the year 2000. She agrees that de-agrarianisation continued in rural Zimbabwe, but now influenced by droughts in semi-arid areas and the Fast Track Land Reform Programme, which led to mass movement of peasants from semi-arid areas to commercial farms formerly owned by white farmers. She shows that in most semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe, there was a decrease in unit area of farmland cultivated in the past decade, because of continuous droughts in 2000, 2002, 2004 and 2007. This was further worsened by shortages of cash and the removal of subsidies for peasant farmers. Manyani (2010:25) points out that droughts and decline in agricultural production drove many rural people to migrate to neighbouring countries. This loss in agricultural labour in rural households of Zimbabwe further de-agrarianised rural Zimbabwe and people turned to wage labour in neighbouring countries as a source of livelihood diversification.

In a different dimension to livelihood diversification, Gaidzanwa (1994:45) argues that de-agrarianisation in Zimbabwe is not necessarily linked to rural non-farm expansion but may reflect impoverishment, landlessness and marginalisation in the rural sector. For her, de-agrarianisation may actually reflect different types of changes in both rural and urban sectors. She argues that de-agrarianisation is a result of people’s differing experiences with land, markets, credit and other services. In this regard she suggests that de-agrarianisation in rural communities of Zimbabwe is at the household level and as such
livelihood diversification follows the same pattern. Gaidzanwa overlooks the role played by structural adjustment in the 1990s and the role of droughts and other political changes in Zimbabwe, choosing to focus on de-agrarianisation and livelihood diversification at the local level without giving a national picture of the trend of livelihood diversification over the past two decades as done by Bryceson (1996).

Gaidzanwa (1994:53) points out that diversification and versatility have become increasingly characteristic of many rural households in Zimbabwe since 1980, especially with regard to off-farm activities by higher-income households. This agrees with Mohan’s (2005:67) conclusion in southern Africa that the promise of real or imagined riches lures residents from their traditional ways of life. Examples of gold rushes in Brazil in the 1980s and diamond rushes in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo shape this narrative, where again mainly high-income rural households were involved. The impression that emerges from these studies is that during the early 1980s in Zimbabwe, livelihood diversification was dominant among the high-income rural earners whilst off-farm diversification tended to be minimal among poor peasants because they enjoyed government subsidies and support in agricultural production. However, this argument may not convince those whose focus is poor peasants in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe as they still experienced agricultural challenges of low rainfall, poor soils and consequent low agricultural output. Does it mean that they were not diversifying during this period? Since Mohan’s analysis is one of livelihood diversification by high-income households there is no indication of how the poor responded to early forms of de-agrarianisation in dry districts of Zimbabwe.

It is difficult to understand livelihood diversification without an assessment of different types of non-farm livelihood activities that peasants engaged in after experiencing de-agrarianisation. Gaidzanwa (1994:50) observes that in rural Zimbabwe poor people are diversifying into vending and small-scale retail, which is largely part of the informal sector in both rural and urban Zimbabwe. Manyani (2010:30) in her livelihood study indicates that rural people in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe are diversifying into vegetable gardening, fishing and carving wood while some have left for neighbouring countries. Berkvens (1997:64) shows how most rural people, particularly men, have diversified through rural-urban migration or to neighbouring countries such as Botswana, Mozambique and South Africa as migrant labour, from where they send cash and goods back home for rural
livelihoods. Hilson and Banchirigah (2009:131) contends that one of the obvious destinations of poor peasants after branching out of agriculture is the low-technology small-scale mining or illegal mining due to low barriers of entry in sub-Saharan Africa, including Zimbabwe.

In similar vein Maponga and Ngorima (2003:86) observe that in rural Zimbabwe, particularly in semi-arid areas, most poor people engage in the extraction of near-surface mineral deposits, particularly gold. However, this type of non-farm diversification faces challenges of government control through the use of both force and regulation. This suggests that not all types of non-farm activities that peasants engage in are easy to sustain.

Hilson and Banchirigah (2009:142) go further to show that diversification into non-farm livelihood activities and its economic importance has been downplayed by most governments in sub-Saharan Africa. According to the International Labour Organisation (1999:89) the small-scale mining industry employs more than two million people directly and indirectly, with most being seasonal smallholder farmers branching out from agriculture to supplement their income. Hilson and Banchirigah (2009:150) and others conclude that small-scale or illegal gold and diamond mining in poor countries such as Zimbabwe is poverty driven. Maponga and Ngorima (2003:72) observe that in some semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe, peasants have turned to alluvial gold panning as a full-time economic activity that supports the livelihoods of over half a million people both directly and indirectly. They argue that this is influenced by intermittent drought and price rises in agricultural inputs and other services and goods.

Bryceson (1999:21) observes that as peasants embark on a dual strategy of engaging in both non-farm activities and agricultural production the two different types of rural economic activity are not parallel but have linkages. Berkvens (1997:75) concurs, and points out that agricultural production in rural Zimbabwe has benefited from emerging non-farm activities since 1991. He attributes a 5% growth per annum of non-agricultural activities to the impact of SAPs and market liberalisation over this period, particularly as the subsequent contraction of the urban formal job market sparked a migration back to the rural areas. He estimates that until then. Remittances constituted about 42% of non-agricultural earnings of Zimbabwean rural households and much of it was channelled
towards agricultural production. While he points out that cash investments into rural agriculture by migrant labourers may not provide an adequate substitute for the loss of their labour, peasant agriculture in rural Zimbabwe has nonetheless benefited from this type of diversification (Berkvens, 1997:82). What is observed in Zimbabwe by these scholars is echoed in by Tellegen in Malawi, where peasants diversified into beer brewing to generate cash, which in turn was used to finance peasant agricultural production. Although this shows that in some instances the allocation of labour in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities is seasonal, the two are linked and complementary.

Although this literature contributes to the general understanding of changing livelihoods in rural Zimbabwe, none of the studies have linked the trend of livelihood diversification to sustainability. Evidence that peasants in rural Zimbabwe were pushed by poverty, marginalisation and landlessness into non-farm livelihood activities indicates that there is a policy gap where the government has failed to support the emergence of non-farm economic activities.

Most importantly the studies ignore the volatile political climate in Zimbabwe that strongly altered rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe, and as a result the studies are premised more on the socio-economic changes. This study analyses how sustainable the livelihoods were that rural people engaged in during Zimbabwe's politically charged environment of the past decade.

2.2.2 Livelihood Diversification and Sustainability of Livelihoods
Hussein and Nelson (2008:12-14) observe that diversification is an important strategy by which rural people may work to achieve sustainable livelihoods, rather than an end in itself. DFID defines a sustainable livelihood as one that:

*Can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base.* (DFID 1999:12)

Chambers (1997:23) observes that a livelihood should be sustainable because it comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income and
assets – both environmentally sustainable in that it should maintain or enhance the local and global assets on which livelihoods depend, as well as have net beneficial effects on other livelihoods, and socially sustainable in that it should be able to cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and still provide for future generations. This suggests that whatever types of livelihood poor people engage in they have to be sustainable to cope with stresses and shocks.

Cole and Carney (1999:15) observe that the concept of sustainable livelihoods was developed after decades of limited success in eliminating poverty, and as a result new ideas about development emerged. They argue that the concept of sustainable livelihoods was adopted to reduce poverty in the most effective way. Hussein and Nelson (1998) go one step further and point out that since livelihood diversification is aimed at achieving sustainable livelihoods, the end goal of sustainable livelihoods through portfolio diversification is to reduce poverty. Further, they show that livelihood diversification operates in conjunction with other strategies that contribute to the sustainability of livelihoods. They offer migrant labour (although this could also be seen as part of livelihood diversification) and agricultural intensification as two strategies that can work in conjunction with diversification, and warn that diversification on its own without other strategies may not achieve sustainable livelihoods and ultimately may fail to address poverty in rural Africa and Zimbabwe.

Hussein and Nelson (1998:84) argue that migrant labour is both a livelihood diversification and a strategy to complement diversification. It is linked to income generation as migrant remittances relieve rural credit constraints. In a much earlier study, Stark and Griffin (1976:127) argue that migrant labour provides much needed resources for investment in rural production. The degree to which remittances are used for rural investment has been a much debated topic since then although the general consensus in the past two decades seems to be that migrant labour forms a central part of rural people’s risk mitigation strategy.

Reardon’s (1997:49) focus on agricultural intensification as a strategy to combine with diversification makes a useful contribution to the literature with the observation that increased average inputs of labour or capital on a smallholding – either cultivated land alone or on cultivated and grazing land – increases the value of output per hectare.
Reardon (1997:53) argues that the effectiveness of agricultural intensification is affected by market proximity and these markets can help farmers generate farm and non-farm income from a wide range of sources, or in other words, to diversify. A study by Delgado (1989:73-4) in Central Africa concludes that crop and livestock integration is one form of diversification that can also be used in conjunction with non-farm livelihood diversification, a complex strategy that enables the construction of sustainable livelihoods.

2.2.3 Different Levels of Livelihood Diversification
According to Cavan (1992:234-251) in her study of rural Mali, livelihood diversification may take place when poor peasants change the composition of their agricultural produce. Hussein and Nelson (1998), too, conclude that poor rural farmers or producers with low levels of capital may be able to restructure their production mix more easily than investing in non-agricultural areas. The strategy of crop-livestock integration is one level of livelihood diversification that can help peasants to maintain fertility through incorporation of manure into the soil, and the animals themselves provide other assets and can also act as liquid assets that can easily be sold. This level of diversification helps to build up or maintain agricultural production and reduce risk. This argument differs from a concept of de-agrarianisation that emphasises branching out from agriculture into non-farm economic activities as the main form of livelihood diversification, with diversification within farm activities (crop + animal livelihoods) as secondary and farm activities that can lead to non-farm activities as third.

Diversification from farm to non-farm activity is a level of diversification, according to Liedholm et al (1994:177). Many of these non-agricultural activities involve micro-enterprises that generate employment and income in rural areas. Liedhold et al (1994:144) flags past empirical studies showing that micro-enterprises provide an estimated 20% to 45% of full-time employment and 30% to 50% of rural household income in sub-Saharan Africa. De Janvry (1994) argues that pursuing non-farm activity represents a risk minimisation strategy to achieve basic household subsistence needs. These scholars contribute to the understanding that livelihood diversification is at different levels and this will have a bearing in this study. Another crucial point is that although diversification has different push-and-pull factors, it also has external and internal supports.

2.2.4 Supports to Rural Livelihood Diversification
Freudenberger (1994) contends that in livelihood diversification each individual and
household engages in a portfolio of activities that vary over time, with the proportional mix of them being influenced by context-specific opportunities such as market proximity, prices, infrastructure and natural resources. Davies (1996) and Berry (1989) both agree that in some cases rural people have access to formal or informal institutions, social networks and non-governmental organisations that help them structure certain aspects of livelihood diversification. This is a departure point for this study, which focuses on different interventions and the role they play in livelihood diversification.

Such institutions condition who can diversify and the potential rewards from diversification, as well as placing limits on the types of diversification open to rural people in different contexts. An example of this was given by Katona-Apte (1988:97) in his/her study of the vital role played by the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in providing micro-credit to women, enabling them to carry out diversification activities and thus demonstrate that they are good credit risks for other sources of credit. This is an acknowledgement that diversification can also be fostered by players who are not necessarily its direct beneficiaries.

2.2.5 Constraints to Livelihood Diversification
Seppala (1996:29), studying constraints to diversification in rural Tanzania, concludes that success or failure in undertaking diversification strategies is dependent upon households’ different management approaches, differences in timing of activities, location of activities and capacity to estimate risks. Dercon (1996:4) similarly conclude that discrepancies in the success rate of households and individuals at their diversification strategies are best explained by differences in ability, location and access to credit. Thus it follows that rural groups that are most vulnerable due to lack of access to education, distance from markets, low wealth status or small household size may have the fewest opportunities to diversify – and in fact that the extreme vulnerability of peasants in rural Zimbabwe may in itself be a constraint to livelihood diversification. As a result, as other households diversify they may not be in a position to do so.

Evans and Ngau (1991:18) identify macro-economic and policy contexts as specific constraints to diversification, and agree that low population in rural communities reduces the chances of diversification. Limited access to markets, non-availability of urban centres, restrictions on internal and/or cross-border movement and trade, government economic policies that extract surplus from people trying to diversify or that impede their preferred
diversification strategies, market regulation and unavailability of infrastructure all adversely affect the capacity of the rural poor to diversify. Thus the unavailability of most services that are supposed to be provided by the government or local authorities are a constraint to livelihood diversification. Reardon et al (1992:58) adds that degraded or insufficient natural resources such as land and water also limit livelihood diversification in semi-arid areas while Berry (1996:19) points out that limited availability of education and skills training is a further constraint. This analysis provides an overview of livelihood diversification contexts of semi-arid areas and how rural people diversify in these areas.

However, none of this literature shows the specific areas of activity diversification that the most vulnerable groups with the most limitations tend towards. This study focuses on specific evidence of diversification by the most vulnerable groups in marginalised and semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe. Neither do the studies clarify whether there are also systemic constraints on diversification by the most vulnerable. However, Berry (1989:17) observes that at community level lack of credit is more likely to affect the poorest groups and as a result they may fail to diversify. He also points to the powerlessness of these groups to influence decisions about allocation of land or common property resources at village level. This leads to the conclusion that barriers affecting the rural poor in livelihood diversification exist in a variety of dimensions.

2.3 Post-Independence Agrarian Changes and Land Reform in Zimbabwe
Start (2001:201) in his agrarian studies of southern Africa observes that agriculture is historically the mainstay of the region’s rural economy, including Zimbabwe, where an estimated 70% of the population is engaged in agriculture. Despite the shift from an agricultural to a non-farm rural economy observed by Bryceson (1996:09), agriculture still supports the livelihoods of most poor rural people in semi-arid areas in Zimbabwe. Wolmer (2002:89) observes that not all people are affected to the same extent when it comes to agrarian and land reform.

Cousins (2007:67) defines agrarian reform both narrowly, as government initiated or government backed redistribution of agricultural land, and broadly, as an overall redirection of the agrarian system of the country, which often includes land distribution reform. Other measures of agrarian reform could include credit measures, skills training, extension services and land consolidations. Moyo (2004:34) stresses that while it is difficult to separate land reform from agrarian change, land reform on its own is not
sufficient for agrarian reform and national development. Land reform is a deliberate human intervention whilst agrarian change refers to much broader processes. The World Bank (2003) holds that agrarian reform has five dimensions – price and market liberalisation, land reform including the development of land markets, agro-processing and input supply channels, rural finance, and market institutions – all important for rural livelihoods. Cousins (2007:39) further shows that whilst land reform is concerned with rights to land and their character, strength and distribution, agrarian reform focuses not only on these but also a broader set of issues that include the class character of the relations of production and distribution in farming and related enterprises, and how these connect to the wider class structure. It is thus concerned with economic and political power and relations between them.

2.3.1 Background to the Land Question in Zimbabwe
Gora (2008:128) gives the origins of the land question by demonstrating that the failure by white settlers in Zimbabwe to make a profit from scant gold deposits just after the First World War encouraged them to engage in agricultural production. This was the starting point of the land question in Zimbabwe. Indigenous people were dispossessed of their land and coerced into labouring on settler farms. According to Moyo (1986:53), after the 1923 white referendum for self-governance in then Rhodesia, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 was enacted in order to separate land along racial lines, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and blacks were not allowed to acquire land in areas designated for whites. The new land structure was characterised by two major race groups with unequal power relations to land and agricultural production (Moyo 1986:67-73). The new colonial agrarian structure that emerged was largely carried through into the post-independence period after 1980.

The period 1945-1960 saw an increased influx of white settlers taking up agriculture (Kinsey 1999:61), and to make way for these new settlers a new entrenched policy of wholesale evictions and forced removals of black communities was undertaken. Many people were forced into reserves that were largely located near or in inhospitable and tsetse-ridden areas such as Gokwe and Muzarabani. These communal areas – semi-arid, rocky and mountainous – are the focus of this study. The remaining 20% of the land was shared between commercial companies, conservation areas and the colonial government, while an estimated 0,05% was set aside for the Native Purchase areas for acquisition through freehold or leasehold by small groups of richer Africans.
Alexander (1991:56) observes that increasing population densities in these marginal communal areas resulted in social and economic dislocation associated with labour migration, substantial environmental degradation and a growing production crisis. The agricultural economy of the Shone and Ndebele people was reduced to subsistence levels and there was a significant reduction in the variety of crops grown, indicating an early de-agrarianisation during the colonial period. The rural livelihoods of people under these dry agricultural conditions as depicted by these scholars were characterised by low volumes in trade involving black people. Overstocking and reduced agricultural productivity in the communal areas further increased poverty. The colonial agrarian structure led to communal overcrowding that forced many people to settle on river banks, steep slopes, grazing areas and fragile land, posing great environmental and livelihood risks. Moyo (2004:88) concludes that it is no surprise that the iniquities and inequalities of land allocation associated with state support to white agriculture became areas of conflict, or that conditions for a new agrarian structure premised equal land ownership.

Few if any of the contributors to the above historical account of Zimbabwe’s land question emphasise the specific rural livelihoods of people in communal areas. Alexander (1991:59) indicates that as indigenous people were moved to marginal areas some were converted into white settlers’ farm labourers, though most continued with agricultural production under difficult conditions in the new marginal areas. However, there is no focus on changes in the specific types of crops grown, despite a mention that production of specific crops declined. Neither is it clear whether rural people were partially or even completely supported by the colonial government. This study partly captures the historical trend in livelihood support from the colonial government despite a clear focus on the ten-year period between 2000 and 2010.

2.3.2 Post-Independence Land and Agrarian Reform
Rural poverty and limited rural livelihoods characterised by a skewed land and agrarian structure inevitably became the basis for rebellions and liberation movements aimed at radical land reform once in power, according to Bratton (1987). He agrees with Moyo (1986:13) that this agrarian structure was slightly modified in the post-colonial period and this made the landless and the near landless the poorest of the poor. In 1980, guided by the negotiated Lancaster House Constitution of 1979, an orderly transition from white minority to black majority rule was facilitated, but the hopes of the black majority to get
back prime and productive land were curtailed by the liberal principles of land transfer enshrined in the constitution’s ‘willing buyer, willing seller’ mechanism. Sachikonye (2005:234), too, outlines how mass expropriation of land by the new post-colonial government was rejected while Palmer (1990:28) points out that in 1980 the government’s hands were tied with regard to agrarian transformation as any significant redistribution of land was ruled out. He argues that despite this limitation, the state retained the right to expropriate land for public and resettlement purposes in cases where compensation would be paid out in foreign currency.

Palmer (1990:33) in his studies on land reform in Zimbabwe notes that the early post-independence land reform was state-centred and market-based. Moyo (1995:17) describes this period as liberal land reform, where the black government had the intention to redress past land alienation by creating equal access to land for the majority of the population but could not. This early post-colonial land reform was to create political stability and an acceptable property rights regime, promote economic growth through wider equity and efficiency gains from land redistribution and foster national food security, self-sufficiency, and agricultural development through labour intensive small-farm production, optimal land productivity, and returns to invested capital. It had great emphasis on agrarian reforms and rural development within the peasant sector.

Moyo (2001:12) and Palmer (1990:89) agree that this state-led, market-based land and agrarian reform failed to redistribute land on any significant scale. Matondi (1998:42) contends that due to constitutional limitations, the government managed to resettle 71 000 households out of the expected 162 000 between 1980 and 1990 on 3.5 million hectares. The British government disbursed grants in the form of aid worth approximately US$ 44 million during the 1980s for market-based land acquisition but this was inadequate. The acquisition process was also very slow because only land deemed underutilised or derelict, farms abandoned by white farmers during the war and those adjacent to communal areas were purchased for resettlement. As a result, Moyo (1995:33) shows, the available land for resettlement under the market-based process quickly ran out.

Moyo (2001:66) brings in another dimension to this land distribution process – that of people from communal lands initiating the process from below as they needed the land to improve their rural livelihoods. In this people-driven land acquisition, they themselves
initiated land identification through the occupation of abandoned and underutilised land, prompting the government to respond by acquiring the occupied land at the market price. Although this type of acquisition was deemed illegal, by 1986 it had contributed to the purchase of a limited number of farms. However, by moving selected privately owned pieces of land into the market, neither the government nor poor beneficiaries drove the process of distributing land during the market-based land reform. Matondi (1998) points out that this left communal and semi-arid areas still congested, overcrowded, overstocked and overgrazed with very limited livelihood options. This increased the demand for access to land as an important natural asset for rural livelihoods.

Bratton (1987:233) details how instead, agricultural research, extension services, roads and marketing depots, education and health in those marginal and semi-arid areas became the focus rather than land redistribution and agrarian restructuring. Although these infrastructural changes made by the government were important for livelihoods in rural areas, the land was degraded, the soil poor and agricultural productivity consequently low. Matondi (1998:53) concludes that under the Lancaster House Constitution, no meaningful land reform could take place.

Through the willing buyer willing seller principle, the land offered to the government was expensive and marginal, and occurred in pockets around the marginal areas. As a result land supply failed to match the demand for resettlement. This was compounded by the failure of the international community to fund the land reform as promised in 1979 by the British government and other donor countries. The domestic budget also constrained the market-based land reform because the government came under intense pressure from the World Bank, IMF and donor governments to cut back on resettlement funding.

Between 1991 and 1995, although the World Bank insisted on market-based land reform, its ESAP failed to integrate land reform into other economic reforms that took place, thereby aggravating market failures in land acquisition, compounding existing land conflicts and generating new ones. Moyo (1995:79) points out those severe droughts in the mid-1980s and early 1990s made it more difficult for the government of Zimbabwe and the rural un-resettled people lost out on their limited livelihood assets in degraded communal areas. He further shows that even those who benefited from the resettlement programme but were not yet established were so severely affected that many returned to
 communal and semi-arid areas in search of better conditions. In response the government began to use more financial resources on relief efforts and less on land redistribution efforts.

According to Groenewald (2003:03), the first post-independence land reforms in 1994 were marred by scandals of land allocations to politicians and senior civil servants, and as a result the unresolved land question in Zimbabwe remained a constraint to rural livelihood development in rural Zimbabwe. Roset (2002, 2004) critiques the market-based agrarian changes, saying they tended to depoliticise the problem of landlessness, which by its nature could be resolved only by structural changes of a kind that had to be addressed in the sphere of politics, not economics. Borras (2003:146) argues that market-based land reform was a failed policy of the World Bank, which took a lead in promoting and financing reforms of land tenure, including titling, land market facilitation, negotiated redistributive reforms and credit, technical assistance and marketing. He contends that most policies led by the World Bank largely fail to address the underlying causes of poverty and exclusion.

Although the Lancaster House Constitution was only to last for ten years its restrictions remained a constant theme in the Zimbabwean land reform that followed (Moyo 2004). The British government wanted to perpetuate market-based land reform as a condition for its continued co-funding beyond 1990. However, this was rejected because it would mean that peasants would wait longer for the land reform. Inevitably demands for land redistribution grew among the poor in marginalised areas due to growing poverty and the retrenchment of workers under the SAPs. The land question remained unresolved and this gave rise to the people driven land distribution process.

At the policy level Mlambo (2005:109) notes that the colonial land grab policy displaced farming peasants from fertile land to steep, rocky slopes, desert margins and infertile soils and facilitated a progressive incorporation of those displaced people into a poorly paid seasonal labour force for export agriculture. Eicher (1995:84) argues that the Land Apportionment Act (1930), the Native Land Husbandry Act (1951) and the Land Tenure Act (1969) merely consolidated land gains by the white settler farmers and ensured that Africans remained legally confined to unproductive land. These legislative instruments divided the country into two: white owned areas of prime land located in central arable
highlands, and black occupied reserves in agro-ecologically low potential regions characterised by semi-arid climates (Moyo 1995).

The Native Land Husbandry Act (1951) enforced de-stocking and conservation practices on black held land, thereby leading to a further decline in asset holding levels by rural people. The enactment of this act shows a highly interventionist and punitive stance by the state. It was geared at the peasantisation of rural communities through the creation of a rural peasantry on one hand and an urban proletariat on the other.

Thompson shows that the Land Tenure Act (1969) still pursued the segregation agenda although it repealed the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. It led to further overstocking, very high population densities, worse poverty and serious environmental damage, and reduced agricultural productivity in communal areas. As a result rural opportunities for people became even more constrained.

Worby (2001:167) notes that although the minority whites controlled half of the country's agricultural land, it became difficult to attract labour from African reserves. Africans resisted measures of political coercion by taking up jobs in urban areas and in other cases enrolling for mining jobs in South African mines, where wages were higher (Johnson 1992; Lebert, 2006). This signifies a transformation of rural livelihoods from being wholly agricultural to cash income due to the creation of wage labour. Worby (2001:180) further shows that the colonial labour policy widened the sources of wage labour by recruiting people from neighbouring countries such as Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique and this increased the number of people on seasonal agricultural employment. Arrighi (1966:89) stress that this process of capitalist development led to the birth of a rural semi-proletariat with households combining “wage and hoe”, as men were oscillating between the rural and urban sectors.

Arrighi (1966:197) shows that in the context of a suppressed reserve agricultural sector, labour migration became one of the forced forms of livelihood activity as households endeavoured to pay numerous taxes that were levied on them. This was also the origins of gender-based livelihood diversification, where men migrated to urban areas and women engaged in subsistence production in rural areas. Arrighi (1966:203) indicates that by 1930 semi-proletarianisation of the rural economy was complete, as discriminatory
policies were enacted to protect settler farmers. This destroyed the smallholder agricultural sector in regions where it had initially flourished. Page and Page (1991:133) also point out how various legislative instruments forced Africans into the wage sector and treated African reserves as a labour reservoir, while most of these African reserves were subjected to state neglect with households only allowed to exercise freedom of occupation and cropping.

However, Wolmer and Scoones (2000:124) argue that attempts were made to develop African agriculture on the African reserves, but ideologically. Duggan (1990:17) argues that they were treated as a labour reservoir for the industrial sector. To the contrary, Page and Page (1991:201) argue that despite a slight policy shift by the colonial state, the colonial agrarian policies had been to placate white settler concerns by ensuring that African farmers should not compete fairly on the market. Instead, two-tier pricing policies were developed, thereby protecting inefficient white farmers.

2.3.4 The Fast Track Land Reform Programme (2000-2004)

According to Marongwe (2003:40) the failures of the market-based land reform failed rural people in semi-arid communal areas whose livelihoods were insecure due to overcrowding, overstocking, overgrazing and environmental degradation. As a result it is no surprise that most semi-arid areas in Zimbabwe experience the worst poverty and hunger in the country whilst most of the toward consumers in wealthy countries. Moyo (1998) further argued that the impoverished peasants could afford to buy what was locally grown in large commercial farms because they were not a significant market. This further worsened the downward spiral of land degradation and deepening poverty in these semi-arid areas.

Moyo (2001:37-40) observes that from the mid-1990s the full market compensation principle began to fall away. Attempts to institutionalise the compulsory land acquisition were strongly contested because the colonial and class formations remained intact until the mid-1990s. Moyo (2004:49) in his studies of agrarian changes in Zimbabwe tracks the origins and resurgence of grassroots initiatives in land occupations and indicates that they did not originate during the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) but resurfaced during this period after an earlier surge during the post-independence market-based land reform programme. Yeros (2000:96), argues that although the FTLRP is conceived to have started as a bottom-up process, the government was stung by the people’s rejection
of the constitution, and to maintain its grip on power the state formed an alliance with farm occupiers and launched the FTLRP, marked by illegal land seizures, lawlessness and violence. Moyo (2004) concurs with Yeros (2000) that the state had no option but to be in alliance with the local rural poor people and social formations such as war veterans for land reform, although the success of the alliance in creating and supporting rural livelihoods is debatable.

Shiku (2002:103-107), arguing that the FTLRP was fuelled by populist appeals that encouraged rural people to indulge in xenophobia and violence, concludes that the way land reform is carried out determines the culminating results and impact. Chambati and Moyo (2004:102) agree with Shiku (2002:16) that the FTLRP process turned into flagrant land-grabbing and outright theft by political elites and their supporters. Both studies are critical of the way the law was ignored or selectively applied and the police in some instances failed to act against lawlessness or protect victims of violence. Chitiyo (2000:13-18) further indicates that the army and judges themselves acted unlawfully by taking possession of farm equipment and property to which they had no right. This impunity has been buttressed by a series of laws and constitutional amendments to dispossess farmers and farm workers of their livelihoods without compensation.

Although this analysis might be a correct reflection of what happened during the second phase of land reform after independence, what goes unacknowledged is that the unresolved land question during the early post-colonial land reform created fertile ground for the violent nature of the FTLRP. It is important to indicate that the continued congestion of rural people in marginalised communal areas, accompanied by donor country influences trying to delay the wholesale land reform, catalysed the way the FTLRP programme happened including the effects of the process on rural livelihoods in both communal areas and newly resettled areas.

Richardson (2007:93) argues that the FTLRP was based on national economic and social imperatives of poverty eradication and faster economic development targeted at decongesting communal lands and creating an indigenous commercial farming sector. However, the process was undertaken in an accelerated manner with reliance on domestic resources that was a clear departure from the previous philosophy, practices and procedures of acquiring land and resettling people.
Moyo (2005:81) notes that between June 2000 and February 2001, a national total of 2,706 farms covering more than 6 million hectares were gazetted for compulsory acquisition and the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) (2003:112) indicate that more than 1,600 commercial farms were occupied by rural people by the end of 2000. A UNDP technical report (2002) indicates that the fast-track process was affected by cumbersome consultations and decision-making processes involving numerous districts, provincial and central government actors such as line ministries and security agencies. This introduced another set of logistical efficacy challenges similar to the ones faced during the market-based land reform.

Richardson (2007:84-87) argues that problems of weak capacity and poor coordination by the government led to numerous errors in processing the acquisition of properties. This threatened food security (UNDP, 2002:6). Many people who deserved land for production purposes did not benefit from the reform. The process, violent as it was, became a looting spree as people concentrated on grabbing property from white commercial farmers. Farm workers whose livelihoods depended on commercial farms were displaced and the number of vulnerable people increased in the countryside. As a result the land reform process, though it has a strong link with the livelihoods of most Zimbabweans, did not achieve the objective of improving the livelihoods of those who needed it most.

2.3.5 The Impact of the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme on Agrarian and Livelihood Changes

Oya (2010:28) estimates that about 42% of land in Zimbabwe after the FTLRP is communal land, on which an estimated 73% of the population eke out a living from subsistence farming. His analysis shows that despite the FTLRP in Zimbabwe the largest number of people remained in communal areas including the semi-arid areas. Matondi (1998:98) observes that the FTLRP resulted in a new agrarian formation dominated by small- to medium-scale farms. It reduced the oversized commercial farms of about 2000 hectares to an average of 500 hectares. Moyo (2004:112) confirms that substantial changes in Zimbabwe’s agrarian structure occurred after the FTLRP in terms of differentiated farm size allocations and the inferred class character and nationality of beneficiaries, as well as the demography of the farming population in terms of its racial and gender composition. These changes, according to Moyo (2004:24), forced adjustments in the character of agro-service providers and services, as it has changed the
character of the rural labour process.

Matondi (2008:106) observes from his studies in Zimbabwe that a significant amount of land was set aside for two models that were developed, the A1 and A2 models, with medium and large commercial schemes falling in the A2 category. In his analysis of the new classification system, Gundani (2002: 99-103) explains that the A1 model, in which smallholder farmers live in a villagised or self-contained manner, was meant to decrease land pressure in communal areas as well as provide livelihood assets to the poor. However, Gundani is greatly concerned with the type of land tenure and security associated with this model. The offer letter to the A1 farmer stipulates that the offer can be withdrawn anytime by the government with no obligation to compensate for any improvements. This has made A1 settlement an insecure investment for new farmers.

This model was designed to benefit people from communal areas including semi-arid areas. In this regard these new A1 model farmers came from marginalised and semi-arid areas to settle in prime land areas, but without the important natural asset of security of tenure. The same beneficiaries were not supported by agricultural inputs from the government as industries closed due to a deepening economic crisis. With commercial agriculture now dominated by rural people without inputs, capital poverty increased in communal areas as they used to depend on commercial farms for food and contract employment. Matondi (2010) argues that most A1 model beneficiaries came from cities and towns and not from semi-arid communal areas, indicating that the FTLRP failed to decongest these semi-arid areas. Thus while the model was a success in certain aspects, it failed to address semi-arid communal problems because of severe shortages of agricultural inputs, and agricultural production declined severely in both new resettlement and semi-arid communal areas.

Land rights have remained in the hands of the government, which has the prerogative to deny access or remove settlers at any given time (Sadomba 2008). The land reform programme has a mixture of beneficiaries from the poor to the better-off in society including the wealthy, youths, the experienced and qualified in agriculture and some with no agricultural experience or skills. Moyo (2004:89) notes that in most cases beneficiaries had neither government nor donor support.
For Moyo (2004:74) the FTLRP reconfigured Zimbabwe’s agrarian question, reflecting new problems for the transformation of agricultural and industrialisation processes, labour utilisation, mechanisation and support institutions in the public and private sphere. In this analysis Moyo (2004:46) is concerned about the absence of a strategy adequately crafted to ensure the sustainability of the new agrarian structure. He points to a clear shift in agrarian labour processes, including changing patterns of demand for and utilisation of farm labour, recruitment processes, wage and income patterns, and the power of organised farm labour to influence its interests. Moyo and Chambati (2004) agree that there is an increase in numbers of unemployed farm workers. The new employers are now A2 model farmers comprising mix of new black commercial farmers and a few remaining white farmers. This is different from A1 model farmers who are the new smallholder farmers recently resettled. These diverse employers re-engaged farm workers but on a limited basis, causing hundreds of thousands of farm workers to lose their livelihoods. In other words, the FTLRP was a disaster to the livelihoods of many poor farmers and farm workers (Chambati, 2004). Thus the new agrarian structure reflects a new set of rural power relations influencing labour structures and relations.

Rugube (2003:101), too, argues that despite some rural people having access to prime land the expectations that the FTLRP would decongest communal areas and lead to improved communal agricultural performance and better incomes for people in communal areas was not achieved as expected. People who moved to prime land areas were expected to equally benefit from the quality land for improved income, but Richardson (2006:29) argues that this thesis of improved agricultural performance and incomes in places of origin (communal areas) and places of settlement did not materialise because other compounding factors conspired to negatively affect agricultural production. Matondi (2008:88) shares the same argument as he shows that after the FTLRP the communal areas, particularly the semi-arid ones, emerged worse off for a variety of reasons. While these studies are useful, they ignore specific livelihoods in semi-arid areas after the FTLRP.

Alexander (2003:114) is another who argues that despite the hopes placed in the FTLRP for better agricultural performance; the policy resulted largely in people losing their livelihoods. The overall picture is that of massive job losses, virtual destruction of managerial and farm worker skills base resulting in huge food crisis, and the collapse of
Zimbabwe’s foreign exchange earning capacity. The government’s focus on rural development shifted from the marginalised rural areas to new settlement areas and this worsened the situation of peasants in communal areas established by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. Owens (2003:15) argues that some people who benefited from the FTLRP continued holding onto land in communal areas of origin. This created split households as families spread risk through maintaining dual farming households as a fall-back plan if they were evicted from the new settlement areas. Ownership of plots in communal areas was thus never totally surrendered by most farmers, who now enjoy the security of owning two plots in different areas. One impact of splitting investment and spreading it over two separate households was reduced agricultural productivity. Most farmers left children in communal areas of origin where there were no social services such as schools or health points, resulting in increased insecurity for women and children. This agrees with Bryceson’s (1996) argument that labour shortages in agricultural production lead to de-agrarianisation. This suggests that both communal areas and new settlement areas experienced de-agrarianisation during and after the FTLRP.

Richardson (2006:204) contends that the disappearance of external inputs such as fertilisers, seeds and pesticides during the period after the FTLRP made it even more difficult for people in semi-arid areas to depend on agricultural production. In addition when the FTLRP started it was dogged by successive droughts in most semi-arid areas, poor investment in production, equipment and inputs, lack of knowhow and shortage of labour, thus dragging down the overall Zimbabwean agricultural sector, which was now unable to feed its hungry population or supply raw materials to its agriculture-based industries (Richardson:2007). Generally the picture shows that the FTLRP brought about the collapse of agriculture and subsequent huge food shortages as well as exacerbating poverty even further. However, Richardson (2007:209) stresses that despite the decline in the agricultural sector it remains an important productive sector of the country’s economy. In this new agrarian structure, the ones who lost out most were those from the semi-arid regions because of the drought. Agricultural inputs from commercial farms that are now owned by new black commercial farmers also declined. Due to smart sanctions some fertiliser industries had viability challenges and smallholder farmers in semi-arid communal areas were affected. The government attempted to support new black commercial farmers with inputs and equipment but failed due to financial constraints and limited donor support directly to government. Government efforts and focus on new black commercial farmers
became biased against smallholder farmers in semi-arid communal areas. As a result food production collapsed in communal areas.

Moyo and Makumbe (2004:99) argue that relations between the British government and other European donors and the government of Zimbabwe worsened as donor countries declined to support the FTLRP. According to Mandaza (2006:123) the government, despite criticisms from Western donor countries, allowed development agencies to directly support communal people. However, the government was supposed to be aware of all development activities by these development agencies. He argues that the government of Zimbabwe felt that its mandate was not supposed to be usurped by ‘European imperialists’. Donors in this regard recognised the importance of smallholder agriculture as the core of the economy in southern Africa and main source of livelihood for most of the poor who remained in communal areas.

At the policy level Moyo (2005:89) notes that land was acquired compulsorily in accordance with the Land Acquisition Act (Chapter 20:10) as amended. The constitutional amendment number 16 of 2000 placed the financial obligation of paying compensation for any improvements on the acquired properties but this was never followed or implemented. The Land Acquisition Act of 1989 underwent changes to ensure conformity with the new constitutional provisions. To strengthen this, new laws and policies such as the Rural Land Occupiers (protection) Act were enacted to protect land occupiers on land not yet acquired by government, and the Farm Machinery Acquisition Act and various other guidelines facilitated land transfer. In this regard Moyo (2005:95) shows there was a policy change because in the 1980s the same occupiers of similar land were deemed illegal by the same government. Matondi (2008:99) further criticised the land reform policy by showing that despite all these legislative amendments, the land acquisition process was fraught with a number of procedural impediments.

2.4 Livestock Production in Semi-Arid Areas of Zimbabwe
Scoones (1990:44-48) argues that in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe agriculture includes livestock rearing because of the integration between the two. This view is shared by Sandford (1977:103) who adds that not only is livestock rearing a major production activity in most semi-arid areas but much of the country’s livestock is concentrated in these areas. Chenje et al (1998:21) agrees that the climate in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe make them suitable for livestock rearing. Most semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe, including the study areas
of this research, are in natural regions four and five according to how climatic regions are categorised. Sibanda (2005:13) notes that in the natural region four, where many livelihoods depend on semi-extensive farming, there are periodic seasonal droughts and severe drought spells during the rainy season. Even though low and variable rainfall restricts the potential for cropping, farmers use large proportions of the land for cultivation, mainly maize, sorghum and millet. However, he argues that livestock production is more appropriate and could be intensified by growing drought resistant fodder crops.

In natural region five, where there is extensive farming, the very low and erratic rainfall makes it unsuitable even for drought resistant grain and fodder crops (Sibanda 2005:19). Farming depends on the utilisation of rangelands. In natural region five, although extensive livestock production is most appropriate, farmers still try to grow crops especially maize, sorghum and millet. Scoones (2007:47) concludes that any assessment of rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe without a discussion on livestock would be inadequate, because more than 50% of the country’s cattle and almost all its goats are kept in these semi-arid areas. Sandford (1977:101) argues that livestock producers in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe seldom limit their activities to animals, as most of them cultivate food crops as well. This enables them to take advantage of the positive interactions between animals and crops, such as manure for soil fertility and crop residues as animal feed.

Hargreaves et al (2004) similarly observes that in the southern parts of Zimbabwe, cattle and donkeys are key components in smallholder cropping systems as they provide critical inputs such as manure, draft power for cultivation and weeding, and transport for produce. Households with cattle can also use their cattle in fields for other farmers for cash income for rural livelihoods. Barret (1991:48) also shows that cattle production in Zimbabwe is closely interrelated with crop production. He argues that investment of crop income in cattle ownership leads to capital growth as the herd grows through reproduction. Oliver (1966:13) observes that cattle in most semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe are of Sanga type, mainly unimproved Mashona with a number of other indigenous types such as the Ngoni or Nkone and Tuli, all of which are of local importance to rural livelihoods.

Manure improves not only soil fertility but also soil structure. However, Steinfield (1988:71) concludes that manure is potentially of less value in more arid areas (natural region five)
of Zimbabwe, where returns to crop inputs are intrinsically less than in areas of greater rainfall and higher cropping potential. Delgado (1999:59) indicates that although cattle are a major source of draft power in semi-arid areas, frequent droughts and resultant high cattle mortality has led to an increase in the importance of donkeys as draft animals.

In communal areas approximately 85% of donkeys are owned by households in semi-arid areas (CSO, 1996). This assertion is supported by Muvirimi (1995:11) in his study of selected semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe, who holds that donkeys are a major source of supplementary draft power. They alleviate drudgery in the transport of crop inputs and produce, and scotch carting of essential household needs like water, firewood and the staple maize meal. They also contribute to ploughing and weeding. However, Muvirimi also points out that in natural region five, where agricultural production is very low, the value of donkeys is limited because they do not have other tradable products that can be turned into cash such as meat, manure or milk.

Moyo (2007) stress that in semi-arid areas, goats are increasingly being used to augment cash income and enhance food security, thus serving as an important component in a household’s livelihood strategies. Goats can alleviate seasonal food variability, both directly – through milk and meat production – and indirectly through cash earned from the sale of their products. Sender (2007:76) contends that in semi-arid areas goats have advantages over cattle because they are more resistant to droughts, they can eat a wider diversity of plants and their higher reproductive rate allows populations to recover quickly. He further shows that promoting goat production in semi-arid areas contributes to risk mitigation and empowerment of vulnerable groups (women, people living with HIV and AIDS, and the poor). However, Mhlanga et al (1999:40) criticised this argument by indicating that unlike cattle, goats do not contribute to the cropping system and farmers are more willing to dispose of them for livelihoods.

Sibanda (2005:66) attaches more value to livestock in semi-arid areas, arguing that their products are sold for cash used for various rural livelihood activities. He contends that this is driven by growing urban demand for livestock products, based on increased urban populations with higher incomes and associated dietary changes. Barret (1991:104) goes one step further, arguing that in years of drought and other domestic crises livestock may be the only major asset that can be turned into cash. At the same time cattle and goats
have a spiritual and cultural role in rural communities as they are used for bride-wealth payment (lobola).

Although livestock is an important livelihood asset in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe, challenges such as poor access to animal health support, dry season feed shortages and inadequate housing contribute to high mortality rates, as do lack of information and poor service structures, both resulting from limited support from both the government and NGOs (Moyo 2007). With regard to goats, mortality has been found to be the most important constraint as farmers with few goats are unable to sustain their flocks, whereas those with larger flocks may not realise the potential benefits from goats due to high mortality rates. Hormann (2007:13) shares the same view that livestock production in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe is on the low side, mirroring the circumstances in most of southern Africa. This is worsened by poor infrastructure, underdeveloped markets, insufficient information and lack of access to new technology.

Barret (1991:56) observes that the seasonal trend of mortality of all livestock in semi-arid areas is similar, with most deaths occurring from September to October, the period of feed shortages and disease outbreaks. Sibanda (2005:21) agrees, and points out that although goats fulfil an important cash function, many rural people do not realise these benefits because there are no formal markets for goats in rural Zimbabwe. This leaves peasants with no option but to sell their goats at their homesteads at very low prices. Despite the importance of all livestock for income generation in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe, household sale rates of livestock are very low, with cattle estimated at 4% and goats at 11%, and fail to adequately support rural livelihoods (Sibanda, 2005).

Despite these challenges, Moyo (2007:99) point to several studies arguing that the most important issue is to reduce livestock mortality during the dry season, and conclude that any development interventions that aim at improving livelihoods for resource poor farmers in semi-arid areas must recognise the importance of livestock, especially goats, because of their comparative advantage. However, they ignore the associated challenges highlighted above of no formal market in Zimbabwe and limited or no contribution to the cropping systems since people engage in both animal rearing and crop production and their bias towards goat production is at the expense of other livestock such as cattle and donkeys, which are also important for rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe.
Sibanda (2007:53) brings the FTLRP into focus here, arguing that it was this policy change and others such as land tenure policies that caused the dramatic decline of the country’s agricultural capacity and low outputs of the communal livestock sector but Moyo ignore the policy side of livestock production in their studies, and this is a gap this study covers as well. Most of the literature on livestock production in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe covers pre-2000 eras and focuses on cattle, donkeys and goats, ignoring the pivotal role of chickens, pigs and sheep, while studies done since 2000 have shifted focus to resettlement areas, ignoring the communal areas where some of the resettled people came from. This study includes a comprehensive analysis of the contribution of all livestock in the semi-arid areas selected to understand their contribution to rural livelihoods during the decade between 2000 and 2010 after massive shifts in the agrarian structure in Zimbabwe.

2.5 Policy Development and Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe

Rural poverty reduction and income distribution are affected by policies that promote or downgrade alternative income generating activities (Arnold, 1998). According to Reardon (2004:109) and Rukuni (1999:53) an appropriate rural development policy is the entry point for poverty reduction and rural livelihood development. Such a policy should create clear institutional ownership for vulnerable groups, investment in sustainable rural financial systems that can reach previously excluded sub-populations of the rural community, a redoubling of efforts in education and health to stem the serious threats posed by HIV-AIDS and political violence, and encourage increasing investment in the physical and institutional infrastructure necessary to make markets accessible to all.

Rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe need to be understood in a historical context that shows changing trends in policy. According to Wright (2000), policy is located in political and bureaucratic contexts. They point to particular histories and the balance of state and society forces as shaping the emergence of any given policy path, and argue that policy is often contested, substantially reshaped or even initiated from a range of places or points between macro and micro levels. This section reviews a selection of policies developed during the colonial and post-colonial periods to understand how policy shifts influenced rural livelihood trends of people in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe during the period under study.
In particular, this study seeks to understand how national policy impacted on semi-arid areas since the government shifted its focus to new resettlement areas. But first, it is important to place post-colonial rural development policies in the context of colonial policy.

2.5.1 Implications of Colonial Policy on rural Livelihoods
Bruce (1990:72) observes that colonial marketing policies were highly restrictive, preventing competition, encouraging unidirectional trade and causing low rates of economic growth in communal areas. They created barriers to entry and discouraged the emergence of rural markets and private traders. Various marketing and controlling boards were established to control the marketing of agricultural products. The Grain Marketing Board of 1931 controlled maize and the products were increased to sorghum (1950), groundnuts (1952), soyabeans (1969) and wheat (1970). Rukuni (1994) shows how the Cotton Marketing Board, established in 1969, had monopoly in the purchase, processing and export of all cotton products. Similarly the Cold Storage Commission of 1938 was established primarily to control the purchase, slaughter and distribution of cattle and external trading.

However, of greater concern to Rukuni (1994:68) is the producer price policy, which was highly discriminatory. He argues that the producer prices were set at levels aimed at protecting white farmer producers, whilst prices to urban consumers were subsidised in a bid to keep down wages and buy political favour. In addition, cotton and groundnut farmers, who were largely peasant farmers, tended to be taxed, thereby reducing income to rural peasants and limiting their livelihood options, whereas wheat and other capital-intensive commodities produced by white farmers were heavily subsidised (Rukuni 1994:74). Maize prices declined along with maize output throughout the 1970s (Rukuni, 1994).

Similarly, colonial livestock production policies saw a lack of herd growth, something that Bruce (1990) attribute mainly to the prevailing economic climate combined with restrictive government policies that controlled livestock numbers in African areas. They track a policy shift in 1963 that saw the repeal of the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 and signalled a less authoritarian attitude towards land use and cattle numbers, resulting in a slight increase in African livestock herds. However, in the 1970s the communal cattle herd again stagnated due to economic and political instability prior to independence. This analysis has helped show that rural livelihoods in rural communities of Zimbabwe remained highly
restricted. Access to natural resources and other resources such as livestock and cash income through wage labour was limited. Cash income generated was used mainly to pay numerous taxes at the expense of rural workers. The trend during the colonial period was of declining livelihood opportunities due to the highly restrictive policy environment.

2.5.2 Implications of Post-Colonial Policies on Livelihoods (1980-2000)
Agriculture and the rural sector remain of considerable importance to the Zimbabwean economy today. The success of the sector, which supports over 73% of the total population in Zimbabwe, hinges on rural policy development. Zimbabwe’s agriculture sector is highly dualistic, consisting of the densely populated smallholder sector and a modern, large-scale commercial sector (UNDP, 2002). It is therefore important to analyse the policy shifts that came with the new political dispensation after the transition to the post-colonial era. The government of Zimbabwe (1982:114) stressed that it had a key development policy challenge of promoting re-distributive strategies to reduce the colonial racial inequality and poverty, broaden the base of economic growth and focus on domestic needs, particularly of the poor.

According to Moyo (2004:56) Zimbabwe’s post-independence rural development policies did not change much as they were modelled along the heavily interventionist and essentially inward-looking domestic policy lines that were implemented after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in 1965. Direct controls on imports, foreign exchange, investment, agricultural marketing and prices were maintained. He further shows that the state intervened extensively in communal area agriculture by putting in place prime movers necessary for an agricultural take-off to serve smallholder farmers. These included setting up parastatals, marketing boards for agricultural products, extension services and easy loan facilities, and providing free seeds and fertilisers (Rukuni, 1994). These institutions or marketing boards and the Extension Department encouraged both resettled and communal area households to adopt improved seeds and chemical fertilisers. These early policy reforms combined led to an agricultural mini-miracle and peasants produced about 60% of the maize and 90% of the cotton in the country between 1980 and 1984. However, in semi-arid communal areas the policies only worked well for cotton production whilst other crops did well in communal areas in non-semi-arid areas. This lasted until the adoption of the ESAP in 1991.

Berkes (2003:21) supports this account and argues that such ‘old’ policies significantly
expanded social investment and government support for smallholder agriculture in Zimbabwe, including land purchases for resettlement of smallholder households that were implemented similarly to UDI days, where there was support for resettled farmers. Rukuni and Berkes agree that the government’s interventionist approach to rural development resulted in a slight improvement in rural livelihood security. However, Moyo (2003:26) notes that continued land disparities were also observed in policy development that did not prioritise land distribution. Large-scale farms enjoyed the same support they enjoyed during the colonial period because they were protected by the Lancaster House Constitution. He contends that although communal people were supported through the input provision, access to land was the major question that needed to be addressed. This shows that the two parts of the dualistic agricultural system were not equally supported by government policy; commercial farmers benefited at the expense of smallholder farmers despite input support to communal farmers.

Anderson (2007:33) and Thebe (2010:20-26) agree that while in general there was a surplus from communal areas during the early post-colonial period of reform, households in marginal agro-ecological regions, including some newly resettled farmers and farm workers, faced severe food insecurity. They both argue that conditions in the marginal areas that are the focus of this study remained challenging and though soils are poor, households prefer to produce maize as promoted just after independence under the new reforms of communal agricultural support. They further demonstrate that the agricultural miracle of the early 1980s did not last long, as it was undermined by both inadequate policies and subsequent droughts. This inevitably perpetuated the insecure rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe.

Generally the post-colonial state maintained the dual agrarian economy and failed to challenge the beliefs and practices which had informed technical development through state-led land reform and resettlement attempts to address African smallholder agriculture (Alexander, 1994). The new state had ambitions of turning families into peasant households, but failed due to a restrictive framework and exorbitant farm prices (Rugube, Roth and Chambati, 2003). This is supported by Moyo (2004:24), who argues that under the Lancaster House Constitution there was no meaningful land reform because of the willing buyer willing seller principle. Under this legal document the land offered to the government was expensive, marginal and located only in pockets around the marginal
areas. As a result, land supply failed to meet demand for resettlement.

Thus Moyo (2004:94) demonstrates that rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas remained unchanged despite a new political order in 1980. Drinkwater (1989:38-43), in similar vein, observes a remarkable policy consistency between the colonial and post-colonial eras in terms of actual policies and styles of governance. Despite intensive support to communal areas the policy pivot remained supporting of smallholder farmers in the same colonially designed, degraded communal areas, albeit with new support services. In terms of administration, after independence, state officials operated with the same technicist modernising mindset despite obvious shifts in politics. As a result, departures from the colonial policy were minor and that is why Zimbabwe’s agricultural boom lasted for a very short time and was already in decline by 1984.

Moore (2001:23), in his studies of agrarian change in Zimbabwe, observes that despite failures by the colonial state to destroy the worker-peasantry, the new state spent decades attempting to resurrect the colonial master farmer, remould the rural sector and incorporate peasant households into the capitalist mode of production through translocation and resettlement. Moore (2001:28) furthers his argument by showing that colonial agrarian policies played an important part in moulding the rural landscape and have left legacies that continue to shape rural livelihoods and households’ behaviour today. This suggests that there were no significant policy shifts to assist the improvement of rural livelihoods after independence in Zimbabwe. Thebe (2010:29-31) concurs, and is deeply critical of the continuation of a policy that failed during the colonial period. He argues that the strategy was geared at creating a rural peasantry after the ZANU-PF led government adopted a peasantisation rural development policy no different from the colonial policy, and simply resurrected the colonial master farmer in the same colonial communal areas, as people were not significantly relocated to prime land areas.

Moyo (2005:68-93) demonstrates that the new political structure in 1980 maintained the colonial macro-economic policy strategy, which was based on sanctions-induced economic introversion and industrialisation. He argues that the extension of social services such as health, education and infrastructure to smallholder farmers, alongside policies in support of monopoly capital and state enterprise growth in colonially designed communal areas, kept rural people in marginal areas with poor soils. These services were
supposed to have been provided in newly resettled areas with better soil. The limited agrarian reform policy in the early 1980s was vested on a development strategy still focused on import-substitution industrialization within a heterodox macro-economic policy framework that failed to address livelihood challenges in semi-arid areas and other communal areas.

Bratton (1987:86-89) observes that in 1980, the new government took over power with strong backing from the rural population. As a result the ambitious new government rewarded rural people by developing a decentralised policy system of local representation through village development committees and ward councils in 1984 to encourage a decentralised process of rural development. However, Scoones and Keeley (2000:35) criticise the decentralisation system and argue that it undermined development of the congested marginal areas. Describing the state as monolithic in the two decades between 1980 and 2000, they show how the character of the policy process was shaped by the peculiarities of each government ministry and department, and how decentralisation increased competition over budgets, donor projects, operational mandates and personnel.

2.5.2.1 Impact of the ESAP on Rural Livelihoods

Mustapha (1999:101) notes that the adoption of structural adjustment programmes from 1991 in Zimbabwe was another turning point in rural livelihoods of people in communal areas. Scoones and Keeley (2000:52) describe how, because the state was weakened through restructuring and retrenchment, external players or non-state actors such as International Financial Institutions (IFI), NGOs, bilateral donors and the private sector such as fertiliser companies, seed companies, civil society actors and even churches began to have greater influence on the state in policy discussions. Bryceson (1999:12-19) shows that the subsequent removal of subsidies on improved inputs such as fertilisers, seeds and chemicals, introduced just after independence in 1980, drastically undermined most peasants’ capitalised production and threatened the viability of their market-oriented production.

The adjustment largely dismantled the African marketing boards and parastatals that had serviced peasants’ input requirements, enforced commodity standards and provided single-channel marketing facilities and controlled prices. Scoones and Keeley (2000:59) show that it resulted in increased migration reversal from urban to rural areas, creating further crises of lost cash income from urban employment and re-congestion of rural
areas. This triggered a huge, unplanned income diversification response in rural communities. Peasants found themselves straddling an active search for viable new income sources and their declining or unsupported subsistence agriculture.

According to Moyo (2005:167) during the 1990s there was significant de-industrialisation, reduction of social expenditures and subsidies in general, liberalisation of agricultural markets and trade, and erosion of wages and incomes of the working classes as a result of adjustment policies at the insistence of the IFIs. He argues that the agrarian policies were dramatically redirected by the adjustments with far-reaching anti-poor effects on land use, land markets and land redistribution. The state’s retreat from subsidising agriculture was widely supported and private traders were allowed to compete, reversing the late 1980s trends of increased smallholder profitability and affordable food. The state budget contracted and this led to reduced extension services, input support and credit for smallholders, which eroded farm incomes (Moyo, 2005).

Vivian and Maseko (1994:41-56) observe that nongovernmental work increased in Zimbabwe during the same period as the ESAP and played a role in influencing policy development on communal areas, particularly semi-arid areas. These NGOs work closely with the state in service delivery, and make up for some of the lack of government capacity in rural areas that is one of the major consequences of the SAPs. Thus they demonstrate that relations between the NGOs and the state are not necessarily always confrontational.

This was supported by Scoones and Keeley (2000:75) who observe that unlike other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, NGOs in Zimbabwe operate with considerable freedom to experiment with new approaches, and they are also able to be quite outspoken in criticising government practices. Both studies show evidence that the NGOs are staffed by highly qualified and competent personnel, well connected to both government and donors. The staff is highly literate in both national and international sustainable debates, indicating a high degree of nongovernmental capacity in Zimbabwe. This study assesses the role of these NGOs in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe during the period under study, and examines changing trends in the relations between NGOs and the state in relation to their projects.
2.5.2.2 Implications of Government Policy Changes on Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe (2000-2010)

Barret (2001:15-17) argues that rural livelihood development policies aim to improve the asset holdings of the poor by endowing them with additional financial, fixed, human, natural or social assets; by increasing the productivity of the assets they already hold, or both. The post-ESAP period was characterised by another policy shift in favour of creating an indigenous black commercial farming class (Sachikonye, 2003 and 2005).

Policy questions related to land tenure are central at both national and local levels (Matondi, 2008). Moyo (2005:118) indicates that profound tenurial insecurity in Zimbabwe’s communal lands continued during the post-colonial period including the post-2000 period under study. This has resulted in even lower productivity and unsustainable agricultural practices. Rukuni (1994:96) shows that increasing land and natural resource-based conflicts in Zimbabwe are fuelled in large part by the weakness of land and natural resource administration institutions, unclear policies and laws, lack of clarity over institutional roles and responsibilities and poor enforcement of existing laws and regulations.

Moyo (2005:78) observes that from 2000 Zimbabwe saw a gradual return to a dirigiste and heterodox macro-economic policy framework alongside the execution of extensive land reform in a context of increasing economic decline and international isolation after the FTLRP. He further argues that after the ESAP export-oriented policies initiated during the colonial period were continued as evidenced by increases in incentives for investors in the Export Processing Zones that were launched in 1994.

Yeros (2002:23) points out that a decision for military intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1998 strained the national budget and led to harsh criticism from Western donors. As a result the IMF and the World Bank withdrew financial support to Zimbabwe during the period under adjustment. This became one of the factors that fuelled the radicalisation of the land reform policy, which in turn brought increased economic isolation and restricted access to external credit and aid in general. As a result donor support and nongovernmental organisations that had flourished in the early 1990s in communal areas declined. As the economy declined, price controls were reintroduced, as were market and foreign exchange controls. The indigenisation of banks, mines and
industries was mooted forcefully during the period.

Hammar (2005:38) notes that the introduction of draconian legislation severely restricted political freedom (POSA and AIPPA) and closed the political space, and the 1990s saw a deprofessionalisation of the bureaucracy, politicisation of security services and armed forces and militarisation of everyday life in rural and urban areas. She further argues that this was associated with extremes of both economic and political decline, widespread internal displacement and severe impoverishment, especially of ex-farm workers.

Sachikonye (2003:34) demonstrates that since the late 1990s the government of Zimbabwe has struggled to design effective policies to make more attractive livelihood strategies available to the rural poor. According to Moyo and Makumbe (2004:48) rural human capital in Zimbabwe has faced challenges of HIV-AIDS and political violence since 2000. Political violence and HIV-AIDS rob rural communities of young adults to whom valuable skills are handed down. Many families lost members to the HIV-AIDS pandemic while others lost members or were disabled by political violence. They argue that rural human capital, important for livelihood development, was adversely affected as there were no policies to deal with the challenges.

Moyo (2005:67) notes that the government policy transformed after 2000, when the agricultural sector was reorganised through the FTLRP. Despite numerous studies on the effects of the FTLRP, these studies did not reveal how rural livelihoods in dry communities were affected by agricultural policies that were largely focused on large-scale farms. The argument by Matondi (2009) that communal areas remained congested because many beneficiaries came from urban areas was supported by Sachikonye (2003) who gave a statistical analysis showing that in total only 1.3 million from communal areas and 52 000 from commercial farming areas were resettled on 11 million hectares but there are no exact figures for those who came from urban areas. During the same period few scholars researched the livelihoods of those people who remained behind as the focus was on the resettled areas and their beneficiaries. In terms of policy analysis this is a serious gap because more smallholder farmers remained in communal areas created by the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 than those who were relocated.

2.5 Social Differentiation in Rural Communities and Impact on Rural Livelihoods
In rural livelihood studies there is wide debate on whether social differentiation is a part of
livelihood diversification or a product of capitalist livelihood diversification. This debate is important in this study as it informs a better understanding of the sustainability of rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe. Seok (1998:20) in his studies of South Korean villages notes that the differentiation hypothesis is a derivation from Marxian theory. Marx and Lenin argued that as capitalist economies develop, the peasantry will disintegrate into two classes, the rural bourgeoisie and the rural proletariat. It is from this hypothesis that different arguments and findings were generated, and the debate started depending on each country and how the capitalist economy developed. Seok (1998:24) argues that the Marxist hypothesis failed the test in South Korean rural villages because the peasant economy has persisted because it is able to reproduce itself characterised by intensive use of family labour. The South Korean peasantry do not differentiate, but experience a cycle of mobility along the family cycle. His study shows that rural social differentiation in South Korea was retarded in the 1940s due to early land reforms that equalised peasants to small-scale landholders.

Bernstein (2001:221), in the same vein, shows that Lenin predicted the possibility of the dissolution of the peasantry through the formation of distinct classes of agrarian capital and wage labour from within the ranks. Based on Lenin’s class analysis, Bernstein (2001:34) brings up more than two rural classes emerging with the development of capitalism. He shows that poor peasants are subject to a simple reproduction ‘squeeze’ as capital or labour or both. In this regard their poverty and depressed levels of consumption express their intense struggles to maintain their means of production. For Bernstein loss of the latter entails proletarianisation. The second class envisaged in this analysis is of middle peasants, who are able to meet demands of simple reproduction, while rich peasants are able to engage in expanded reproduction, to increase the land and/or other means of production at their disposal beyond the capacity of family labour, hence hiring labour.

These studies clearly indicate that social differentiation has a strong influence on the capacity of rural people to sustainably diversify or improve their rural livelihoods through agricultural production or other livelihood activities. Peters (2004:199) argues that while researchers recognise social differentiation across Africa, they do not agree on a single interpretative model for its analysis. She argues that many studies distinguish among rural populations according to landholding size, income, type of livelihood strategy, gender and
age, while some researchers use terms such as peasants, peasant labourers, or proletariat to capture variability.

Raikes (2000:67-68) notes that the economic and social differentiation in African peasant communities has generally increased with growth and development, but that diversification of livelihoods of any kind is found across social strata. Cousins (1993:32) argue that in rural differentiation, possession of access to the means of production influences the process of accumulation. Access to resources such as land, capital, and labour vary from farmer to farmer. In this analysis Cousins (1993:38) clearly shows that these variations can be used to attest to the emergence of rich and poor categories of farmers, and he outlines what he calls a “classic process” whereby the peasantry is internally differentiated, with the emergence of rich peasants who gradually transform themselves into capitalists or commercial farmers, and whose labour needs are provided for by the poor peasantry.

Peters (2004:89) argues that intensification of social conflict around land reveals deepening social differentiation and class formation, and she zeros in on the land question as one factor influencing social differentiation and class formation. This hypothesis does not give a picture of why there is social differentiation among the same group of people who have access to the same land, particularly in rural areas.

2.5.1 Social Differentiation and Class Formation in Colonial Zimbabwe

According to Cheater (1981:79), both the pre-colonial and colonial Zimbabwean societies were highly differentiated. She alludes to the fact that during the pre-colonial period successful farmers (called hurudza) were large-scale farmers and they expanded their production, selling their produce to white and Indian traders of that period. On the other hand poor farmers used to work for hurudza farmers in exchange for produce. This contradicts the Marxian hypothesis that the rise of capitalism saw the emergence of social classes as they were there before it, in what Marx called primitive and egalitarian societies.

Capitalist development in colonial Zimbabwe involved the deliberate creation of labour reserves alongside the appropriation of large areas of productive land for an emerging
white capitalist farming class, constraining the emergence of an African peasantry (Weiver 1988). The agricultural sector and agrarian differentiation focused on the racial division of land and the inequalities between white commercial farmers and an increasingly marginalised subsistence sector. Cousins (1993:189) demonstrates that local people during the colonial period were attracted to gold mines in South Africa, whilst foreign labour migrants were attracted to agricultural farms in Zimbabwe.

The dire need for cheap labour led to a massive recruitment of workers under the notorious ‘chibaro’ system in colonial Zimbabwe, according to Arrighi (1966). He shows how rural households from these reserves had to sell their labour to survive, supplying cheap labour to the emerging mining and manufacturing sectors through a highly regulated migrant labour regime. Using the class analytic perspective on small-scale farming, Cousins (1993: 205) argues that small-scale farming is centred on ‘petty commodity production’ and ‘accumulation from below’ and this is essential for understanding the differentiated character and diverse trajectories of small-scale agriculture within capitalism. Bundy (1979:184) contends that in African reserves opportunities to become successful petty commodity producers were available during early periods of industrialisation, but were increasingly limited by discriminatory policies.

Agriculture for rural livelihoods was negatively affected by the absence of male labour, overcrowding, and a growing shortage of productive land and lack of infrastructure. Over time household production declined and most households became highly dependent on migrant remittances. Cousins (1993:46) agree, and points out that racialised class relations took the spotlight off inequalities and differences between rural households in the reserves. As a result inequalities in income within the rural population are viewed as distributional in character and explained by differences in wages or wage equivalents paid to different members of the same class, rather than as deriving from incipient processes of class formation.

Bernstein (2001:301) argues that despite the racial differentiation in colonial Zimbabwe, there are also notable differences and inequalities within the rural community areas themselves. He demonstrates that there are master farmers and successful cash crop farmers who are held up as models to be emulated. Such farmers in dry land communal agriculture possess more land and accumulate more cash than others. Cousins (1992:15) came up with four social classes in his study of rural Zimbabwe. The first class is of the petty commodity producers who are able to meet their simple reproduction needs through
their own production. The second are worker-peasants who combine wage work and own agricultural production to secure their simple reproduction. The third are lumpen semi-peasantry who are unable to reproduce themselves without external assistance, be it family or state. The fourth are the rural petty bourgeoisie – those who produce a surplus, invest in means of production, engage in expanded reproduction and often have urban or business-based sources of income. This social differentiation by Cousins (1992:19) is similar to Lenin’s social classification.

However, Bernstein (2007: 49) argues that such rural social differentiation is fluid, blurred and difficult to operationalise in the analysis of specific empirical data sets. This blurredness of subjective class identities arises from the fact that social identities are always multiple, overlapping with and cross-cutting each other in a complex manner.

Beach and Ranger’s (1989:301) contribution to this debate is a tribal and ethnic dimension on social differentiation in colonial Zimbabwe. They argue that the colonial state did not invent ethnic differentiation because Zimbabwe was already a multi-ethnic society of groups such as the Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Shangani, Venda, Tsonga, and Kalanga. They demonstrate that the political and economic relationships among these various groups were always dynamic and changing. Their complex and fluid relations were characterised by conflict and cooperation, incorporation and fragmentation and these were facilitated through marriages, political alliances and constant population movement. This takes us beyond the capitalist development analysis that did not take into account ethnic and tribal differentiations. In an earlier study, Ranger (1985) shows how the colonial government politicised Zimbabwean ethnic identities by trying to deconstruct and reconstruct people’s identities, thereby deliberately preventing people from developing nationally integrated identities by differentiating among them and favouring certain groups over others. This polarised people and reinforced ethnic divisions among Zimbabweans. As a result, race and ethnicity in Zimbabwe came to define social relations between rural members of these categories and also to determine one’s access to resources and position in society.

This is the unanswered question on why people of the same community are different in livelihood diversification and its sustainability. This is the point of departure in this study, where the common denominator is that social differentiation has taken on a different dimension over the years and there seems to be further disintegration of rural social
classes beyond the Marxist analysis of class formation and social differentiation, with the creation of a new rural elite defined by political affiliation.

2.5.2 Post-Independence Social Differentiation and Class Formation

Seok’s (1998) analysis of social differentiation in South Korean villages shows that social differentiation was equalised by early land reform that gave plots of equal size to rural people. Compared with this, Zimbabwe’s experience has been that of an unequal and race-based land distribution that was carried over into the new post-independence state. Does this mean that with continued unequal land ownership, social differentiation increased among rural people in Zimbabwe? Ranger (1989:74) shows that the divisions made by the colonial state remained unchanged under the new government. The country remained divided into ethnicised administrative units such as the Ndebele provinces, the Shona provinces, the Manyika province and the Karanga province. As a result many small groups speaking minority languages such as the Tonga, Venda and Kalanga were lumped into major ethnicised groups and these minorities’ alternative identities were ignored.

The continuation of this regime of ethnic rights influenced people’s access to resources, especially in communal rural areas attained through one’s ethnicity. Some rural people had to assert their identities in order to access important resources like land (Ranger, 1985). Mombeshora (1990:431) asserted that the seeds of ethnicity were derived from the pre-colonial past and colonialism simply provided fertile soil in which the ideology of tribalism germinated, blossomed and was further propagated. This ethnic dimension has been largely ignored in recent studies on rural livelihoods and social differentiation in Zimbabwe and it is important to deal with it thoroughly in a study of a politically charged environment where differentiation takes a political party dimension.

Maast (1996:203) makes the point that the commonest forms of differentiation in Zimbabwe’s rural areas have been access to land, labour, gender and off-farm income, for example migrant earnings. He examines such differences in access to land between freehold and communal areas and within communal areas as important in understanding social differentiation. Other factors are the privileged position and political manoeuvrings of chiefs, differences in the quality of land and differentiated access to labour related to off-farm income including polygamy. Nyambara (2002:124) notes in agreement that not only do some rural households have landholdings far above the national average, but also
the land disparities are fairly large.

Although Maast (1996:114) brings important issues related to ethnic divisions to the fore, he fails to acknowledge the impact of ethnicity on social differentiation and access to resources in rural Zimbabwe. This gap is addressed by Nyambara (2002:48) in his study of Gokwe district, where he shows how two ethnic groups fight for livelihood resources. He argues that modernisation in Gokwe district took on an ethnic dimension in the colonial era and continued under the new government.

Nyambara outlines how settlers in Gokwe (nicknamed Madheruka) from colonial evictions in Rhodesdale in Masvingo province in the 1960s were regarded as master farmers by the colonial regime as they had quickly embodied modernisation in their areas of origin. The original inhabitants of Gokwe district (known as Mashangwe) were regarded as backward and primitive and in need of the guidance of the Madheruka to modernise, and Nyambara argues that the creation of the Madheruka and Shangwe identities is what skewed access to resources and livelihood assets in rural Gokwe. Although the Gokwe economy consisted of a combination of subsistence agriculture and pastoral pursuits including gathering fruits and hunting animals in the 1940s, the ethnic construction in the 1960s redefined social differentiation in rural communities of the district. Roth and Gonese (2003:22) argue that the Shangwe are a sub-group of the Karanga, as are the Madheruka, but the Shangwe were constructed as the indigenous people of Gokwe because they migrated some 30 years before their fellow Karangas were forcibly evicted from their place of origin in the 1960s. Thus migrating from the same place to the same place at a different time became one of the factors for social differentiation.

2.5.3 Post-Fast Track Land Reform Programme Social Differentiation (2000-2009)

Moyo and Yeros (2005: 271), in their studies on agrarian change in Zimbabwe, observe that social identities are changing in post-independence Zimbabwe, and single out social differentiation factors beyond age and gender such as tribal, ethnic and linguistic identities, lineage, religion, nationality and political affiliation. These factors shape and influence processes of class differentiation in specific rural places and during different periods of time.

Focusing on the way the FTLRP reconstructed ethno-regional identities in land holding, they note that there was relatively limited allocation of land to white farmers as the process became influenced by racial discrimination against white citizens. Some farmers
were also excluded from the process on ethnic grounds, particularly from A2 farm allocation. They highlight the importance of other dimensions of connectivity for accessing land, such as that with leaders and officials in charge, party affiliation and professional, class, familial and other social networks including church membership. Participation in land occupations and negotiations with local leadership was also key to A1 allocations. Social differentiation in access to land had class formation processes. The number of small cultivators and middle-scale farmers grew and their plots expanded at the expense of white large-scale farmers. The differential status and origins of those who gained access to varied land sizes and assets suggested the emergence of a new agrarian structure.

Moyo (2005:85) notes that a class-based differentiation process in the creation of black capitalist farmers arose firstly from the original policy that created A2 schemes, which were elaborated into three categories: small, medium and large-scale new commercial farms. He outlines a re-peasantisation process with the entry of urban working class elements into the A1 and resettlement schemes, which in turn led to the growth of a class of new petty commodity producers (2005:90). Most of the literature on rural development in Zimbabwe has ignored social differentiation in communal areas, particularly studies since 2000. Moyo demonstrates that despite the implementation of the FTLRP, there is substantial class differentiation within the peasantry, some of which is concealed by agro-ecological variation in sizes of land entitlements, off-farm incomes and other local processes of economic and political power building reflected in inequalities in assets and influences over access to agricultural resources. The better-off peasantry, which historically comprises less than 10% of the peasantry in communal areas (Moyo 1995, Maast, 1996, Cousins et al 1993) is characterised mainly by their employment of substantial non-family labour and better access to remittances compared to other peasants and the remaining landless. Moyo (2005:100) predicts that peasant differentiation is expected to continue, as is the operation of informal land markets, within communal and newly resettled areas due to differentiated access to remittances and labour. However, the transformation in rural economies, particularly in semi-arid areas, points to changes in rural social differentiation that are different from the ones identified in the literature discussed so far. This study covers new types of social differentiation in semi-arid areas and how they have impacted on rural livelihoods.

Roth and Gonese (2003:154) highlight the gendered nature of social differentiation (in
Zimbabwe, since the colonial period until today observing that women are neither recipients of agricultural loans, nor controllers of the land they spend so much time tending. Their social standing is lower than their male counterparts and they are looked down upon in a largely patriarchal society where men are considered major decision makers in nearly all fields of human endeavour, including agriculture. From the colonial period forward, women were seen as perpetual minors under the tutelage of a male guardian, be it a father, uncle, husband or son. Jirira and Halimana (2008:176) argue that during the FTLRP women benefited largely as spouses, implying a subordinate level of control over the land. For them, the gendered inequalities in access to land manifested when women who applied for land faced bureaucratic bottlenecks in a male-dominated beneficiary selection process. In addition, women lacked adequate information on selection procedures. This brief outline of social differentiation based on gender in rural Zimbabwe takes us to the next section, where the literature on changing gender patterns in rural livelihoods and feminisation of poverty in rural Zimbabwe is reviewed.

2.5.4 The Gendered Nature of Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe

This section assesses the historical nature of gendered livelihoods and how they have influenced contemporary livelihood diversification and sustainability in rural Zimbabwe. Malaba (2006:23) defines gender as a social construction and codification of differences between women and men. She argues that gender issues relate to aspects of women’s and men’s lives, their different opportunities, access to resources and needs. Gender is therefore neither natural nor divine but culturally constructed, and it permeates all levels of society. It can therefore be deconstructed, reconstructed and transformed by society. Maghadam (2005:04) brings another dimension to the understanding of the gendered nature of livelihoods by arguing that poverty is gendered and this feminisation of poverty is largely influenced by increasing growth in the number of female-headed households, intra-household inequalities and bias against women and girls and the neo-liberal economic policies including structural adjustments. A UNDP (1997:02) study outlines a feminist approach to poverty that focuses on the social costs of gendered poverty including a growing involvement of women and children in the informal economy, and highlights differential treatment of girls and boys in households, pressure to get girls married off quickly, higher school drop-out rates for girls, and women with no control over their own fertility.
Malaba (2006:17) in her study of rural Zimbabwe argues that the structural nature of poverty in Zimbabwe lies in the country’s political economy. At independence Zimbabwe inherited a dual economy characterised by a relatively well developed modern sector supporting the livelihoods of the minority and a largely poor and neglected rural sector supporting the livelihoods of around 80% of the country’s population, most of whom were women and children. There is general agreement in the literature that there is a symbiotic relationship between poverty and gender. Malaba (2006:27) contends that gender is an essential concept for poverty analysis, and must be taken into account in any design and implementation of poverty reduction strategies. The scholar argues that the causes of poverty are heavily gendered and yet traditional policy formulation, conceptualisation and practices underplay or even completely fail to delineate poverty’s gender dimensions. Zimbabwe has one of the highest levels of inequalities in the world (Malaba, 2006). She further argues that the inequalities reflect the gap between the rural and urban population and also between female-headed households and male-headed ones. Mariwo (2008:9) contends that after the FTLRP an estimated 73% of Zimbabwe’s population was living rurally and that rural women are among the poorest of the poor, living on less than a dollar a day. Figures from the government of Zimbabwe (2007:25) indicate that in rural areas 68% of the poor were women. Mariwo (2008) takes issue with the prevailing view that women are powerless and devoid of skill and knowledge, as we shall see below.

Makura-Paradza (2010:31-34) demonstrates how during the colonial period in Zimbabwe women were boxed into a status of permanent legal minority that increased their dependence on men. Working men became migrants moving between urban and rural homes but still controlling decision-making in the latter. The resultant socio-cultural change was the dualisation of homes. For Malaba (2006:48-53), this process largely created de facto female-headed households, and this socially re-engineered status quo persists in rural Zimbabwe today, making the separation of spouses in rural Zimbabwe a major factor in the feminisation of poverty in rural areas. In addition to farming on poor soils, women became sole farmers but without decision-making powers to dispose of the produce and to spend money without their absentee husbands. Makura-Paradza (2010:43) contends that the dominant view of communal areas presents men as having primary land rights and women secondary rights as daughters, sisters and wives. Berkvens (1997:18) shows that adult women can only access communal land through marriage or relations with their agnatic kin group, even though they dominate the main livelihood
activity in communal areas, namely subsistence agriculture, though this is subsidised by wages earned from urban areas by men (Potts 2000).

Several studies show how the patriarchal discourse, practice and ideology reinforce male dominance in most rural areas. Gaidzanwa (1994:72) contends that this male dominance in communal areas has traditionally been based mainly on the governance of agricultural resources, but the shifting livelihoods of communal area residents have witnessed changes in both the role of agriculture and gendered access to land. This argument suggests that men's original dominance of important resources may be shifting. Zimbabwe government statistics indicate (2007:168) that since the FTLRP a larger proportion of women – between 12% and 18% – now own land in their own right compared to 5% before. Despite Jirira and Halimana’s (2008:196) study showing that the gendered land access inequities originated mostly at the point when women, who lacked information on selection procedures, faced bureaucratic bottlenecks in the FTLRP’s male-dominated beneficiary selection process, the official figures do indicate a remarkable increase in access to land by women in both A1 and A2 areas (government of Zimbabwe 2007:84). Moyo (2005:67) contends that this suggests a new dynamic emerging in gender relations. However, he argues that despite these shifts, such women beneficiaries do not seem to come predominantly from the vulnerable groups, such as widows, divorcees and those in communal areas, but from urban areas.

Muza (2010:63) in her study in Masvingo province demonstrates that active women in communal areas – apart from their food production, preparation and processing roles – also engage in marketing, distribution and care work. However, despite women’s contribution to household income, their participation in food production and processing is usually not given a market value because of a patriarchal ideology that fails to acknowledge women’s work as having economic value. A similar contribution is made by Malaba (2006) who stresses that the economic reforms in Zimbabwe intensified women’s workloads by increasing their participation in informal labour markets and shifting the burden of the care economy to them. She argues that women have assumed a ‘safety net/cushion’ role under harsh economic adjustments and in situations where the economy is contracting.
Thus the literature presenting women as vulnerable and helpless in rural communities due to unequal power relations is plentiful. However, Mariwo (2008:6) in her study of rural Zimbabwe is deeply critical of these conclusions, arguing that this portrayal of rural women constructs a global image which is eventually reproduced and perpetuated in academic literature, governmental rural development policies and project justifications of nongovernmental organisations. In this regard the facts of their female diversity, capabilities and needs are neglected and such essentialism, generalisation and stereotyping affect rural women negatively. As a result the core of current rural development programmes and policies targeting rural women is wrongly placed. Mariwo (2008:16) radically departs from the general picture by showing that some rural development programmes targeting women, such as small-income generating projects, further label women’s activities as ‘mini’ things with little importance. This has led to the exclusion of women from benefiting from programmes that ought to enhance their economic prowess. As a result this harmful image of rural women has excluded them from programmes other than those that seek to address the helpless image.

Mariwo (2008:28-34) clearly shows that the position of women in communal areas with regard to rural livelihoods has greatly improved, and that the old, helpless, vulnerable construction of rural women needs to update itself to recognise their enterprising characteristics, potential, skills, capabilities and the role they play in economic development through entrepreneurship. She demonstrates that rural women are not homogeneous and poverty is not their only concern. The image does not encompass all levels of marginalisation and disempowerment that governments and donor agencies must deal with. Her study in Mutoko shows that rural women engaged in vegetable farming are ingenious and practical in their use of available resources. This marks a departure in this study, which argues that the position of rural women has not remained static and neither have rural women remained inactive in the face of different livelihood shocks and trends. Despite wide research on rural women, most studies reproduce the picture that Mariwo (2008) rejects. This shows that there is a gap in the literature on lived realities of rural women with regard to changing rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe. This study focuses on understanding the changing roles of rural women in a politically charged environment.
2.6 Overview of the Socio-Economic and Political Environment in Zimbabwe during the period under study (2000-2010)

This section analyses the socio-economic and political environment in Zimbabwe over the past decade that forms the context of this study. It outlines a number of livelihood shocks and adverse trends that have affected rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe.

According to DFID (2007:04), Zimbabwe inherited a thriving agro-based economy in 1980 and maintained positive economic growth throughout the 1980s (5.0% GDP growth per year) and 1990s (4.3% GDP growth per year). However, the economy declined dramatically from 2000 to 2010: 5% decline in 2000, 8% decline in 2001, 12% in 2002 and 18% in 2003. Tibaijuka’s (2005:15) report on Operation Clean Up in Zimbabwe outlines the changing economic situation in Zimbabwe since independence and examines the post-2000 economic meltdown. She argues that while in the 1980s the government managed to successfully provide social services such as education, health care, higher wages and better working conditions for the black majority, the underlying socio-political and economic problems that were left unresolved were to eventually produce a national crisis. The unresolved land question remained a threat to the Zimbabwean economic situation, creating an unstable development context.

According to the UNDP Mission report to Zimbabwe (2008:79), three political factors deepened the economic crisis in the late 1990s. The first was an appeasement policy towards war veterans adopted in 1997 through cash handouts. The handouts sparked an inflationary spiral from which the economy is still recovering. Secondly, Zimbabwe’s military intervention in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had serious consequences in terms of budgetary allocations and deficits. Thirdly, the FTLRP of 2000 negatively affected agricultural production, the mainstay of the Zimbabwean economy. It also prompted the imposition of targeted sanctions from the European Union, the US and several Commonwealth countries. This created an economic crisis filled with political contestations and accusations. Zimbabwe, previously an exporter of maize, became a net importer. According to an earlier UNDP report (2006:34) tobacco exports had already begun to decline sharply and at least 60% of the country’s wildlife has died since 2000. Zimbabwe’s inflation rate, which rose to a rate of 516 quintillion percent (unofficial figures in November 2008) is the second worst inflation spike in history, behind the hyperinflationary crisis of Hungary in 1946, in which prices doubled every 15.6 hours (UNDP, 2008).
Private enterprises in Zimbabwe weakened, taxes and tariffs were high, and state enterprises were strongly subsidised. Government spending was as high as 56.4% of GDP, and the government financed itself by printing money, which contributed to the inflationary spiral. This reduced the value of remittances from urban areas to rural people whose livelihoods were already depleted in most communal areas. Emigration rose to unprecedented levels, leaving large numbers of children and the elderly to fend for themselves and weakening the capacity of rural households to sustain themselves. This clearly amounts to de-agrarianisation as expounded by Manyani (2010:27), in which a decline in agricultural productivity is due to labour flight. This provides the context of severe economic and rural livelihood crisis during the period under study.

Tibajuka’s (2005:56-71) points out that Zimbabwe had been ruled by one political party for over 25 years before a real opposition emerged, suggesting that the emergence of a strong opposition resulted in development policies being rushed. However, Tibajuka does not address how development policy was developed before the emergence of the opposition to offer some comparison. Scoones (2000:43) observes that during the 1990s, a number of civil society organisations, especially the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU), emerged as pressure groups to oppose the dominant rule of ZANU-PF, challenging emerging corruption, human rights violations and poor governance in general. This political space for civil society allowed for the emergence of strong leadership that ultimately led to a powerful alliance of forces that mobilised Zimbabwe’s public opinion. The opposition party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) emerged, against this background, as a formidable challenge to the ruling party. ZANU-PF won the parliamentary elections of 2000, but the process was criticised by international observers as neither free nor fair. ZANU-PF, on the other hand, believed that the emergence of the MDC was as a result of support from Western donor governments, and consequently treated any external support to rural areas with suspicion. This political contestation shaped the study context as a politically charged environment.

Although the FTLRP was implemented, the whole process was seen as more political than economic or developmental to those whose rural livelihoods were not improved by government policy (Moyo, 2004). Ordinary Zimbabweans in rural areas were discriminated against during the FTLRP distribution process, as the process was in favour
of ZANU-PF loyalists and already influential people at the expense of the neediest. Moyo (2004:114) notes that traditional leaders recommended people loyal to ZANU-PF for land allocation, leaving out all those suspected to be opposition members and supporters. This became a form of social differentiation. The conditions of non-beneficiaries, who were the majority of rural people in semi-arid areas, worsened as government focus was no longer on providing inputs and services for those remaining in dry areas, but on the “new farmers”.

According to Mandaza (2006:12) the international media communicated falsehoods to the international community that made the whole land distribution process seem like a political process to keep ZANU-PF in power. This inevitably worsened animosity between the Zimbabwean administration and international media. The Human Rights Watch (2002:40) noted that the international media tended to focus on attacks on white commercial farmers while justifying demands for full market value compensation for land. ZANU-PF and the government saw this, according to Moyo (2003:13), as imperialistic and the government became more hostile to any criticism of the FTLRP. This created a politically charged environment full of anti-West rhetoric.

Western governments responded by withdrawing cooperation and investment, as the government failed to protect its citizens who had other views (Moyo and Makumbe: 2004). The scholars also note that the people most seriously affected by disregard of the rule of law during the implementation of the FTLRP were the poor, rural Zimbabweans who had less effective means of escaping violence and securing their livelihoods. The fast track process, instead of rectifying past injustices, created new ones that were difficult to justify or defend as undeserving people in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe who were interested in land allocation benefited based on political affiliation.

Although ZANU-PF won the 2000 parliamentary elections, the opposition had a number of seats in the house. The pre-election campaign period was characterised by violence as incumbent president Robert Mugabe faced his first serious challenge since independence from MDC presidential candidate Morgan Tsvangirai. These elections were held at the same time as the FTLRP was being implemented, and this is one of the reasons the land reform was considered a political process. According to the Human Rights Watch (2002:27), Mugabe chose a multi-faceted strategy to ensure re-election that included
intimidation of opposition members, violence and even murder in some instances. This became a continuation of the FTLRP violence, creating a politically charged environment that compromised development.

However, it was unfortunate that the two events happened at the same time and this gave opportunities to civil society and Western donors who were anti-Mugabe. The poll results were condemned by the Commonwealth and other international observer missions, who concluded that there was evidence of state-sponsored violence, repressive legislation and lack of transparency in the voting procedures. These conclusions contributed to the imposition of restrictive measures that are considered by the government to be illegal sanctions. Moyo (2004:53-76) notes that as a result of the limited sanctions, financial support to Zimbabwe from various international bodies such as the World Bank and IMF was stopped, capital projects including support to communal farmers were halted and agricultural inputs to both communal farmers and newly resettled farmers became limited.

According to the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe report (RBZ: 2007:21-45), the targeted sanctions consist of the withdrawal of trade and financial relations, including technical cooperation, as Zimbabwe was declared ineligible to borrow from IFIs. Thus the sanctions have taken the form of denied access to foreign lines of credit, which ordinarily finance external trade. As a result financial flows to Zimbabwe are limited; the government no longer has access to long-term loans and this also reduces the private sector’s access to foreign loans. However, this version is disputed by both the IMF and the World Bank, which argue that Zimbabwe’s failure to honour its debt is the main reason for its limited access to loans and further borrowing. The argument by the RBZ, which is the government view, is that Zimbabwe was being punished for embarking on the FTLRP.

The government believes it was crippled by the targeted sanctions, making it unable to undertake economic development and reduce poverty, and hence it is not responsible for the economic crisis. Contrary to this perspective, donor countries argue that the sanctions only affect targeted individuals through travel bans and frozen foreign accounts, and this has limited impact on the majority of the population.

There is evidence that the targeted sanctions affected the government’s support to rural households (Mandaza, 2006). The withdrawal of the Danish government’s support of the
agricultural sector, education, and health and transport infrastructure left projects incomplete, such as rehabilitation of the Kwekwe-Nkayi road passing through rural Gokwe, which was intended to increase access to the market. Irrigation schemes in Mwenezi and Chiredzi districts are also incomplete, indicating that a policy shift after the implementation of targeted sanctions by donor countries affected some of the long-term projects. However, the government is also using targeted sanctions as a scapegoat for its failure to improve rural development. The subsequent 2005 legislative elections increased polarisation, politically related violence and mistrust of the ruling authorities (Mandaza, 2006), rather than resolving tensions between ZANU-PF and the MDC. As a result, Zimbabwean society remained a society full of violence and fear and the environment remained politically charged to the detriment of the rural poor, who were no longer getting development support from the central government.

Sachikonye (2003:18-23) notes that the Commonwealth suspended Zimbabwe’s membership in 2002 and Zimbabwe formally withdrew in 2003. This context indicates a society in crisis, a society de-linked from all lines of economic support internationally and a society that was expecting less in rural development. During the same year Zimbabwe’s membership rights in the IMF were also suspended. This presented difficulties for a government that inherited structural economic problems difficult to solve without international community support (Moyo, 2004). As a result Zimbabwe was fully embedded in an economic, political and social crisis that could only find answers in political and ideological change.

Over these years the political and economic crisis was further compounded by poor rainfall ranging between 250-450mm in most semi-arid areas (Moyo, 2005). Political instability, the failing government, Western governments’ negative approach to Zimbabwe’s policies, and HIV-AIDS were all factors behind the insecure food supply situation in Zimbabwe. Politics played a major role in aggravating the economic crisis. Land invasions led to scarcity of seeds and other inputs. HIV-AIDS severely reduced rural human capital and constrained productivity as more time was allocated towards caring for the sick instead of livelihood development. From the year 2000, President Mugabe’s determination to hang onto power further damaged the economy. Food production collapsed as the price of maize meal, the country’s staple food, was fixed at artificially low prices that discouraged most commercial farmers from planting the seeds.
The ability of poor households in semi-arid districts to respond to risks and shocks was substantially weakened by a number of successive shocks during this politically charged period. The dramatic and sustained economic decline meant that the poor faced shrinking incomes and spiralling costs of living. No remittances were being sent from urban areas to relatives in rural areas. Households were increasingly unable to afford basic necessities such as food, healthcare and education. The challenges in the economy, successive droughts and rocketing input and transaction costs all combined with the formal institutional network’s failure to deliver services to undermine the capacity of ordinary households to manage their food security (Jones, 2002, ). Disease started having a devastating effect on livelihoods.

By 2007, life expectancy had plummeted from 60 years in 1990 to 37 years for men and 34 for women, among the lowest in the world, and the infant mortality rate climbed from 53 to 81 deaths per 1000 live births in the same period (UNDP, 2008). A total of 1, 8 million Zimbabweans were estimated to be living with HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS 2008). HIV and AIDS, because of the collapse of the health system, affects production and earnings at the household level, leading to a reduction in income, job loss, decreased productivity and labour substitution (when households remove children from school to nurse parents, care for siblings, cultivate crops or earn money).

During the period 2002-2008 the food security situation remained precarious throughout Zimbabwe. The availability of staple cereals for purchase was erratic and grossly inadequate throughout the country. Maize was only occasionally available and at high prices. This is the context of this study that differentiates it from other studies conducted on livelihood development. However, this picture is a national picture that fails to detail how rural people, particularly in semi-arid areas, managed to cope, as this study aims to do.

2.7 Overview of Semi-Arid Areas of Zimbabwe

According to the UNDP (2002:123) an estimated 61% of the population of southern Africa lives in ecologically vulnerable areas characterised by a high degree of climatic variability and sensitivity, as well as low resilience. The 1991-1992 droughts, according to the SADC (1996:20), resulted in a fall in agricultural production of 45% and a decline in the aggregated Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 6% in Zimbabwe. The areas most affected
by drought were the semi-arid areas. The focus of this study is the three semi-arid districts of Gokwe, Mwenezi and Muzarabani.

Bryceson (1996:56) observes that forest and woodland biodiversity plays an important role in the semi-arid areas in Zimbabwe as the crop and cereal production is low. Edible nuts, insects and mushrooms, meat and by-products from game, birds and reptiles, and fish, both fresh and dried, are important sources of protein. Forest and woodland resources are not only consumed directly but are also marketed to generate income for livelihood purposes.

Scoones (2000:48) notes that the potential in semi-arid areas for dry land agriculture is severely limited by low and erratic rainfall estimated at between 300-450mm per year and poor soils. In addition, there are misinformed land use practices that are not appropriate for improved production. Manyani (2010:28) in her study in Gokwe notes that the main crops grown are small grains that are drought resistant such as sorghum and millet, with maize, beans and tomatoes as either dry land or irrigated crops in the small irrigation schemes found in these areas. Yields of dry land crops are very low in all three districts examined in this study (Gokwe, Mwenezi and Muzarabani) due to climatic limitations and challenges, and livestock populations are very high, despite the low carrying capacity. This also affects agricultural yield as the land becomes overgrazed. For the purposes of this study, government policy for semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe is assessed vis-à-vis the policies for prime land areas during the same period.

2.7.1 Selected Semi-Arid Study Areas
The three semi-arid districts of Gokwe, Mwenezi and Muzarabani were selected for study based on their similarity of climatic conditions and crops grown, as well as similarity of government rural development policy after independence in 1980 and development aid received. Gokwe District in the north-western Midlands Province and Muzarabani District in the northern Mashonaland Province are both in the Zambezi valley, while Mwenezi District is in the southern Masvingo Province along the Limpopo Valley heading north.

Zimbabwe is divided into five natural regions based on agro-ecological potential, ranging from the prime lands in natural region one with high rainfall ranging from 1200-1600mm per annum. These Highveld areas are primarily devoted to dairy, forestry, tea and coffee
production. Region two receives rainfall of 800-1000mm. Region three is still relatively wet with 650-800mm, and climatic conditions allow moderate crop production. Region four receives 450-600mm and five, 300-450mm (Zimbabwe Department of Meteorological Services, 2007). To the north lies the Zambezi valley, a hot, humid region that supports a mixed agricultural base for maize and cotton. To the northwest, bordering Zambia stretches the hot, dry Kariba Valley. These lowland areas receive no winter rain and summer rainfall is erratic and infrequent. In the south lies the flat, lowland savannah forming part of the Limpopo river basin. On average up to three in every ten years are drought years and the most recent occurred between 2000 and 2002? The northern dry areas and the southern dry areas of Zimbabwe that fall into regions four and five are the selected semi-arid districts for the study.

While several studies place most semi-arid areas in Zimbabwe in regions four and five, the literature fails to acknowledge that many of the areas have at least two different ecological regions. This is important in understanding rural livelihoods in the district because people in the same district might experience different agro-ecological conditions and therefore engage in different livelihood activities. For the purposes of this study, only areas in natural regions four and five are studied, leaving out areas that fall under natural region three. Muchara (2010) highlights these distinctions in his study of Mwenezi district and observes that natural regions four and five have infertile soils and dry weather conditions that make agricultural production very risky, but animal husbandry, cattle ranching and wildlife management a better proposition.
2.7.1.1 Gokwe District

Gokwe District is the largest district in Zimbabwe and lies to the northwest of the country. Nyambara (2003:4) estimates that 70% of its northern and western parts are part of the Zambezi River valley. Gokwe District has two agro-ecological regions, with the upper part falling under region three and receiving moderate annual rainfall of around 819mm per year. The lower part of the district falls within region four (450-600mm) and is very hot, with average temperatures of 28°C. During drought years rainfall in this lower part drops to 300-450mm, which is not adequate for a significant crop harvest. The region suffers from chronic problems of food insecurity. Rural livelihoods depend on rain-fed cultivation of cotton as the cash crop and maize as the main food crop, supplemented by sorghum and other minor food crops.

Gwimbi’s (2010) contribution to the literature on rural livelihoods in Gokwe district is his focus on cotton production as a cash crop, a key source of income for most households in the district. He argues that the area under cotton has increased in recent years despite fluctuating cotton prices in the international market as the market for cotton readily exists in Gokwe thanks to the parastatal Cotco. Other cotton company buyers such as Cargill, Grafax, FSI Agnum and ADAI are also found in the district. In addition to these, cotton gineries at Gokwe and Nembudziya centres provide a wide choice of cotton markets. This has made cotton a viable cash income crop in Gokwe (Gwimbi 2010). Mannak
shows in his recent study that livestock is also very important as households raise cattle, goats and poultry. Maize and sorghum are the main food crops but yields for maize are very low and variable.

The inhabitants of Gokwe District are mixed, with the Shangwe people covering the northern, central and eastern parts of the district. Migrants (Deruka) people from Masvingo and Manicaland provinces are dotted all over the district (Nyambarra, 1999:23). Gwimbi (2010:34) contends that the first people to inhabit Gokwe were of Shona extraction and belong to the Karanga sub-ethnic group. Derogatorily referred to as the Shangwe, they are now considered the indigenous or original inhabitants. After independence ZANU-PF officials encouraged people to migrate to the frontier regions of Gokwe and Muzarabani for political reasons (Moyo, 1995). It was hoped that migrants with a long history of agriculture and animal husbandry in their areas of origin would impart their skills to their local counterparts in Gokwe and Muzarabani upon settlement. The following is the Midlands provincial map showing the location of Gokwe South district.

Figure 2: Midlands Provincial Map showing location of Gokwe district

Politicians claimed that it was the national duty of the migrants to teach better methods of agriculture to those who had been neglected by colonial agricultural policies in the past, such as the Shangwe. This shows that colonial policies of shifting whole peoples around simply continued into the new regime. In Nyambara’s (2003:16) analysis, Gokwe has two dominant ethnic groups made up of the Shangwe and the Madheruka immigrants, who were regarded as master farmers. Nyambara argues that the construction of the Madheruka and Shangwe ethnic identities dates back to the 1960s with the coming of the
immigrants and the introduction of cotton production. According to Dzingirayi (1996:23-24), the newcomers to Gokwe and Muzarabani were meant to foster the national goals of self-sufficiency and national identity, in other words to bring about ethnic fusion.

Gwimbi’s (2010:48) study shows that rural livelihoods for smallholder farmers in Gokwe have been changing over the years since the 1940s, when livelihoods consisted of a combination of subsistence agriculture and pastoral pursuits such as gathering fruit and hunting animals, then abundant in the area before the creation of the Chirisa Game Reserve. He demonstrates that the boom of cotton production after independence in 1980 led to the disappearance of gathering fruit and hunting wild animals. His study in Gokwe contributes to the understanding of the impact of climate change on rural livelihoods. Climate variability and change has become a major threat to cotton production in Gokwe, which is largely dependent on rainfall. He concludes that predictions of increasing temperatures, drought frequency and shifting rainfall patterns have toppled the dominance of cotton as the leading cash income source in semi-arid areas.

2.7.1.2 Muzarabani District
Muzarabani District forms part of northern Zimbabwe, bordering Mozambique to the east and Zambia to the north. The district is divided into three distinct geographical regions. The flat Zambezi valley to the north, lower Muzarabani, is the selected study area. It falls under natural agro-ecological region four and its 450-650mm falls between December and mid-March — a short rainfall season. During drought years this drops to 250-450mm (Department of Meteorological Services). Upper Muzarabani is in region three and hence is not part of this study. The whole district comprises communal farmlands, large-scale commercial farmland and the Mavuradona Wilderness, formerly a protected wildlife area. The following map shows the location of Muzarabani district in Mashonaland province north of Zimbabwe.
Derman (1993:63) notes that the lower region of Muzarabani supports extensive maize and cotton as cash crops, as well as small grain production, but yields for both maize and cotton have been quite low, averaging one tonne per hectare for cotton and 0.7 for maize. Income is derived from cash crops such as cotton, groundnuts and sorghum, and this is supplemented by cattle and goat sales and seasonal employment from cotton companies. Nuding (2000:81) notes in his study of the district that, just like in Gokwe, soils in lower Muzarabani have high agricultural potential and few farmers apply any supplementary nutrients. Govere (1999:17) emphasises the importance of cotton production in asset building in Muzarabani and Gokwe as non-cotton farmers in these districts have fewer household assets compared to cotton farming households. Govere contends that Nuding and Derman have downplayed the role of livestock in these districts as an important contributor to other forms of asset accumulation besides being an asset in itself. He argues that they highlight the importance of crop production at the expense of livestock, which this study and others argue is equally important.

Despite the acknowledged importance of maize and cotton production in Muzarabani, Osborn and Parker (2001:02) stress that agricultural production has been adversely affected by climate change and elephants. Derman (1993:123) traces the human population increase in lower Muzarabani in the 1980s due to the availability of free and unoccupied land. Since the 1960s, both Gokwe and Muzarabani have experienced a large influx of migrants looking for agricultural land. Some came for political positions whilst others were holding traditional leadership roles. The uncontrolled immigration into the valley was a cause of great concern as people encroached on wildlife areas. As in Gokwe,
immigrants from the Karanga tribe came to occupy unoccupied lands in Muzarabani from Masvingo Province. The original inhabitants of the district, the Tavara sub-tribe of the Korekore, also expanded their subsistence fields towards rivers and wildlife areas as they faced competition. As a result, according to the literature, smallholder farmers and elephants came into conflict. Crop damage has seriously impacted on smallholder livelihoods in Muzarabani even in good rainfall years.

**2.7.1.3 Mwenezi District**

Mwenezi District is in Masvingo Province in the central southern parts of Zimbabwe stretching into the Limpopo river basin. The district lies in agro-ecological regions four and five. During drought years the rainfall drops from 300-475 to 200-350mm. The frequent droughts and dry spells during the growing season make rain-fed cropping risky. Cooper et al (2008:18) concludes that the district’s low rainfall patterns have created a desire to shift more towards livestock farming, especially cattle and goats although most households indicate that they have not been able to restock after a severe drought in 1992. The following is the Masvingo provincial map showing the location of Mwenezi district south of Zimbabwe.

*Figure 4: Map of Masvingo province showing location of Mwenezi district*

![Map of Masvingo province showing location of Mwenezi district](image)

The average daily maximum temperatures vary from 30-34°C during summer to 22-26°C in winter. Minimum temperatures average 18-22°C and 5-10°C in winter (FAO, 2004). Maize is the chief food crop and cotton the chief cash crop in the district. Mapungwa (2008:67) observes that livestock sales, gold panning and daily wage work provide essential income for food purchases. Examining a household’s capability to combine some cereal and cash cropping with livestock production and market purchases, he
demonstrates that casual work opportunities are found on sugar estates nearby, whilst a number of rivers provide gold panning and fishing opportunities despite the area being characterised by chronic poverty and food insecurity. Scoones and Wolmer (2006:32), in their study of livelihoods in Mwenezi after the FTLRP, also observe that food and cash income from animal husbandry is supplemented by income from seasonal work on nearby estates. They point out that maize continues to be grown in drier parts of the district despite the fact that it does not do as well as other cereals as it is preferred to sorghum and millet for its taste and relative ease of preparation.

Mavedzenge, Mahenehene and Murimbarimba (2006:47) demonstrate in their study of the district that soils are more suitable for cattle and game than agriculture and therefore crop productivity is relatively low. Their study shows that since the FTLRP newer farmers have introduced cereal and cotton production on land previously reserved for game and cattle ranching. They examine the role played by a few functional irrigation schemes in supporting rural livelihoods where primarily maize, sorghum and millet are grown, though other crops include groundnuts, round-nuts, sugar beans, cowpeas, sweet potatoes and watermelons. However, the increasing shift from agricultural production to livestock production was threatened by a massive escalation in foot and mouth disease outbreaks triggered by a breakdown in livestock movement control during the FTLRP (Mavedzenge, Mahenehene, Murimbarimba (2006); Scoones and Wolmer (2006:76)). This is another indication of the precariousness of smallholder livelihoods in the district.

Muchara (2010: 29), examining the land reform programme in the district, shows that it has a mixture of inhabitants. The Karanga people occupy the northern parts, where crop production is relatively productive, the Shangani people occupy the central, eastern and southern parts and in the south west and western parts are the Pfumbi people, the original inhabitants of the district, who are cattle breeders.

2.8 Chapter Summary
This chapter provided an overview of linkages between livelihood diversification and poverty reduction. It also reflected on the important role played by NGOs in livelihood development, poverty reduction and related challenges. The debate on de-agrarianisation in Zimbabwe and the relationship between the decline in agricultural activities and an increase in non-farm activities was also highlighted.
The linkages between livelihood diversification and poverty reduction should be exhibited in the sustainability of the livelihood activities rural people are engaged in. This measures the success of livelihood diversification and reduction in vulnerability of the poor. Rural livelihoods in Zimbabwe cannot be discussed without alluding to issues of agrarian change and land reform since most people depend on agriculture. The chapter discussed the impact of land reform and agrarian change on rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas and highlighted literature that contends that rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe are incomplete without livestock. Also reviewed was the literature on how colonial and post-colonial government policies have impacted on rural livelihoods. The interesting debate on whether social differentiation is a process or a product of livelihood diversification was assessed, and this brought into focus another important issue – the gendered nature of rural livelihoods as a dimension of social differentiation. An overview of the socio-economic, political and geographical contexts of the semi-arid areas outlined the challenges to rural livelihood diversification in Zimbabwe during the period under examination. The following chapter provides an overview of the theoretical frameworks adopted in this study.
CHAPTER THREE

3. Theoretical Frameworks

Batterbury (2008) notes that research is not atheoretical and should not be seen separately from theory. Theory is taken to be a set of explanatory concepts that are useful for explaining a particular phenomenon, situation or activity. Theoretical frameworks are therefore essential tools in defining and explaining a research problem at hand (Johnson et al, 2000). In this livelihood study both the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) and actor oriented approach are used to address the research questions as they are complementary and work well together. Every analytical tool has its limitations, but in this study the limitations of the SLF will be countered by the strengths of the actor oriented approach and vice versa.

3.1 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

Discourses and development frameworks have histories and SLF has a history based in the academic disciplines of anthropology, sociology and geography, and in applied research of governments and aid agencies. Those engaged in agrarian studies justifiably claim a long engagement with rural livelihoods (Batterbury, 2008).

The SLF is an analytical framework that provides a way of understanding the factors that influence people’s ability to achieve sustainable livelihoods in a chosen circumstance. It offers both a conceptual and programming framework for sustainable poverty reduction. Unlike more traditional approaches that have sought to tackle poverty by identifying and addressing needs of poor people, the SLF seeks to improve their lives by building on what they have, their assets (UNDP, 1999). Baumann (2000:16) points out that the SLF was not intended to be a sophisticated model for theoretical analysis, but one oriented towards a comprehensive and practically focused understanding of grounded realities that could directly or indirectly inform development interventions.

DFID (2002:19) notes that the SLF is founded on a belief that people require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. No single category of assets on its own is sufficient to yield all the varied livelihood outcomes that people seek. Ellis (1998:29) points out that access to livelihood assets determines the level and extent of diversification in any situation. The particular context determines accessibility and control of these assets and the direction of diversification. According to Carney (Ed) 1998), assets are categorised into five types of capital, namely:
- Human capital (education or knowledge, skills and capacity to work, capacity to adapt, nutritional status and health of household members),
- Physical capital (transport issues such as roads and vehicles, shelter and buildings, water supply and sanitation, energy and communications, enterprise machinery and any equipment for production, including seed, fertiliser, pesticides and traditional technology),
- Social capital (social networks and associations or connections to which people belong such as patronage, neighbourhoods, kinship, relations of trust and mutual support, formal and informal groups, common rules and sanctions, collective representation, mechanisms for participation in decision making and leadership),
- Financial capital and its substitutes (savings, credit and debt, cattle, remittances, pensions, wages) and
- Natural capital (the natural resource base).

Figure 5: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework Diagram (DFID, 1999)

Adapted from the DFID Framework

Based on the above diagram the framework has three key dimensions to sustainable livelihoods:
1) **Livelihood Assets:** Central to the framework and critical for survival in both rural and urban areas, livelihood assets are considered the ‘building blocks’ of development. By building on them, individuals and households develop their capacity to cope with the challenges they encounter and meet their needs on a sustained basis.

2) **Vulnerability Context:** The factors that create and perpetuate vulnerability and poverty can be seen at two levels: that of individuals and their circumstances, and in a broader context. This directs attention to the contextual and systemic factors that contribute to the occurrence of poverty. It points out the need to seek changes at the organisational, community and policy levels in addition to building the assets of individuals and households.

3) **Techniques and interventions or strategies:** The framework identifies two basic types of intervention that communities can pursue in their poverty reduction work. “Practical interventions” facilitate the efforts of low income households to build their livelihood assets. These include education, employment training, economic literacy and savings programmes, and support for small business development. “Strategic interventions” are directed toward the vulnerability context. They work toward the goal of social and economic change at the systemic level. Among the methods used are community building and organising, alliance building, policy work and advocacy.

The framework therefore situates assets in their broader context, focusing on their contribution to realising the livelihood outcomes of the poor. It acknowledges that diversity of asset combinations, both tangible and intangible, and how people interact with dynamic contextual factors to develop a wide range of livelihood strategies is important to rural development. For example it shows that education and skills contribute to an individual’s ability to access information and influence decision making, and can lead to improved capabilities. The framework also helps identify conflicting outcomes and trade-offs between possible interventions. Increased agricultural yields may lead to improved incomes but also contribute to environmental degradation. This may result in short-term gains for some and longer-term negative consequences, possibly for others. It also helps identify links between sector-specific interventions and particular outcomes. For example if productive animals such as oxen are sold, this will negatively impact on the amount of land that can be cultivated, leading to reduced production and nutritional levels.
Ellis (1998:78) points out that in pursuing livelihood strategies composed of a range of activities, both the access to assets and the use to which they can be put are mediated by social factors (social relations and the institutions and organisations that exist in a particular area). They are also mediated by exogenous trends such as economic trends in the country, in the region or in the world such as the 2008-2009 global economic crisis, and shocks such as droughts, floods, pests and diseases such as swine flu. Its focus on the juggling of assets as strongly mediated through different structures and processes points to issues of asset transferability and capital switching such as from agriculture to remittances and rural enterprise development.

DFID (1999:29) notes that the framework shows how the vulnerability context frames the external environment in which people exist. People’s livelihoods and the wider availability of assets are fundamentally affected by critical trends as well as by shocks and seasonality over which they have limited or no control. The assumption is that all study areas are vulnerable to high risks and shocks such as drought, floods, economic crisis, internal political conflict, crop failure, livestock diseases, human diseases and long distances from centres of decision-making and other administrative support. Seasonal shifts in prices, employment opportunities and food availability are some of the greatest and most enduring sources of hardship for poor people in semi-arid areas.

SLF is useful for this study because it facilitates finding out what precisely it is that prevents or constrains the poor from improving their lot in a given situation. Krantz (2000:172) points out its emphasis on the variety of activities that people carry out, often in combination, to make a living and this is important for the poor, who rely on a number of different types of economic activities for their livelihoods. Chambers (1995:321), who introduced the concept of sustainable livelihoods in a 1987 paper, indicates that the SL approach facilitates a holistic view of what resources, or combination of resources, are important for the poor, including not only physical and natural resources but social and human capital as well. The framework is able to conceptually isolate one variable, such as social capital, and examine what influence the other capital assets have and how it is affected by wider structures and processes.

Krantz (2000) shows that by focusing on the way people develop their livelihood
strategies (coping and adapting) to achieve certain outcomes in response to a particular vulnerability context, the SLF makes it possible to see how even the poorest of the poor are not passive victims but active decision-makers in shaping their own livelihoods, since people’s strengths may change over time as their strategies change in response to either personal or external circumstances. The framework facilitates an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty by focusing on the variety of factors and levels that directly or indirectly shapes people’s access to resources of different kinds.

Scoones (1998:37) shows that central to the SLF is an analysis of the range of formal and informal institutional factors that influence sustainable livelihood outcomes. He further shows that examining each element of the framework through the institutional lens helps highlight the way people secure access to the resources they need to construct a livelihood and allows the findings to be used to locate policy spaces where useful interventions can be made (Carney, 1998). It helps to show micro-institutions that function daily to mediate access to the combination of resources necessary to maintain the livelihoods of smallholder farmer households. Its strong focus on the processes of negotiation that take place within local and non-local institutions to mediate access to resources makes it useful for analysing how households engage each other and organisations in accessing resources in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe. Its focus on micro-level outcomes of individuals and households shows how the context might influence poverty outcomes and how policies and institutional processes and structures affect different groups of the poor.

As the framework highlights that assets are not just financial but include others such as social, natural, physical and human capital, what has enriched it is the recent addition of political assets. The addition of a political dimension to the framework makes it more holistic than before. The exclusion of political capital, as argued by Baumann (2000: 181), was one of the limitations of the earlier version of this framework. Its strengths in providing an understanding of the operational, technical and legislative factors that influence sustainable livelihoods at the local level was incomplete without an analysis of politics and power relations, which cannot be captured through structures and processes. Baumann (2000: 186) shows that political capital is one of the key capital assets on which people draw to build their livelihoods and also one of the key constraining factors on sustainable livelihoods. How people access these assets depends on their political capital. It is
therefore critical to understand how these are constituted at the local level and the dynamic interrelation between political capital and other assets identified in the SLF.

The hybrid nature of SLF provides a constructive context in which to examine political capital, particularly its local manifestations. This makes this study different from previous studies in livelihood diversification because they lacked a strong analysis of this political capital. As political capital is analytically posited in relation to other assets at the local level, it places the focus on how it is constituted and reproduced. If politics and power are left out as exogenous to the SLF, this analysis will be lost, as will the ability to answer questions about politics in the context of a specific project. Political capital is important in this study because transforming structures and processes are likely to be met by resistance to change. Baumann (2000:123) notes that if politics is recognised as playing a fundamental role in causing poverty, then it is important because the objective of this framework is also an understanding of poverty. Its capability to deconstruct power relations in its analysis makes it the most accurate framework for a livelihood study in a politically charged environment.

3.2 Limitations of Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

McLeod (2001) questions the usefulness of the SLF. She acknowledges the efficacy of the theory to practitioners, development agencies and scholars seeking to understand the complex dynamics of poverty, but argues that the theory's definitional process and its determination of definitional legitimacy requires further recognition and exploration if its conceptual framework is to be useful to organisations.

De Haan and Zoomers (2005:17) and Fine (2000:121) note the protracted debate about the intellectual merits of the SLF, particularly the use of the term “capitals”. There are worries that social capital is an anodyne concept, shorn of politics, benefiting agencies like the World Bank who have on occasion used it to describe horizontal, rather than the more challenging vertical social networks. Anthropologists and sociologists dislike the use of “capitals” at all, arguing that it conceals particular trajectories that emerge over time, not because people juggle forms of capital, but because they pursue patterns of behaviour embedded in culture. It could be that different people get to the same livelihood through completely different “pathways” and this makes development intervention by conventional means extremely difficult (Batterbury 2008).
Krantz (2001:56) stresses that despite its advantages, the SLF has some difficult methodological and practical issues, including how to determine who the poor are and what constitutes poverty. Poverty is rarely uniformly distributed within an area. He argues that in every community some people are better off than others. The challenge comes from the fact that different methods are used to ascertain poverty lines. However, this limitation has been addressed in this study by adopting only the use of the wealth ranking exercise in identifying the poor and letting the community themselves define relevant criteria for wealth according to their perceptions and experience, and classifying the various households in the community according to these. This model reduces the need for externally conducted household surveys, but a true cross-section of community members must be involved to avoid community leaders skewing the results.

Another limitation is that SLF tends to take the household as the basic unit of analysis. 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 etc. Krantz (2001:63) argues that there is a risk that intra-household inequalities in economic control, interests, opportunities and decision-making powers, which often has gender as a basis, are not given sufficient attention. Women might figure among the poor only when they are head of households and not when they are socially and economically subordinate members of prosperous households.

Ludi and Slater (2008: 134) argue that DFID’s early versions of SLF did not address social relations or social differentiation, and they failed to integrate the exploration of cultural variables such as worldviews, beliefs, traditions, status and identity. The early versions failed to help explore how decisions are made within a household, how societies deal with conflicting interests, how sustainability is negotiated, for whom and for how long, why specific institutions limiting access to assets for the poor have evolved and are maintained or why social groups are excluded from access to certain assets. However, these challenges have been overcome by building on the strengths of the original SLF and integrating insights from extensive collaborative research on rural livelihood systems. Scoones (1998:27) concludes that although the SLF is holistic, its exhaustive analysis may not be appropriate in all cases as a selection has to be made and mistakes can be made in that selection.
Baumann (2000:189) critically argues that the strengths of the SLF as an analytical framework are compromised by the fact that political capital is not counted as an endogenous asset. This results in the key challenge of ensuring that the analysis is not value free and power neutral. Thus incorporating political capital encourages scholars and researchers to consciously explore access and rights to assets and intra-household or community power structures. Baumann (2000:193) argues that incorporating political analysis changes the SLF from being descriptive to being an operational framework and decreases the likelihood that analysts and practitioners will fall into the trap of viewing their analysis as objective. Ludi and Starter (2008: 122) point out that the addition of political capital into the framework has since overcome this limitation.

However, the framework’s strengths outweigh its limitations, and in this study its weaknesses are mitigated by combining it with the actor oriented approach. The SLF sees people as actors who have assets and capabilities and who use them to pursue their own livelihood goals, rather than as victims or simply beneficiaries.

3.3 Actor Oriented Analytical Approach
The actor oriented approach is based on the simple recognition that even under similar conditions social life contains a variety of social and cultural forms (Haberecht, 2009). It contradicts structural models that explain social change and development as resulting from external forces, state interventions or development agencies.

Chekole (2006:17) notes that the actor oriented approach is grounded in the structure-actor debate in social sciences in general, and in rural development in particular. Arce and Long (1994:12) also argue that the approach intends to bridge the gap and seek a way out of the theoretical discord between macro-level structural theories and voluntaristic models of micro-level interaction and decision making. The actor oriented approach is concerned with how different individuals and social groups interact and develop strategies for dealing with social change and how different social actors become involved in negotiations over resources, meanings and control, while attempting to create room to manoeuvre and pursue their own projects. At the same time the approach focuses on how individual choices and practices are influenced and shaped by other dimensions of social life and interaction (Long 2001).
3.3.1 Social Structure – Human Actor Debate
Throughout the history of rural development, researchers have been grappling with the relationship between social structure and human agency in various ways. However, Chouinard (1996:386) argues that it has only been in recent years that development practitioners have shown that the role played by this relationship in social change has become a pivotal issue in debates about development inquiry. Chekole (2006:18) notes that the new Marxist conceptions of the 1970s treat both human agency and societal structure as mutual determinants of social outcome. Development practitioners with more humanist inclinations treat this outlook as inherently flawed by structural determinism and are deeply critical of its impoverished notion of human agency.

This humanist critique, together with the rise of feminist research, reshaped the debate by including social relations – which were understood as constituents of the structure of society – and reinterpreting the role of structural forces in social change without its deterministic angle (Unwin, 1992:167). For that matter, emphasis was placed on how social structure limits rather than directly determines social action and experience. In the 1980s the need to explore an approach that combines human agency within the structural perspective led British sociologist Anthony Giddens to develop a theory of structuration that saw structures as being both the outcome and the medium of agency. He held that structures were created and recreated through human agency (Unwin 1992: 172). Unlike most social theories it sees time-space relations as constitutive features of social systems (Bird, 1993). Structuration theory received considerable attention in social sciences and other disciplines. However, despite this advance, several critiques emerged in the early 1990s emphasising a pressing need for further conceptual and empirical work on the precise ways in which social structures shape human actions and how people’s practices help to perpetuate or challenge those structures (Chouinard, 1996).

The actor oriented approach departs a little from the empirical and conceptual shortcomings of structuration theory. In this regard, Long (1992: 06) the proponent of the approach, notes his intention to grapple conceptually with the flexibilities, ambiguities and socially constructed and self-transforming nature of social life, and to find conceptual frames for doing so, rather than promoting a full-fledged theory (Long, 2001).
3.3.2 Central Analytical Ideas of Actor Oriented Approach

This section explores the practical importance of the actor oriented approach in the context of this study. The approach is one of the strands that emerged as a reaction to the notion of structural determinism. Structural models neglect the fact that under certain circumstances "less powerful" actors can make their voices heard and thereby change the course of events (Haberecht, 2009). Long (2001:31) argues that various local actors are perceived as either beneficiaries of aid programmes or as passive victims of politico-economic interventions. He further postulates that structural models encapsulate the lives of people and thereby reduce their autonomy, whereas an actor oriented approach places social actors and their agency first. This approach attempts to analyse the social processes in which heterogeneity is produced and reproduced, manifested and modified instead of just looking at the structural outcomes of these processes.

Chekole (2006:17) stresses that for Long, structural theories underplay the significance of human agency (2001:34), and he criticised them as “people-less” and preoccupied with the contexts and driving forces of social life rather than with the self-organised practices of people inhabiting, experiencing and transforming the contours and details of their social landscapes. In this regard the advantage of the approach lies in its viability for explaining different responses to similar structural circumstances, even if conditions appear relatively homogeneous.

The concept of human agency forms the pivot around which discussions aimed at reconciling notions of structure and actor revolve (Long and Van der Ploeg, 1994). From this angle, the strategic and adaptive behaviour of actors is also bounded, not only by structural constraints imposed by geography or demography, but also by its embeddedness in past experiences and cultural meanings. This is what Bourdieu (1990) calls “habitus”, the sum of the cultural means people employ to counter insecurities of every sort. Accordingly social actors are not depicted as simply disembodied social categories or passive recipients who process information. Rather, they strategise in their dealings with other local actors, as well as with outside institutions and personnel (Long and Long 1992).

The actor oriented approach does take into account that conditions in the social structure can constrain actors’ choices and strategies. Long (2001:36) notes that actors internalise similar social conditions differently and develop diverse strategies to adapt and cope,
particularly in the case of livelihood diversification. A social actor is always able to choose between at least two options, be it positive in terms of active intervention in the ongoing social process or negative in terms of forbearance. Social actions take place within networks, and are restricted by certain social conventions, values and power relations. These are context-specific and therefore have to be analysed in the context in which they have been generated.

The actor oriented approach is useful for this study as it outlines different patterns of social organisations that result from the interaction, negotiation and social struggles between different actors (Chekole, 2006:21) It maps out actors that are discerned in given “face to face” encounters but also highlights those invisible hands that influence the situation, affecting actions and outcomes (Sano, 2000; Long, 2001). Another merit of the approach for this study is its emphasis on the detailed analysis of the life-worlds, struggles and exchanges within and between specific social groups. It outlines the composite and complex nature of social order through a systematic ethnographic understanding of the “social life” of development projects from conception to realisation as well as the response and lived experiences of the variously located and affected social actors.

A fascinating aspect of the actor oriented approach is the way it looks into the issue of policy and planned development. Long (2001:38-40) argues that policy analysis still seemed to adhere to a rather mechanical or systems model of the relationship between policy formulation, implementation and outcomes, and that such a separation is a gross oversimplification of a much more complicated set of processes involving the reinterpretation or transition of policy all the way to outcomes. He emphasises that such a linear approach fails to appreciate the fact that “outcomes” often also result from factors not directly linked to the implementation of a particular development programme. Moreover, issues of policy implementation should not be restricted to the study of top-down, planned interventions by government, development agencies and private institutions, since local groups actively formulate and pursue their own projects of development which may clash with the interests of central authorities (Kontinen, 2004). This exhibits the analytical power of the actor oriented approach in this study.

3.3.3 Limitations of the Actor Oriented Approach Concepts

Despite its strengths the actor oriented approach is not well articulated in the development
ingredients of time and space concepts. This gap is covered by the use of spatial concepts from the sustainable livelihood framework in order to rural development specialists.

Storper (1985, cited in Bird, 1993:109) was conscious of the significance of time and space in influencing human agency. Accordingly, he pointed out that the structural outcomes of social practices are premised upon their time-space characteristics, since these time and space defined practices serve simultaneously as patterns of interaction and, through the impacts of human experience, as foundations for the motivation of future practices.

3.3.4 Relevance of Actor Oriented Approach to the Research Problem
This section reflects the relevance of the analytical approach to the study by tracing how concepts serve as a basis to understand and address the research questions.

In addressing the proposition as to how smallholder farmers diversify rural livelihoods and respond to external interventions, the actor oriented approach gives explanations about the conditions under which various actors are self-organised and consolidated around a particular challenge, the strategies they use, the rationale for their actions and their effectiveness (Long and Long 1992:86).

As noted by Chekole (2006:23) the notion of social actor encompasses those social entities that can be said to have agency in that they possess the knowledge and ability to assess problematic situations and organise appropriate responses. The actors may appear in the form of individual persons, informal groups, organisations, interpersonal networks, collective groupings or macro actors in governments and international organisations (Long and Long 1992). Applying the concepts of the approach to the actors involved in livelihood diversification allows a particular understanding of the role of each actor and their coping strategy.

The approach differs from traditional institutionally oriented frameworks in that it strives to explore how social actors are locked in a series of intertwined battles over resources, meaning and institutional legitimacy and control (Arce, 2003). Such notions benefit this study in analysing how poor smallholder farmers as individual actors struggle to sustain their role in the face of dynamics of interactions and interventions among the actors.
involved in the broad field of livelihood development.

The framework takes the approach that although it may be true that important structural changes result from the impact of outside forces, it is theoretically unsatisfactory to base one's analysis on the concept of external determination. All forms of external intervention necessarily enter the existing “life worlds” of individuals and social groups affected and in this way they are mediated and transformed by these same actors and structures (Long, 2001:13). The assessment of the effects of policy implementation should not be restricted to the study of top-down, planned interventions by governments, development agencies and private companies. Rather it should be interpreted from the perspective of other actors, since local groups actively formulate and pursue their own projects of development which may clash with the interests of central authorities. This outlook guides the study not only to focus on considering the policy interventions, but also to understand how they are interpreted and transformed by smallholder farmers and eventually the way they respond to external actions.

Long (2001:26) called for a deconstruction of the concept of intervention so that it is seen as an ongoing, socially constructed, negotiated, experimental process that creates meaning, not simply the execution of an already-specified plan of action with expected behavioural outcomes. He argues that one should not assume a top-down process as is usually implied since initiatives may come from “below” as much as they do from “above”. It is important, then, to focus upon intervention practices as shaped by the interaction among the various participants, rather than simply upon intervention models (Long, 2001:26).

The selected theoretical frameworks fundamentally link with the participatory research methodology selected for the study as presented in the following chapter. As an approach and a family of methodologies, the participatory rural appraisal methods provide for a shared learning between local people and outsiders. It is an approach towards empowering the poor and marginalised communities and offers a basket of techniques from which to select. The emphasis of both the theoretical approaches and the methodology is on participation, capability building, ownership of knowledge and empowerment. The intellectual exercise of research thus involves a shared learning process with the poor.
CHAPTER FOUR

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Organisation and Conduct of Fieldwork
This chapter focuses on the overall study research methodology. A sound sustainable livelihood study using the SLF and actor oriented approaches requires an in-depth study of various actors involved in livelihood diversification through a well selected array of top-down interview tools and bottom-up participatory methods. The chapter provides the data analysis methods used and how different study themes were developed. The research was carried out in three semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe (Gokwe, Muzarabani and Mwenezi). Although the overall methodology of the study is qualitative in approach, quantitative data was collected through qualitative methods, supporting the claim by Robert Chambers (1995:12) and others that participatory methods can generate reliable quantitative data.

The aim was to reduce the weaknesses of individual research methods and increase the analytical rigour of the overall methodology. The methodology involved the corroboration of participatory methods with in-depth interviews and analysis of secondary sources and documents. This form of triangulation was aimed at ensuring the validity of the findings. The sustainable livelihoods framework and the actor oriented approach are research frameworks that are premised on participation by ‘ordinary people’ who are the subjects of the study. The centrality of participation at the core of both the sustainable livelihoods and actor oriented frameworks and the participatory methodology enables the intellectual extraction and analysis of local people’s realities. These linkages between the theoretical frameworks and the participatory methodology centres on the capability building, ownership of knowledge and empowerment of local people, and this is important in livelihood studies.

Gaining entry to the study areas and conducting the pilot study to test the research tools was the first stage of data collection in all study areas. The process of creating rapport with district, ward and village authorities took two months. This process involved identification of participants for in-depth interviews, which were conducted during the second phase of the fieldwork. This was done in order to follow the protocol of traditional leadership, community leadership and local government authorities, and to gain
permission to conduct the study in the selected areas. Due to the politically charged environment of the study areas, this took longer than anticipated. This did not affect the research design or plan but only delayed the process. Both the individual interviews and the participatory study tools were tested to ensure that they met the requirements and objectives of the study, as well as ensuring that the language was appropriate for the study. After pilot testing the research tools in the field, they were modified and improved to ensure that they would collect and gather the appropriate data.

Secondly, and throughout the research study period, a review of secondary literature sources was conducted. Documents were gathered during interviews at different levels. The review included published sources and a wealth of “grey” literature (unpublished material), government livelihood research documents, programme documents and related reports. Similar documents were also gathered from development agencies and NGOs as well as private sector organisations. The secondary documents provided information on development activities and interventions in all study areas and this largely generated statistical information in the study.

Simultaneously, interviews that formed the top-down data collection were conducted with selected study interviewees. Data was collected using interview guides that were developed and then pilot tested during the pre-data collection process. Thirdly and most importantly, participatory methods were used to obtain data from the communities. From the participatory methods basket, selected participatory rural appraisal methods were used together with community participants for generating community level data that was triangulated with data from secondary sources and interviews with selected respondents.

4.1.1 Research Chronology
The field work had three phases. The familiarisation period of gaining entry to all three districts took five months. This phase created a general understanding of each district’s situation and its entry points. The familiarisation (phase 1) included a number of informal discussions with officials from government departments, the private sector and NGOs to whom the researcher indicated that interviews might be requested at a later stage. This was a necessary and important part of the research because some districts were politically sensitive and highly charged just after the 2008 harmonised elections.

During this phase the research team members were requested to take their research tools
and undergo a security vetting by the head of each district police office. This involved police interviews on the purpose of the study, the reason for the selection of a particular district, what the research results would be used for, and presentation of all research tools to the security authorities. It took the research team more than two months to get clearance from the local authorities and the police in Muzarabani district. The process of getting entry or familiarisation had specific challenges to each district. Muzarabani and Gokwe districts were the most difficult, as clearance was needed from the police, the president’s office and the district administrator’s office.

In-depth interviews were combined with a secondary data review (phase 2) and conducted over a six-month period (November 2009 - April 2010). The sampling methods targeted specific individuals whose availability was not guaranteed at the time the researchers wanted, and some of the referred people required appointments, so this took quite a long time to complete. One interview guide developed during the first stage of research was used for all the interviewees from government officials to the private sector companies, and the same guide was adapted for other people in the NGO sector, health sector, traditional leadership and funding partners (see Appendix 1). In-depth interviews (top-down approach) were aimed at getting a first set of primary data on livelihood profiles of each district, vulnerability trends, key livelihood assets, various types of rural development interventions or strategies; the political sensitivity in each district; national, provincial and local level policy on development and the regulatory environment; how such policy and livelihood development interventions had impacted on rural development, and what results and challenges were achieved and encountered in the process.

Interviews started at the national level going down to the local level, (top-down approach), whilst phase three of participatory data collection was a ‘bottom-up’ approach. At the national level were various government departments such as the ministries of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources, Local Government, Urban and Rural Development, and Mining and Development, and various departments from these ministries such as Wildlife Management, Forestry Commission, Environmental Management Authority, the Grain Marketing Board, Veterinary Services, Agricultural Extension Services, the National AIDS Council, Social Welfare, and the Central Statistical Office. Using snowball sampling, where various government officials interviewed refer the researcher to the next person for interviews, the same departments were interviewed at the provincial and district level.
down to the ward level. Departmental heads and directors, government principal researchers and officers were interviewed, as were country directors and national coordinators for NGOs and development agencies.

At the national level, the primary objective was getting permission from each department to access the provincial and district offices for information. Without clearance from a higher office it was difficult to interview government departments in Zimbabwe and this was one of the reasons why this top-down approach was used during in-depth interviews. The information found at the national level was general for the whole country but specific information was gathered at the provincial and district levels. For this study the national level provided specific names of people to see and interview at both the provincial and district level. There was no political sensitivity at the national level on such research as all national offices are in urban areas.

At the provincial level, general provincial information regarding rural livelihoods in the province was gathered. Most important was the provincial office as the gateway into the specific districts. During the interviews three provincial offices were visited: Mashonaland Central Province, to the north of Zimbabwe; Midlands Province, central Zimbabwe but stretching from north west to south east; and Masvingo Province, to the south of Zimbabwe. It is at this provincial level where the politically charged environment is first felt, although lightly. It is at this level that the research team was warned about language and selection of words to use during the study.

The research team was also warned about asking for or examining sensitive information related to political violence in the districts or province, including negative aspects of the FTLRP. In Muzarabani the research team was warned not to mention the word ‘politics’ or anything about the MDC. This became a challenge at district level, but gradually it became clear that the risk involved depended on the person being interviewed; most people made mention themselves of these ‘sensitive issues’ without prompting. From the provincial level specific names for district level government officials with local information were provided to the researcher. This made it easier for the research team to approach the identified government officials.

At the district level interviews were first conducted with local government officials and the
first port of call was the district administrator, the political head of the district appointed by the minister responsible. NGOs, community based organisations, public and private sector companies, and community leaders such as councillors, traditional chiefs and local business people were interviewed at this level. All NGOs that operate in the district are registered at the District Administrator’s and Rural District Council’s Office and this is where the list of targeted NGOs was obtained.

Interviews were conducted at this level without a challenge. Information gathered at the district level was specific to the research study. Climatic conditions such as rainfall patterns, population size, natural resources specific to each district, livelihood activities, challenges, livelihood interventions by development agencies and strategies by local people as actors in themselves, crop production trends, inhabitants of each district, migration patterns, different development stakeholders in the district, local level policy development especially at the Rural District Council level, poverty levels, infrastructure development, access to markets - all this information was gathered at the district level from influential people, development agency officials and district and traditional leadership (see Appendix 1).

Lastly, phase three was community level data collection using selected participatory rural appraisal methods. The approach aims to involve people in the processes that affect their livelihoods and empower them in dealing with external actors. During this phase livelihood profiles, timelines, seasonal calendars, resource maps, social maps, wealth ranking, Venn diagrams and gender analysis were used to explore livelihoods and policies as well as institutional issues. Community people were the participants, with the researchers as external facilitators. The process took a total of eight months (April-November 2010) - two months per district, and two months for preparatory work.

4.2 In-depth Interviews
In-depth interviews were conducted by a team of six people, including the candidate as the leading researcher. The research team of three men and three women was selected based on the districts of study, with two members out of the six coming from each of the three districts. This was done to enable easy entry into the study areas, as the local researchers were familiar with the language, culture and environment of their respective districts. Three of the research assistants had sociological backgrounds and the other two had agricultural backgrounds. The first degree level enabled the research assistants to
understand requirements like data collection, using both interview guides and participatory research methods.

The research assistants were trained for two weeks before fieldwork started. They went through the study proposal to understand the study objectives and research questions, and were trained in the use of the developed interview guide and how data was recorded for easy analysis. This was done to standardise the interviewing process and recording of raw data during in-depth interviews.

**4.2.1 Sampling and selection of respondents**

Snowball sampling was only used for government officials from the national level down to the district level. All NGOs working in the study areas were interviewed at the district level based on the list provided by the Rural District Council officials. Three councillors from the selected wards were interviewed, one from each district. From the provincial level the researchers were referred to specific district officers in each district and down to the sampled ward through the same sampling method; this enabled top-down in-depth interviews of all government officials.

A total study population of 275 people were interviewed – 89 in Muzarabani, 92 in Gokwe and 94 in Mwenezi – using the developed interview guide (see Appendix 1). Of the 275 the largest number (211) was government officials from all three levels in various ministries. The remaining 64 were local councillors, traditional leaders, managers and senior officers from cotton companies and development agency officials such as directors, senior managers, programme coordinators and field officers.

Purposive sampling was used for all development agencies and NGOs as well as the private sector companies. The specific individuals interviewed were selected based on who was both available and suitable in each organisation, not on sampling. A total of 28 NGOs and funding partners were selected for in-depth interviews during the study. From the private sector seven cotton companies were selected, with individuals selected by the organisation. Within organisations snowball sampling was used where specific information was going to be provided by another person and researchers were referred to that person for further discussions, including the provision of detailed statistics of secondary information. The following table shows the various organisations interviewed and the number of people interviewed at each organisation and their level.
Table 1: Summary of a List of Interviewed People by Sector and Organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>No. of officials</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Govt</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>National, provincial, district and extension officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Local Government, Urban and Rural development</td>
<td>Govt</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Provincial administrators, district administrators, chief executive officers, officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources</td>
<td>Govt</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Provincial and district officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Finance (Central Statistical Office)</td>
<td>Govt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Mines</td>
<td>Govt</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>National senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Company of Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Managers and senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cargill</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Managers and senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphacs</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Managers and senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insing</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Managers and senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Managers and senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamics</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Managers and senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlam</td>
<td>Private sector</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Managers and senior officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern World Wide</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Directors, coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Vision International</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German Agro-Action</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Care</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Directors, coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan International</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safire</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Directors, coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mwenezi Development and Training Centre</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Managers, coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care International</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Trust</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Sustainable Livelihoods</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Director, coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodists Development Relief Agency</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Cross Zimbabwe</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSF</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fachig</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merlin</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CADEC</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMFED</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heifer International</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LED</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the Children Norway</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Leaders</td>
<td>Traditional leadership</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Councillors</td>
<td>Local govt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward Development Committee Leaders</td>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Development Committee Leaders</td>
<td>Local authority</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Coordinators &amp; field officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sida</td>
<td>Funding agent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Country director &amp; programme manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Participatory Methods

Participatory methods are a ‘family’ of approaches. From within this family, a particular set of methods known as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was selected as being particularly appropriate for rural livelihoods research. Bhandani (2003:19) and Carswell (1999:78) note that PRA methods are “part of action research and utilise a wide range of techniques that includes secondary data reviews, observation, storytelling, diagrams and workshops”. Chambers (2004:23) describes PRA as “a growing family of approaches, methods, attitudes and behaviours to enable and empower people to share, analyse and enhance their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor, evaluate and reflect”. Laderchi (2001:13) further stresses that it is multi-disciplinary in nature and has an inbuilt flexibility in the process of collecting information. It has the advantage of being done on site and is useful for gathering information on a broad range of livelihood activities. It also enables a better understanding of systems dynamics and appreciates the interlinked factors influencing livelihood diversification.

PRA methods are anchored on assumptions that local communities have adequate knowledge of their environments. They avoid problems of long and costly formal surveys that collect too much data and irrelevant data. Laderchi (2001:16) notes that PRAs help overcome the biases created by meeting only more accessible and well-to-do individuals or groups in search of quantitative data, whilst missing the more qualitative, in-depth information and insights dealing with local people in a top-down manner.

The methods involve local people as active participants and outsiders mostly as facilitators. Outsiders facilitate local community people with analysing local information, practicing critical self-awareness and taking responsibility as well as sharing knowledge of life and conditions to enable planning and action. In this regard outsiders should show the will to learn from the community and position them as the main source for understanding their conditions. They encourage participation of local people in the process of development by studying local insights and thereby collecting more relevant data, involving local people in the study and thus increasing commitment among participants.

Conyers (1984:178) argues that although PRA has the advantage of the recognition of traditional experience and knowledge of the community, this does not mean that the community is always right. The PRA process is a dialogue forum between outsiders and
local participants to yield something better. Despite being conducted in an open, informal and flexible atmosphere without pressure, it respects differences as participants come from diverse backgrounds and many opinions and arguments arise.

Another strength of the selected methodology is its tenet of triangulation of information, which is a way of cross-checking sources of information. Every issue should be looked at from different angles and with different approaches. Three different sources is one kind of triangulation as each source must corroborate the others. Three different tools or methods are also a kind of triangulation and both of these were used in this study.

Each PRA technique has advantages and disadvantages and not all information needed can be attained, discussed and used with one or two techniques. Thus the validity must be carefully verified or corroborated with other sources and techniques. Information suggested by village government officials and community leaders can be cross-checked with statements from the community during discussions. The methodology has strengths in optimising its activities by focusing on things that are most important with an acceptable conclusion.

The participatory aspect of the study was carried out at a micro-level, that of individuals, households and communities. A household is the basic economic decision making unit in rural society and as a unit of analysis refers to a group of people who live and eat together and typically engage in joint economic activity. This group is usually based on kinship, and normally comprised of nuclear or extended family and a ‘community’ is commonly defined as a group of people with a shared interest, identity or locality (Scoones, 1998); in this case community is constituted by a group of households located in the same village. However, the study also takes into account the structural, historical and institutional elements that may be called its macro context. The research has a specified timeframe, a period of ten years, and has identified key variables and important trends of change. This means that implications for policy and institutional setups should contain explicit reflections of the particular, relevant contexts in which policy is made.

Ellis (1998:107) and Dupar and Badenoch (2002:83) argue that such livelihood research requires the researcher to understand the diversity at a specific moment in time. However, changes over time also need to be taken into account and this requires an analysis of the
historical context, inference of the broad trends of change and a critical investigation of the institutional framework through which relations between different levels of authority are worked out over time. For quality information the methodology allows probing to be done during plenary and group discussions before passing to the next topic. Using the SLF and actor oriented approaches as guiding frameworks helps build on the successes of participatory methods, particularly in making local level development initiatives much more people-centred. The methods involve people in the processes that affect their livelihoods and empower them in dealing with external actors. Such methods may also generate more nuanced and reliable data than conventional ‘top down’ social science methods; for example, studies of social differentiation in Gokwe by Nyambara (2001) did not reveal the same number of social tribal groupings as found by this study.

4.3.1 Selection of PRA Participants
Firstly, purposive selection was used for the specific wards and villages where community level data collection was conducted. In Gokwe the selection of ward eight (Masuka), which is the remotest and furthest from the growth point, was conducted with the assistance of Concern World Wide as the leading NGO with the largest number of interventions. In Muzarabani the selection of ward nine (Muringazuva) was done with the assistance of World Vision International and in Mwenezi the selection of ward three (Matande) was done with the assistance of Mwenezi Development and Training Centre. The remoteness of the ward, its vulnerability in relation to rural livelihoods, the number of interventions and extent of external support in the ward were the selection indicators used. The same can be said for the selection of the three villages in each ward, which became the lowest level of focus.

After selection of the wards and specific villages, community participants were drawn from the three villages in each ward. A total of 30 participants from each village were expected, making it a total of about 90 participants per ward; however the figures went up unexpectedly in Gokwe and Mwenezi districts. Gokwe recorded a total of 122 participants from the three villages, although they were unequally distributed. This was attributed to the provision of food for participants during the two-day process. For breakfast participants were given bread and diluted orange drink and for lunch they were given thick mealie meal porridge (sadza in the local language) with goat meat that was purchased from the local community. This was replicated in all study areas. The following is the map of
Gokwe district with 42 wards and to the far west is Chirisa game and safari area.

Figure 6: Gokwe South District Map showing different wards and the wildlife area

Source: OCHA Zimbabwe

Within each village, participants were mobilised by local councillors and officers from leading NGOs the researcher worked with. In terms of gender mix Gokwe district had 85 women and 37 men participants, whilst Mwenezi had 83 women and 38 men. In contrast, Muzarabani had 29 men and nine women. This was attributed to the particular state of political tension in Muzarabani. As a result women became less interested to participate in the study as they feared a repeat of the political violence of 2008 where women were beaten and tortured on behalf of their husbands and children who ran away. Traditional leaders such as the headman, village heads, councillors and ZANU-PF party leaders in those wards and villages attended the PRA data collection processes.

4.3.2 Selected PRA Techniques
The PRA methodology uses a variety of techniques or tools that are largely categorised into two sets. The first is a set of visual tools such as Venn diagrams, pie charts, flow diagrams and histograms, ranking techniques such as preference ranking and scoring, pair-wise ranking, direct matrix ranking, ranking by voting and wealth ranking. Time trends analysis includes historical and future mapping, time trends charts and oral histories, while there are mapping techniques such as mobility mapping and transect walks, calendars such as seasonal and historical seasonal calendars and lastly, ethno-classifications such
as proverbs, stories, indigenous categories and terms and taxonomies.

The second set of techniques is of group and team dynamics methods that include focus group discussions, role plays and participatory workshops. Photo and video production and grassroots diaries were recently added to the list. Such a variety of PRA methods and techniques and their flexibility distinguishes them from other methods, which elicit self-perception data through structured questionnaires (Pradhan et al, 1998). These tools and techniques are adopted in a sequence and the assessment can be tailored so as to fit the context and the issues to be analysed appropriately.

The methodology includes documentation of all stages of the process to help understand how the research results are arrived at. This helps with understanding features like the interpretation given to quantitative outputs or the role played by different groups. This proved to be both cost effective and reliable.

Community participants were organised into groups of eleven people in Gokwe and Mwenezi districts, where each group was composed of seven to eight women and three to four men. This was done to encourage divergent ideas during group discussions. Participants from the three villages gathered at one central place in the ward and people from all three villages were randomly put into groups.

*Figure 7: Mwenezi District Map showing different wards*

![Mwenezi District Map showing different wards](image)

Source: OCHA Zimbabwe

In Muzarabani, participants were grouped into six groups of six, with four or five men and one or two women in order to balance group discussions. Thus the gender mix, though
unequal, was used as the criterion to group community participants. Age, although it was intended to be used as one selection criterion for grouping participants, was not used and both young and elderly were organised into the same groups. This was done to enrich discussions at the group level and avoid debates based on age during plenary discussions.

Plenary presentations kick-started the process in all study areas where objectives of the process were explained to people, as well as how the process was going to be handled until the end. It involved welcoming everybody by the local councillor following the cultural procedures of greeting traditional leadership. Officers from leading NGOs who assisted in the mobilisation of community participants assisted with introductions in all the study areas. Each of the techniques used was first explained to all participants in plenary for them to understand how to use them. Afterwards there was a chance for questions and answers for participants to clarify areas that were not clear to them. Plenary presentations were used for people to understand the process and for them to be involved and participating, and that formed the basis for other methods that followed. Not all techniques can be used for a study; a selection has to be made depending on the type of study and the situation. Below is an outline of the specific techniques used during this study.

4.3.1.1 Livelihood profiling in plenary
The techniques were used in a sequence starting with plenary livelihood profiling. Participants began by identifying different livelihood activities they depended on in their specific community in no particular order of importance. The various livelihood activities were all listed on a flip chart. Local language was used throughout the process. This technique generated basic information about livelihood activities, sources of food for different people, income generated, available support services, and opportunities available for both women and men, how people allocate time for labour and ownership of property, both movable and immovable. The information collected here later generated further data in group discussions using other tools to link it to a number of other social factors, explained in detail in sections 4.3.1.3-9.

4.3.1.2 Pair Wise Ranking in Plenary
Pair wise ranking conducted in plenary came next. It was used to rearrange the listed livelihood activities in order of importance. Pair wise ranking tables were drawn up to
compare the livelihood activities against each other. In the table livelihood activities were listed vertically on the left side of the flip chart and again horizontally along the top. The most important livelihood activity would be ‘ticked’ or ‘noted’ or ‘crossed’ as they chose one out of two items. This was done for every livelihood activity as they were compared to each other. This technique reorganised livelihood activities according to their importance, with the most important at the top down to the least important at the bottom. Some of the activities were not even accorded a ranking, showing they were very peripheral to the rural livelihoods of people in that area.

4.3.1.3 Group Discussions
After identifying the different livelihood activities and putting them into their order of importance through pair wise ranking, participants were grouped into six groups – one each for wealth ranking, social mapping, institutional analysis, time line analysis, Venn diagram analysis and gender analysis – for detailed group work data collection. Each group, based on the selected techniques, had a mixture of both men and women.

4.3.1.4 Timeline/ Trend analysis
Timelines were used to determine patterns and trends for each livelihood activity listed and prioritised by the community members throughout the ten-year period. The analysis grouped the first eight years of the last decade in pairs from 2000-2001, 2002-2003, 2004-2005 and 2006-2007. The last two years were analysed looking at each year separately. Participants easily remembered what happened in 2008 and 2009 by each season and month. This was replicated in each of the three districts to ensure that the period under discussion was discussed adequately, based on the livelihood activities identified and prioritised in each area.

The technique generated data on rainfall distribution patterns and how livelihoods were affected; food availability focusing on own production savings and food aid; agricultural production patterns; income generation by local people, health problems, human development through education at primary, secondary and tertiary level; and information on other activities.

The trend analysis also showed how villagers allocate their time and labour to various activities within the community. Labour allocation was dependent on the vulnerability
context of the community each season or year as well as the different shocks to rural livelihoods. Information collected showed how people employed their own innovations in order to survive during periods when shocks severely affected their livelihood activities.

The technique also generated information on rainfall patterns, climatic changes, cropping seasons, availability of inputs, livestock cycles and labour demand. This helped to identify lean periods for resources that affected rural livelihoods. It determined when the year's livelihood challenges were most severe, giving reasons for this, and also the specific seasons.

### 4.3.1.5 Wealth Ranking and Analysis

Wealth ranking determines the economic attributes of households in the community. Men and women in this group identified a number of socio-economic groups based on wellbeing or wealth and poverty levels at the household level. This group described the rich, the poor, the very poor or the better-off based on their asset holding levels; human capital levels based on type of rural or urban employment; type of rural business or enterprises; quality of life guided by wellbeing; and asset holding indicators such as number of movable assets, agricultural output, type of houses, quality of clothing, type and quality of food, type of schools they send their children to and number of meals they ate per day. The same was applied to all the identified socio-economic groups identified in the community.

This method generated information on the relative wealth and wellbeing of households in the whole ward represented by participants from the three selected villages. It determined the social and economic status of households and individuals in a particular rural community. The data generated helped to identify the poor and rich households and the type of livelihood activities they prioritised. It also generated information indicating who had access to and control of resources and who did not.

The wealth ranking linked both poor and rich households to specific prioritised livelihood activities. Analysis of data from these discussions showed that the lower ranked livelihood activities were for the very poor and such activities were not linked to asset or resource control. Linked to trend analysis, the technique showed that most poor people had been vulnerable to a series of shocks during the decade under study and had failed to recover from the shocks.
4.3.1.6 Gender Analysis
Gender analysis linked the listed and prioritised livelihood activities to men’s and women’s roles and responsibilities. Group participants wrote down each livelihood activity and coded it as dominated by either men or women, or shared. This also reflected the levels of control of resources and assets, as well as decision-making in the use of those resources by either men or women. Data generated from this group reflects how women and men allocate their labour to various livelihood activities and how vulnerable they were to various shocks as well.

Linked to trend analysis, it reflected how women and men responded differently to various shocks and patterns affecting their key livelihoods. The data generated indicated how men and women have different levels of control of and access to resources for their livelihoods, the different type of activities undertaken by men and women over the past decade for survival, and how institutions and policies impacted on them differently. Due to the overall composition of participants being dominated by women, women’s views were adequately collected during these group discussions and male views that were left out were incorporated during the plenary discussions of each group’s findings.

4.3.1.7 Venn Diagram Analysis
Venn diagrams were used to identify key institutions, organisations (NGOs), government departments and influential individuals in a village, and their relationships, importance and contribution to decision-making and development of the community. This group was made up of ordinary men and women who discussed the role played by intervening organisations in their community. Participants wrote down the various organisations and plotted on a flipchart how their interventions contributed to their own livelihood improvement and diversification.

Interventions of government departments and organisations were linked to the prioritised livelihood activities to assess the importance of the contributions of each organisation to the community and to the improvement of people’s livelihoods. Data collected indicated the type of support various semi-arid districts received during the past decade based on the vulnerability context. The interventions from various organisations and groups were dependent on the type of shocks that were prevalent in each community. The technique also collected information on the scale of interventions, the number of people accessing
the support and the extent of the contribution by the type of intervention.

4.3.1.8 Social Mapping/ Natural Resource Mapping
This technique generated information on the availability and distribution of community houses, social facilities and infrastructure such as stores, grinding mills, schools, water sources, village gardens, village crop fields, roads, recreation facilities, and natural resources such as minerals, wild animals, forest products, firewood and usable trees. It is a stock-taking method that accounts for all available services, assets and natural resources, as well as the number of households in the community. The following photograph shows the social mapping group during group work and discussions in Mwenezi district.

*Figure 8: Social and Resource Mapping in Mwenezi (Musevenzi, June 2010)*

It documented distances travelled by people of different age groups for social services such as schools, dip tanks, vegetable markets, general input supply points, shopping centres and clinics. The mapping exercise helped to visualise the location of all important features, facilities and infrastructure in the village according to availability and accessibility for different groups in relation to livelihoods. This technique also showed the spatial distribution of common resources and other resources such as crop fields around villages and those far away. Information collected reflected control of and access to such common resources by different groups of people as identified by wealth ranking.
4.3.1.9 Participatory Institutional and Policy Analysis

The institutional analysis group was a mixture of traditional leaders, local councillors, government officials such natural resources officers, agricultural extension officers, other government employees and ordinary people, both men and women. This was usually the biggest group in all study areas because a wide definition of leaders at community level – which included traditional, government employees and politicians, increased the numbers.

Group participants identified and wrote down each of the local institutional arrangements and local policies and by-laws. Each of the identified policies and institutional arrangements were discussed in relation to how they enabled or inhibited livelihood diversification in that community and then they were ranked, with the most enabling policies scoring highest and most inhibiting lowest. The group then discussed how local people as actors responded to various implications of these arrangements and policies. It showed how local people develop their own mechanisms to cope with the changing trends in rural livelihoods and devised their own methods of getting around the inhibiting policies and institutional arrangements.

Using ranking techniques on the identified policies and institutions gave a much needed bottom-up perspective to counter the conventional and easily accessible top-down view of the policy arena. The group’s analysis of the institutional arrangements and policies was therefore subjected to plenary discussions specifically for verifying and validating data and removing incorrect information from the group’s discussion.

4.3.1.10 Plenary Discussions

Plenary discussions were used to triangulate data from the group work. Information from different groups was subjected to criticism and debate in plenary, a system that added considerably to the findings as it allowed the researcher to probe and ask questions on specific areas that needed clarification. To avoid domination by individuals during plenary discussions the facilitator would identify and encourage responding on certain issues. The technique allowed the researcher to link findings from different groups to make sense of all presentations, as the methods linked, complemented and fed into each other. This method allowed preliminary data analysis with the participants.
4.3.1.11 Observations
Direct observations were used throughout the fieldwork, particularly during the third phase (participatory method). Several visits were made to different livelihood projects such as irrigation schemes, vegetable gardens, small dams, initiatives by individual households and crop production fields.

During observation photographs of these livelihood activities were taken and are attached in this study. Also observed were different houses and homesteads for rural people to have an appreciation of the wealth differences. Inference and further analysis of gathered data was strengthened by direct observation of livelihood activities, assets owned by rural people and the way they live.

4.3.2 Limitations of Participatory Methods
Every approach has its limitations. In this regard Participatory Rural Appraisal methods require greater researcher understanding of potential limitations. Despite its wide array of advantages for a livelihood study the theoretical foundations of PRA and the class interests which it is likely to promote are questioned by several scholars. Cooke and Kothari (2001:33) are unsympathetic to the ideology of participation, seeing it as a very qualified form of democracy, and one which is eminently prone to cooption by the elite. There is concern that, in the guise of support for democratic involvement, responsibility may be transferred to rural communities for decisions in which they have played only a very limited part.

Methodologically PRAs are criticised by Ncapai (2005:12), particularly over the potential reductionism which derives from preference for the visual over the verbal, and the
simplification that this implies. It is also criticised for lacking objective standards of assessment and quality control, by which one might know whether a PRA has been adequately or badly undertaken. Ncapai (2005:17) notes that PRA methods are not the answer to all rural development problems; its limitations must be acknowledged and caution should be exercised to avoid unrealistic expectations and disappointments. Khodamaradi and Abedi (2011) argue that the rapid spread of PRA as an emerging family of approaches containing many methods has made quality assurance a concern. The dangers of an instant fashion are that the methods of the moment can be widely used without due consideration to their limitations, and they can be rushed during implementation without paying attention to detail. At the other extreme is the danger of formalism, where there might be excessive adherence to prescribed or recognised forms of implementing the methods with limited flexibility. They also argue that PRA’s capacity to relate norms and values to other variables in the social system appears limited, as is its value for exploring and challenging established social relationships.

Christoplos (1995:157) is concerned that PRA does not ensure equitable access by all community members as not all community members attend, and during group discussions some members dominate the discussions at the expense of naturally quiet group participants. This study aimed to address these limitations by ensuring that the selected participants were a representative sample at the ward level. In addition, the study sample became bigger than planned because of the lure of food, as discussed in section 4.3.1 above.

The processes might be co-opted to agendas that are far from participatory, in fact tightly controlled by the centre. Chambers (1994:12) warns of the danger of a naive populism in which participation is regarded as good regardless of who participates or who gains.

Nelson and Wright (1995:277) note the limitations of PRA in dealing with situations of unequal power relations and warn of the danger of using the term “community” as if it covered a homogeneous, idyllic, unified population with which a researcher can interact unproblematically. The notion of community cohesion continues to permeate much participatory work, hiding a bias that favours the opinions and priorities of those with more power and the ability to voice themselves publicly. Gujit and Shah (1998:01) similarly argue that PRA methods have the danger of hiding diversity and presenting a falsely
homogeneous picture of the people whose views it purports to represent. It involves some labelling of women, men, young, old, rich, poor, household or village; and this can mask internal distinctions within groups. The language and practice of "participation" often obscures women’s worlds, needs and contributions. Hopefully the risk of this limitation is minimised in this study by the fact that more women (177) participated than men (104).

Cooke and Kothari (2001:34) and Kapoor (2002:21) argue that the public arena in which PRAs take place are recognised as influencing the actual participation of people who are the most socially marginalised. Equally, since PRA exercises are conducted in groups, the discussion and subsequent results are most likely framed by group dynamics, and as such the outcomes may consequently present a distorted view to the unaware researcher. Information about livelihoods may be vulnerable to misrepresentations. It is likely that these misrepresentations are found mainly at the group-work level, and the further discussion and analysis in plenary was aimed at verifying and correcting these misrepresentations.

Cooke and Kothari (2001:168) argue that questions of ethics and quality bear directly on the validity of the findings. They argue that the involvement of subjects makes ethical issues a particular concern in participatory more than other forms of research. It would be a mistake to overemphasise the specificity of participatory research in this regard.

Laderchi (2001:26) stresses that the abstractions of participatory research from peoples’ own analysis and action, and its incorporation as data from external policy makers, may not only carry the moral hazard that it becomes extractive and even exploitative. It may also produce poor quality information, representing a false consensus and apparent identity of interest where none in fact exists. The rigorous triangulation of data collection methods used in the study was an attempt to address this limitation. In report writing Laderchi (2001:36) argues that there might be issues regarding the extent to which analysis arises simply from respondents themselves, unsullied by any contact with researcher concerns.

The wealth ranking is criticised as it may generate unexpected information in terms of the dimensions people identify and the ways they prioritise them. Daas (2000:221) argues that the formulation of the “good life” does not adequately capture the deepest values of what
people consider wellbeing. The argument is that the technique may impose a different picture of wellbeing from the community understanding of it, or in other words ignore the community’s sense of wellbeing and capture an artificial one. This study attempted to address this limitation by using practical examples and eliciting the community’s own criteria for identifying the poor and the rich. The use of practical indicators of asset holding such as number of livestock, agricultural output and other sources of income was aimed at reducing the risk of generating an artificial picture of wellbeing.

White and Tiongo (1997:129) note that as outside facilitators allow an existing consensus to emerge, they are also actively involved in creating that community and the shared interpretation of reality which animates it. The argument is that the realities of a community can be constructed by outsiders. In this study this was reduced by limiting the involvement of the researcher during group discussions, although the role became more active when probing for more information.

To sum up, the limitations of PRA methods were mitigated as far as possible through innovation, triangulation and flexibility in the methods themselves. Other challenges were addressed administratively during selection of participants, the role played by the facilitator, the composition of different groups, use of practical activities and using the local language to reduce wrong interpretation. Chambers (1983:02) proposed that as participatory methods are conducted in groups, the groups should be smaller in all study areas for the outcomes to be more reliable. This was also adopted by maintaining the group numbers at less than 16 people in areas where more people than expected participated and less than eight where the expected numbers participated. The size of groups had a direct relationship to the depth of information obtained.

4.4 Data Analysis
During analysis, raw data was condensed into a brief summary format to establish clear links between the research objectives set out at the start of the study and the study findings derived from the data. The intention was to come up with a line of understanding or a theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes that became evident in the collected raw text. This approach was used to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in the raw data. It was a systematic approach guided by the set objectives as well as various interpretations attached to raw data collected.
Data generated from both in-depth interviews and participatory research methods in all three districts was analysed at four different levels. Firstly there was close reading of the raw data, diagrams and maps to become familiar with the content and to gain an understanding of the themes and details in the text and diagrams. Secondly, determined by both the set objectives and multiple readings and interpretations, data was grouped into emerging themes. These themes are: types of livelihoods; socio-economic and political environment; interventions by government department, private sector and NGOs; target beneficiaries of interventions; institutional arrangements and policies and how they are implemented; people’s behaviour vis-à-vis the institutional arrangements and policies.

These emerging themes were time-framed between the years 2000 and 2010, the period of Zimbabwe’s worst political and socio-economic crisis, in order to gain insight and to develop a theory based on the rural livelihood experiences of residents of semi-arid districts in a politically charged environment. Various forms of data during the categorisation process were coded or categorised in more than one category or theme. Various sub-themes were identified during this categorisation process.

As the research findings resulted from the researcher’s and research assistants’ multiple interpretations of the raw data, the findings were therefore shaped by the researchers’ assumptions and experiences while conducting the research. The researcher also went through the preliminary reports produced by research assistants and analysed the data based on major themes emerging. For the data to make sense and be usable, decisions had to be made about what was more and less important. This means that what was considered irrelevant to the research objectives was left out. Different forms of data generated from different participatory methods were grouped in one theme as corroboration or verification.

The third step of data analysis was the development of linkages between the categorised emerging themes. These emerging relationships and associations also helped to draw out the implications of various themes. Data collected by each participatory research method was linked to the other methods used, such as interviews and reviews of secondary sources, with the intention of finding causal relationships and implications. This is the stage where data from three different sources was triangulated to generate emerging
themes. The fourth stage in data analysis was writing up study findings from the inductive analysis. The top-level themes or categories became headings with specific categories as subheadings in the overall study report.

4.5 Ethical Considerations
There was no problem in fulfilling the code of conduct that governs the conduct of research for Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Issues relating to honesty and participation and the politics and political context of this study process must also be contextualised within Zimbabwe.

The researcher had no problem in locating and selecting respondents and participants for both interviews and participatory methods. Procedures of accessing respondents from government departments were followed and letters of authority to conduct research were gathered at the national level. The research proposal and tools were submitted to the police and security forces for consideration before the research team was granted authority to enter the study areas. Research assistants were recruited from the respective districts or study areas as requested by the provincial authorities. Interview respondents were informed that no material or monetary benefits would accrue to them as a result of participating in the study. Participants in the PRA process were informed that food would be provided during the two-day process of data gathering in each study area.

4.5.1 Politics and the political context of the research process
It is important to take into account the political context of fieldwork at every stage of the research process. The research team sometimes faced challenges in getting entry into communities despite having letters of authority from the responsible government departments. The major problem was that entry points were at different levels starting from the national level, and going down to provincial, district and ward level. It is at the ward level that community gatekeepers used political affiliation to gain entry.

The research team was supposed to get political clearance from local ZANU-PF leadership to be allowed to enter the selected wards. Although it took some time, we were assisted by leading NGOs and local councillors in each district. This was complemented by the recruitment of research assistants from each district. This was done to enable easy entry into the study areas, but the team remained apolitical during the study for easy passage into the communities.
Some challenges were encountered during the fieldwork in specific study areas. The participatory research process took longer in Muzarabani due to the political volatility of the district. During the period June to September 2010, political violence started occurring due to the constitution-making process, which involved outreach programmes, and shortly thereafter political leaders in the coalition government announced that they were preparing for national elections in May 2011. The three political parties had different positions on what should be included in the new constitution. As a result, political tension increased to the extent that some of the remote areas became sealed off and it was impossible for outsiders to hold discussions with community people.

The two major political parties in Zimbabwe (MDC-T and ZANU-PF) drafted their own position papers on the constitution and they taught their supporters how to respond to outreach questions in it. ZANU-PF protected the rural areas by limiting the entry of unknown people to ensure that theirs was the only influence. Rural people were forcefully mobilised and threatened to defend or represent the ZANU-PF position during the outreach discussions at ward level whilst the MDC-T did constitutional lectures in urban areas.

The constitutional outreach process coincided with phase three of the study in Muzarabani district. Entry into the lower valley part of the district for meetings then required political clearance from the police and political leadership, particularly from ZANU-PF, as the district was considered a ‘no-go area’ for political parties other than ZANU-PF. However, a strategy was devised with support from World Vision Zimbabwe to transport participants to a central place outside their ward of residence for the PRAs.

Given the changing nature of Zimbabwean micro-level politics today and the state’s extended reach into people’s lives, what appeared politically safe acts yesterday may not be safe today. Although it was necessary for the research team to conform to these political access requirements, we took measures aimed at ensuring that this did not bias the information received and that we were not perceived to be aligned with any political party, particularly the opposition. We remained apolitical in all our discussions, we conducted our participatory methods in the presence of the ZANU-PF local political leadership, and we also paid protection fees that we were asked to pay to enable us entry into our communities of study.
CHAPTER FIVE

Rural Livelihoods in the Semi-Arid Districts of Zimbabwe

5.0 Introduction
This chapter is arranged in six major themes that emerged from the research process. The first section deals with the current status of rural livelihoods in semi-arid districts. This is linked with their changing trends over the past ten years. The second section highlights different rural livelihood interventions by NGOs, the government and the private sector in Zimbabwe. The third section reflects on emerging livelihood strategies by rural people in semi-arid areas to improve their own livelihoods. The fourth section deals with issues of access to and control of resources by different social classes of rural people including tribal differences and the changing gendered nature of rural livelihoods, and the last section is a presentation of the changing institutional and policy context in Zimbabwe that enabled or inhibited rural livelihood development.

The chapter integrates and presents findings from in-depth interviews and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods used in the study as well as secondary data gathered from various organisations. The findings are a result of triangulation of data generated from these three data collection methods used. Data presentation is in different forms including tables, pie charts and Venn diagrams to illustrate statistical changes.

The study shows dominant livelihoods in semi-arid areas categorised into three sets of livelihood activities that are traditional livelihood activities (crop production, livestock rearing and contract work), external interventions and locally initiated livelihood activities (gold and diamond panning, migrant labour, wood carvings and wild life poaching as well as property theft). Of the three sets the traditional livelihood activities were ranked high despite experiencing a decline particularly of crop production, livestock and agricultural related contract work. The study also shows that these three sets of livelihood categories overlapped into each other as agriculture and locally initiated activities benefited from external interventions. These three sets determined the extent of livelihood diversification in all study areas. Generally the study shows that despite evidence of diversification into non-farm activities, agriculture has remained the major rural livelihood activity in the semi-arid areas of the country. People retain agriculture to fall back on, should other non-farm
activities fail to bring positive livelihood outcomes. Some changes in agriculture itself were also observed.

The study findings show that the available natural resources in each semi-arid district greatly influenced the nature and dimension of diversification. This has determined the emergence of various non-farm activities and initiatives. The role of NGOs in rural livelihood development increased in most semi-arid areas to deal with the increasing vulnerabilities. Engagement in non-farm activities and NGO interventions resulted in a number of changes in community relations, social networks, social differentiation and changing gender roles in livelihood diversification. The following sections present livelihood activities based on each study area.

5.1.1 Rural Livelihoods in Gokwe District
Despite the reticence of participants to discuss some illegal activities such as wildlife poaching and gold panning, it was possible to get an accurate reflection of the importance of the livelihood activities through a pair wise ranking exercise. The following table presents the livelihood activities listed and prioritised through pair wise ranking:
Table 2: Livelihood Activity Pair Wise Ranking in Gokwe District (Source: Participatory methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crop farming</th>
<th>Gardening</th>
<th>Weaving</th>
<th>Livestock production</th>
<th>Food Aid</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Contract labour</th>
<th>Cooperatives</th>
<th>Poaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
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<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Livestock production</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Food Aid</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Aid</td>
<td>Aid</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Food Aid</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Aid</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Aid</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
<td>Poaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Order of preference by community participants

1. Crop farming (14 mentions)
2. Poaching (12 mentions)
3. Livestock (12 mentions)
4. Gardening (9 mentions)
5. Cooperatives (7 mentions)
6. Weaving (6 mentions)
7. Food Aid (6 mentions)
8. Contract labour (3 mentions)
9. Fruit (1 mention)

The table shows that crop production is the main livelihood activity in the district although people engage in other activities as indicated. Although livestock rearing was not considered part of agriculture it was ranked second, together with wildlife poaching, among the preferred livelihood activities. Vegetable gardening was ranked third, cooperatives fourth, weaving fifth, food aid sixth; contract labour seventh and gathering wild fruit last. This shows a collection of both farm and non-farm activities that people in Gokwe depended on and the order shows the importance or contribution of that activity to their household livelihood.

Analysis of crop production in the district shows that crops commonly grown in Gokwe are cotton, maize, sorghum, groundnuts, rapoko, sunflower, cowpeas, vegetables, watermelon and tomatoes. Of all these crops cotton was prioritised as the most important cash crop and suitable for semi-arid areas. Gathered data shows that since the 1960s cotton has been generating cash income for various livelihood activities. Its production was supported by the government until 2000 with inputs accessed at the open market.

Nyambara (2003) outlines how cotton production became the major livelihood activity after people were forcibly moved to the district during the colonial period as master farmers. It remained the major cash crop after independence when the new government encouraged farmers to migrate to Gokwe as master farmers to train local inhabitants in cotton production. This strategy, meant to modernise agriculture, created two major identities in the district: the local indigenous Shangwe people and the migrant Deruka, or so-called
master farmers. This contributed to the growth of cotton production in the district with the establishment of a cotton ginning centre at Gokwe growth point in 1984.

*Figure 10: Cotton Crop in Gokwe District (Musevenzi May 2010)*

However, after the FTLRP in 2003, cotton inputs were no longer available on the open market and accessing cotton inputs became a challenge for most rural people. The findings show that the non-availability of cotton inputs in local shops contributed to a decline in cotton production. This was partly as a result of reduced government support to cotton production after 2003 and partly because cotton prices were generally low on the international market. Despite this decline people in the district continue to have faith in this crop for cash income generation.

Maize was ranked the most important crop for food security despite the challenging hot climatic conditions. Manyani’s (2010) study in Gwanda shows similar results – despite hot and dry climatic conditions people continue producing maize for food security at the expense of other small grain crops. Data gathered shows that small crops such as rapoko, sorghum, millet and cowpeas were considered supplementary crops to cotton and maize in Gokwe. Maize is the staple food crop for Zimbabwe, but does not do well in high temperatures and harvests are low. However, not all people grow maize as it is mostly grown in relatively high altitudes where there is moderate rainfall compared to valley areas along the Zambezi River.
Livestock rearing in Gokwe includes both small livestock such as goats, sheep, rural chickens, free range rabbits and large livestock such as donkeys and cattle. Information gathered indicates that small livestock is used both for cash income and for own consumption at community level, whilst large livestock is mainly used as draft power for agricultural production. Hargreaves (2004) also found that livestock is an important component in smallholder cropping systems, providing manure to improve crop output besides draft power. Cattle have other livelihood uses such as milk production for household consumption, and meat production for both cash income and own consumption. Cash generated is used for different livelihood activities such as paying school fees, purchase of household goods, food and agricultural inputs.

Secondary data sources from the Agricultural Technical and Extension Services Department indicate that in 1999 Gokwe had an estimated maximum population of 220,000 cattle under normal conditions. However, fieldwork suggests a decline, as statistics from all dip tanks in the district gave totals of between 150,000 to 152,000 cattle in the decade under examination. Goat and sheep populations show equally dramatic declines from government statistics of 136,000 and 15,000 respectively. Trend analysis showed that this decline was due to drought and increased dependence on exchange of livestock for survival during periods of crisis, particularly in 2008. Food shortages forced people to sell off their livestock for survival. Plenary discussions revealed that rural people exchanged one ox for 150kg of maize meal and two goats for 50kg of maize meal during the food crisis period.

Poaching emerged as a survival strategy during the period under study due to increased adverse trends and shocks. Wildlife is readily available in Chirisa to the west and Nyaminyami game reserve to the north. This was an actual reflection as participants apparently hid nothing from the researcher. The most hunted wild animals are buffalos, wildebeest, elephants, and various small wild animals such as waterbuck and impala that provide meat for local consumption. This shows that this livelihood activity was largely meant for household food security although some game meat was sold for cash income.

Information gathered from the community showed that it is a highly secret livelihood activity that is rarely discussed openly. Poaching emerged as a livelihood activity after the

\footnote{Typically referred to as road runners in Zimbabwe}

\footnote{Derukas are immigrants who settled in dry districts}
FTLRP, when the socio-economic environment became more difficult and rural people became more vulnerable to droughts, food shortages and other crises. The proximity of wildlife areas to communal areas in Gokwe enables rural people to illegally access wildlife resources. The findings show that poaching is dominated by men and young boys who hunt in small groups to avoid detection by the game rangers who protect these areas. Poaching is considered a risky livelihood activity and a number of rural people have been killed, either by animals during hunting or by the Wildlife Department for poaching.

This fieldwork data was corroborated with statistics from the Department of Wildlife, which show that since 2007 18 people were shot dead by game rangers for poaching, and 29 were killed by wild animals such as elephants, lions, buffalos and crocodiles during the same period. Others have been imprisoned for poaching but statistics were not readily available. However, despite the dangers, poaching is on the increase as other livelihood options become more limited.

During hunting women also have a role to play as they travel distances of over 30km to carry meat home during the night if word comes that there is a kill. Women indicated that they travel during the day, pretending that they are going to look for thatching grass from the wildlife reserves, but bring back the meat at night. Although it is also prohibited under the Wildlife Act and Natural Resources Act to cut grass from game reserves, women do cut the grass for selling as well as for their own use. This is one livelihood strategy that was not listed during profiling but came out during plenary discussions.

Vegetable gardens are not seasonal and provide food and cash income to rural households throughout the year, particularly between March and November. Women participants indicated that women from all tribes are involved in vegetable and crop production for both consumption and cash income generation. Most of the vegetables are sold at Gokwe centre, where there is a market.

Some women travel more than 90km from their homes to Gokwe centre to sell their produce. They spend about four or five days selling their produce and return home with cash income of between USD17 and USD21 per month, for a household of 8-11 people. On average the household survives on USD1 per day, so in a month there is a deficit of at least USD7. However it also has to be considered that during their stay at the growth
point, whilst selling their produce they spent a few dollars for their own survival. The following photograph is of a tomato crop from the gardens.

*Figure 11: Tomato Crop from Nutritional Garden in Gokwe District (Musevenzi, May 2010)*

Cooperatives and food aid were ranked as external interventions by NGOs and development agencies. Cooperatives involving vulnerable beneficiaries were formed for projects like crop production, community gardens, small livestock projects and conservation farming. They were considered important as they contributed to the survival of the very poor who had no livelihood assets.

Contract labour, weaving and gathering wild fruit were ranked very low because they happened at low levels and were carried out mainly by women. Wild fruits identified in the district were largely masau and baobab fruit, which are largely seasonal. These fruits are consumed in their natural state when they are ripe and can also be prepared for a drink or porridge for children. These livelihood activities were undertaken by the very poor who had no stake in agricultural production.

During the study it emerged that most of livelihood activities were linked to specific tribes in the district. The Derukas (immigrants) dominated crop production whilst local tribes (Shangwe and Tongas) were largely engaged in less conventional agricultural activities and other non-farm livelihood activities such as poaching, hunting, fishing and harvesting wild fruit. Derukas were considered to have superior conventional agricultural skills, access to inputs and experience compared to local tribes. The Tongas are largely
engaged in winter river bed crop production, but the yield is limited. The Shangwe and the Tonga have been dependent on wildlife hunting since the colonial period, and this is one of the reasons the government decided in 1980 to promote the migration of people from other provinces – to encourage increased conventional agriculture and one national identity. Nyambara’s (1999) study on the creation of the master farmer identity and the poor primitive farmer identity shows that it was government policy in the 1980s to offer incentives to immigrants in commercial cotton production in Gokwe, which was sparsely populated before this policy. It was believed that their advanced skills in conventional agriculture would ‘trickle down’ to the local Shangwe and Tonga people and improve conventional agriculture in the area. Beach and Ranger (1989) similarly found rural identities taking a more tribal and ethnic dimension after being reconstructed and promoted by colonial governments. Although the colonial government did not invent tribal groups in Zimbabwe, it prevented the development of a national integrated identity and that is why multiple identities take a tribal and ethnic nature today.

5.1.1.1 Trends in Rural Livelihood Activities in Gokwe
A timeline analysis conducted in groups of 8-15 participants revealed various factors that affected and influenced changing livelihood activities during the period under study. The table below is a summary of the timeline analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crop Production</td>
<td>Limited crop production</td>
<td>Droughts, Shortage of inputs, Increased political violence</td>
<td>Poor Crop output</td>
<td>Slight improvement in crop output</td>
<td>Relative stability and supply of inputs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock Rearing</td>
<td>Population went down</td>
<td>Droughts, Increased marketing, Increased disease outbreaks</td>
<td>Reduced number of livestock per household</td>
<td>Political Violence, Increased dependence on Livestock</td>
<td>Slight increase in number of livestock per household</td>
<td>Relative Stability and peace, Food availability in the country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife Poaching</td>
<td>Very Limited</td>
<td>Dependence on crop production, Livestock production was viable</td>
<td>Sharply increased</td>
<td>Severe Food shortages, Increased political violence, property seizure</td>
<td>Sharp decrease</td>
<td>Food assistance, political stability, Increased food imports from neighbouring countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperatives</td>
<td>Started increasing</td>
<td>More NGOs came into the country, Zimbabwe was getting hungry after fast track land reform</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Rural people needed assistance, Government failure to support rural people, Agricultural production declined, Increased political violence</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Need for supporting vulnerable people in rural areas, Economy not fully recovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritional Gardens</td>
<td>Started Increasing</td>
<td>Donor support increasing, Need for diversification of livelihood options</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>An emerging source of rural livelihood, Cash income generation</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Cash income generation, Sustainability of the activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving</td>
<td>Limited and was optional</td>
<td>There was no local market</td>
<td>Increasing</td>
<td>Diversity rural livelihoods</td>
<td>Declining</td>
<td>Limited market for the products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Aid</td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>Rural people managed to depend on own livelihood though limited</td>
<td>Sharp increase</td>
<td>Food shortages, Increased political violence and displaced people, Crop production failure</td>
<td>Dominant</td>
<td>Slow economic recovery and crop production, Food insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract Labour</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Cotton commercial farmers were still available</td>
<td>Sharp decrease</td>
<td>Cotton farmers relocated to other districts, Increased political violence</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>No contract work, Low agricultural, Dollarization affected rural economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild Fruits</td>
<td>Very limited and optional</td>
<td>People had access to food and other sources</td>
<td>Sharp increase</td>
<td>Food shortages, Commercialization</td>
<td>Reduced</td>
<td>Agricultural production picking up</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table shows that the level of dependence on each of the livelihood activities changes during the three periods discussed. People turned to each of the livelihood activities depending on opportunities readily available. Crop production was adversely affected by droughts, shortages of agricultural inputs and increased political violence. Political violence forced rural people, particularly youths and the mostly economically active, to spend more time campaigning, mostly for ZANU-PF party and its members. This left most households with less time for livelihood activities. As a result, agricultural production in 2007, 2008 and 2009 was adversely affected.

During the same period small grain crops such as sorghum, groundnuts, rapoko and cowpeas did better than cotton and maize as they are more drought-resistant and require less labour than cotton and maize. Evidence from the table shows that crop output for major crops such as cotton and maize declined compared to minority or small grain crops.

Livestock populations declined for a number of reasons. Firstly, tick-borne diseases were on the rise as dip tanks became dysfunctional. The livestock study by Scoones et al (2006) confirms this, describing a breakdown of the livestock disease control system due to uncontrolled movement of livestock as a result of the FTLRP as people began transporting their livestock into disease-free areas without following disease control procedures. Increasing food shortages and fear of livestock diseases increased livestock exchange for food and cash. Second, droughts contributed to reduced livestock population because of severe water shortages and limited pastures. Delgado (1999) similarly found that frequent droughts and uncontrolled livestock diseases led to high cattle mortality in most semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe. Third, political violence added to the decline in livestock because youth militias, mostly from ZANU-PF, forcibly took livestock and food for consumption in their political camps during the 2008 elections.

From 2006, crop failure, severe food shortages and political violence led to an increase in wildlife poaching. Information from group discussions in a timeline analysis showed that rural people turned to wildlife poaching as a desperate survival strategy. Its popularity as a livelihood activity declined after the GPA of February 2009 although it is arguable that the political stalemate continued even under the GPA.
Income generating projects, food security, and small livestock projects increased during the period under study in the district, courtesy of various NGOs and the government separately and together. The government conducted a number of community livelihood projects to counter projects by NGOs. Data gathered shows that most NGOs did not want to support rural communities through the government structures for fear of political abuse of the assistance. The government distributed food procured from China and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). This food was distributed through local government structures and local traditional leadership. Contract labour, on the other hand, decreased, partly as a result of the removal of white commercial farmers from their farms in prime areas of Gokwe and partly because competent cotton farmers in semi-arid areas who provided contract work relocated to neighbouring prime land districts during the FTLRP.

5.1.2 Rural Livelihoods in Mwenezi District
Fieldwork in Mwenezi generated similar findings to Gokwe, though with slight variations in the prioritisation of the livelihood activities. Gold panning and selling of wares and products were ranked relatively high after livestock and crop farming. Cash and food remittances from migrant household members working in South Africa and Botswana emerged as a new and developing livelihood activity in the district. The following table is a summary of the activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crop farming</th>
<th>Projects</th>
<th>Selling Wares</th>
<th>Contract Farming</th>
<th>Donor Aid</th>
<th>Livestock</th>
<th>Remittances</th>
<th>Gold Panning</th>
<th>Fishing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Crop Farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Contract Farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Contract Farming</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Contract Farming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Livestock Production</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>projects</td>
<td>Selling wares</td>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>Remittances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>projects</td>
<td>Selling wares</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Selling Wares</td>
<td>Contract Farming</td>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Order of Prioritised Livelihood Activities by Community Participants

1) Crop farming (16 mentions)
2) Livestock production (14 mentions)
3) Projects (12 mentions)
4) Selling wares (10 mentions)
5) Gold panning (7 mentions)
6) Donor aid (6 mentions)
7) Contract farming (4 mentions)
8) Remittances (2 mentions)
9) Fishing (0 mentions)

The pair wise ranking shows that crop farming is the most important livelihood activity in Mwenezi. The most grown crops are cotton, maize, sorghum, millet, and rapoko, round nuts, cowpeas, sunflower and groundnuts. Information gathered from provincial and district officials shows that Mwenezi is ranked the sixth highest cotton producing district in Zimbabwe.

Study findings show that crop farming is gendered. Women participants indicated that because of their culture, all household arable land is family land that belongs to their husbands. Women do not have the right to decide what crops to produce. Rather, it is the decision of the husband to allocate a piece of land to his wife each year to produce crops of her choice. Women in the district produce mostly so-called ‘soft crops’ such as round nuts, groundnuts, cowpeas, sunflower, rapoko and vegetables, whilst men focus more on cotton, maize, sorghum and millet, which are cash crops. This tallies with Maghadam’s (2005) study on the gendered nature of poverty as the number of female-headed households’ increases. But the study findings show that even in male-headed households where both spouses are living access to resources is also gendered.

Although crop production has remained the most preferred and important livelihood activity in the past ten years, it suffered in the face of drought, agricultural input shortages and political violence. As people failed to cope with the socio-economic and political challenges affecting the country, they started engaging in various local livelihood initiatives such as gold panning and wood carvings for survival. Maponga and Ngorima (2003), studying small-scale mining in Zimbabwe, found that the poor in marginalised areas
engage in extraction of near surface mineral deposits for survival, especially when crop production declines. The following illustration shows a poor maize crop in the eastern part of Mwenezi. Despite crop production challenges, rural people in the district continued to plant crops as the major livelihood activity.

*Figure 12: Poor Maize Crop in Mwenezi District (Musevenzi, May 2010)*

Common livestock identified in the district are cattle, pigs, donkeys, goats and rural chickens. According to the district officials, Mwenezi is one of the best livestock producing districts in Zimbabwe because the area is free of livestock diseases such as foot and mouth and is tsetse fly free unless transmitted from other areas. The vegetation, particularly acacia and mopane trees, and soils are suitable for livestock production. Statistics from the Department of Livestock show that the district has an estimated maximum livestock population of 360,000 cattle, excluding donkeys and small livestock.

However, due to declining agricultural production, most rural people sold off their livestock or bartered livestock for maize meal or other livelihood goods brought from neighbouring countries as a survival strategy. Increased exchange of livestock for cash or goods was a direct response to the external adverse shocks that affected rural livelihoods, particularly food shortages, crop production failure due to drought, and the non-availability of agricultural inputs. As a result some vulnerable households completely sold off all their cattle for survival but did not get out of the vulnerability trap.

Projects or external interventions focusing on vegetable gardening, commercialisation of non-timber forest products, dam rehabilitation, irrigation schemes, vocational skills training, food distribution, crop production technologies and conservation farming among others were ranked third. Evidence shows increased external support from the
government and NGOs separately as a livelihood development strategy during the period under study. Fourth and fifth ranked respectively are the selling of wares and gold panning whilst donor aid was ranked sixth. Participants distinguished between aid as food handouts on the one hand from developmental projects that were long-term livelihood activities on the other. Information from plenary discussions shows that rural people sell various products such as wood carvings, vegetables and soft stone products along the Masvingo-Beitbridge highway.

Most of these non-farm livelihood activities were ranked low as people started gold panning in local major rivers for survival. These livelihood activities were dominated by young men, boys and young women. As time went by, older women who were economically active also joined in. However, though more people opted for gold and diamond panning they were not guaranteed quick returns. Other people opted for wood carvings, soft stone carving, fishing, and enterprise development. Fishing from dams and rivers in Mwenezi also increased. Fish is sold to middlemen who resell in towns and cities. These were some of the means of cash income generation for rural people in Mwenezi.

A significant proportion of participants indicated that cash and food remittances from labour migrants in neighbouring countries were an important source of income in Mwenezi. Berkvens' (1997) study in rural Zimbabwe similarly found that most smallholder farmers diversify through rural to urban migration or to neighbouring countries. Although remittances are ranked the least important income source in Mwenezi, information gathered shows that hundreds of people in Mwenezi are dependent on remittances from migrant labour. But some households do not count them as household livelihood activities by absentee household members.

Plenary discussions revealed that some households whose members are migrants did not benefit from remittances. This shows that having migrant household members does not guarantee remittances. Bryceson (1999) and Manyani (2010) found that migrant labour leads to de-agrarianisation and this is worse if there are no remittances coming the way of the household. Most women participants agreed that it was better if their husbands and sons were at home helping the family to survive rather than migrating to neighbouring countries to look for work, especially if they sent no money back.
Contract farming was first introduced by the government through the Cotton Company of Zimbabwe (Cottco) to promote cotton production. Contract farming enables poor farmers to access cotton inputs easily but this has to be paid back to the supplying company in the form of cotton. It has been an important strategy for introducing new cotton farmers to the sector and at the same time enabling new smallholder farmers to adopt cotton production for cash income generation.

Data from Cottco officials shows that this is a government approach to improving rural livelihoods in semi-arid marginalised areas. With contract farming the smallholder farmer invests his labour whilst inputs are provided by Cottco. After deduction of the cost of inputs in the form of cotton the smallholder farmer takes the profit. Contract farming was adopted by other private cotton companies. Due to competition for smallholder farmer clients by cotton companies, contract agreements require farmers to sell their cotton exclusively to the company that supplied their inputs.

5.1.2.1 Trend Analysis of Livelihood Activities in Mwenezi District
The following trend analysis table shows the analysis of each of the livelihood activities using the timeline participatory analysis tool. The trend analysis illustrates how rural people in the district are vulnerable to various shocks and trends specific to Mwenezi and in general.
Table 4: Livelihood timeline analysis in Mwenezi District (Source: Participatory methods)

<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crop production</td>
<td>Crop failure</td>
<td>-Floods -Droughts -Input shortages</td>
<td>-Poor crop -Increased cotton production</td>
<td>-Limited rainfall, political violence -Input shortages -New crop and contract farming</td>
<td>-Poor crop output -Cotton declined</td>
<td>-Limited rainfall -Shortages of agric inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock rearing</td>
<td>-High livestock population</td>
<td>-Good pastures because of more rainfall</td>
<td>Reduced livestock population</td>
<td>- Severe food shortages -Drought and livestock deaths -Increased selling of livestock -Political violence</td>
<td>Slightly improved</td>
<td>-Good rains received -Food availability -Coalition Government -Political stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>Increasing number of projects</td>
<td>-Crop failure and increasing food shortages -Hunger</td>
<td>Dominant in rural areas</td>
<td>-Increased poverty -Destruction of water sources and infrastructure -Increased political violence</td>
<td>Dominant in rural areas</td>
<td>-Capacity building of youths for livelihood improvement -Limited water sources for livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling wares and vegetables</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>-Livestock rearing was dominant</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>-Increased interventions on nutritional gardening -Increased production of wood and soft stone carvings</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>-Increased nutritional gardening -Dollarization and return of tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold &amp; diamond panning</td>
<td>Slow start to gold panning</td>
<td>-Floods enabled the process</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>-Discovery of diamonds in Chiadzwa</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-Increased tight security by state security on mining points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donor Aid</td>
<td>Started trickling in</td>
<td>-Fast track land reform effects -Food shortages -Poor crop output</td>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>-Political violence -Internally displaced people -Food shortages</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>-Crop failure during the previous seasons -Food shortages in rural areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract farming</td>
<td>Introduced in the district</td>
<td>-Increasing cotton production -New cotton farmers potential to produce more cotton</td>
<td>Increased</td>
<td>-Promotion of cotton production</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-Low cotton production in the country -Food security crop promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remittances</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>-Few people had crossed to borders to neighbouring countries</td>
<td>-Increased</td>
<td>-More people had crossed the borders</td>
<td>-Increased</td>
<td>-More people in neighbouring countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>More water and floods</td>
<td>-Increased</td>
<td>-Fishing enterprises establishment</td>
<td>-Reduced</td>
<td>Unavailability of fishing equipment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The timeline analysis shows some differences between Mwenezi and Gokwe in the factors that influenced changing rural livelihood activities. However, major constraints to crop production such as limited rainfall, shortages of agricultural inputs and political violence were common to both. Unlike Gokwe, Mwenezi was affected by floods in 2001, 2002 and 2003. The trend in Mwenezi district shows that crop production declined in terms of output but smallholder farmers continued engaging in this livelihood activity. Muchara (2010), studying the same district, also found that despite crop failure after the FTLRP, smallholder farmers kept their faith in crop production.

The crop trend analysis indicates that cotton and small grains production increased during the first years of the period under study but cotton declined during the second half of the period. Interviews with district officials revealed that rural development interventions by the government and NGOs contributed to increased small grains production for food security. At the same time the government promoted contract farming in cotton.

The timeline analysis shows that livestock population declined sharply after the FTLRP due to the collapse of livestock disease control mechanisms and floods that destroyed most small dams that provided drinking water to livestock in the district. This corroborates with findings by Scoones (2006) in Mwenezi on how the impact of the FTLRP led to a decline of livestock populations as prior to the FTLRP livestock was not allowed to be transported from one district or province to another without clearance as a mechanism to control disease transmission. Although the timeline analysis data does not show actual statistics on livestock the information tallies with data from the Livestock Department indicating the livestock population went from 360 000 to about 175 000 in the district between 2004 and 2009.

Interventions by both the government and NGOs increased as a response to severe shocks and adverse trends such as food shortages, crop failure, political violence, droughts and floods, and loss of livestock and other livelihood assets. Selling of wares, donor aid and remittances also increased during the period under study as people wanted to increase livelihood portfolios to reduce risks and be resilient. The external support also includes remittances by migrant labourers in neighbouring countries.
5.1.3 Rural Livelihoods in Muzarabani District

Muzarabani district is in general no different although the range of livelihood activities shows a wider array of opportunities. Livelihood ranking order in Muzarabani district shows that crop production and livestock rearing are the leading livelihood activities. Information gathered from community participants showed that rural people are also largely dependent on natural resources such as wild fruit and fish, which are abundantly available in the district.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Crop farming</th>
<th>Livestock production</th>
<th>Contract labour</th>
<th>Fishing</th>
<th>Food aid</th>
<th>Wild fruits &amp; products</th>
<th>Nutritional gardens</th>
<th>Gold panning</th>
<th>Buying &amp; Selling</th>
<th>Stealing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Livestock production</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruit</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
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<td>Fishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Food aid</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruit</td>
<td>Food aid</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Food aid</td>
<td>Food aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruit</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruits</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling fruits</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruits</td>
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<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruits</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nutritional gardens and projects</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Food aid</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruit</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Nutritional gardens &amp; projects</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruit</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Buying and selling</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Contract labour</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Food aid</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruit</td>
<td>Nutritional gardens</td>
<td>Gold Panning</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>Crop farming</td>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>Food aid</td>
<td>Harvesting &amp; selling wild fruit</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>Gold panning</td>
<td>Stealing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Order of Prioritised Livelihood Activities by Community Participants

1) Crop farming (18 mentions)
2) Livestock (16 mentions)
3) Fishing (14 mentions)
4) Wild fruits (12 mentions)
5) Gold panning (8 mentions)
6) Contract labour (6 mentions)
7) Theft (6 mentions)
8) Food aid (6 mentions)
9) Nutritional gardening (2 mentions)
10) Buying and selling (none)

Discussions revealed that diversified crop production focused on two major crops: cotton for cash income, and maize for food security. Small grains such as sorghum; ground nuts; round nuts; rapoko; millet; watermelons and pumpkins were secondary crops that supplement maize and cotton. Despite increased focus on maize production, small grains do well in the district’s climate. Due to perennial floods in areas along the Zambezi River crop production is not consistent. This has worsened the vulnerability of people in these areas along Africa’s fourth largest river.

Similar to the other two districts livestock is the second most important livelihood source in this district. Statistical information gathered from the Department of Veterinary Services shows that Muzarabani had the smallest livestock population, estimated at about 126 000 head of cattle during the period under study. However, the district carrying capacity is estimated at 150 000 cattle. This semi-arid district has perennial diseases such as foot and mouth, tick-borne and tsetse fly diseases but they are easily controlled if the livestock population is kept within its prescribed range. It is also because the area inhabited by rural communities in the district is small, as areas along the Zambezi River are mostly wildlife areas. Derman (2003:19) similarly shows that Muzarabani lost livestock not only to diseases but also to the FTLRP as smallholder farmers were relocated to other districts such as Mazowe for prime land agriculture. In this regard livestock diseases were exported out of the district as opposed to Mwenezi, where they were imported.
Interviews with district officials show that in colonial times, livestock production was limited to a maximum of five head of cattle per household; however this was unofficially loosened after independence in 1980, when the regulation limiting the number of livestock per household was no longer enforced, although it has not been repealed to date. The findings show that livestock production had been increasing freely since 1980, but the area meant for livestock forage and production remained limited. As a result, over the past 30 years of majority rule smallholder farmers increased their livestock unchecked, leading to overcrowding and overgrazing. Despite this increase in livestock population, livestock declined during the period under study, as indicated earlier.

PRA participants indicated that they invested in livestock rearing as an important alternative livelihood activity to crop production, despite the decline. Delgado (1989) also found that crop-livestock integration is one diversification strategy used in conjunction with other non-farm activities. During the period of food crisis they sold off livestock for cash income for other livelihood activities. This enabled smallholder farmers to largely depend on livestock in the short term for survival without replacing the sold-off assets. Efforts to avoid livestock losses to diseases because of the unavailability of pharmaceuticals became a priority, rather than maintaining the herds. As a result cattle were sold off at a rate faster than they regenerated.

Fishing as a non-farm activity was ranked the third most important livelihood activity in Muzarabani. As food shortages worsened, particularly in 2008, branching from agriculture into fishing increased. Bryceson (1999) and Manyani (2010) both argued that the poor performance of agriculture led to increased branching out into non-farm activities, although they did not detail the types of activities. These findings therefore consolidate their position and complement their findings by examining the actual activities smallholder farmers branched into. The proximity of rural communities to the fourth largest river in Africa increased the scale of illegal fishing, which was happening at a low level prior to the period under study. The fish is dried in salt to preserve it for marketing. Fishing generated a reasonably good income for those who branched out into it because there was a ready market. Study findings indicated that income generated was used for food security by purchasing maize. Middlemen buyers travel from small and large towns including Harare to buy fish for reselling in urban areas. Some of the fish was bartered for maize for immediate survival as a strategy.
Findings from the livelihood profiling exercise show that fishing is dominated by people who do not own livestock and those who perform poorly in conventional agriculture. Similar to poaching in Gokwe district, fishing in Muzarabani district is not organised and is also considered a poaching activity as it is illegal without a permit. PRA participants indicated that since there was little to no enforcement of the act along the rivers because of the remoteness of the area, fishing became a thriving livelihood activity. However, fishing is risky. Many fishermen have been attacked and killed by wildlife such as lions, elephants, buffalos, hippos and crocodiles whilst fishing and when travelling to and from fishing. Statistics from the police showed that during 2009, there were 47 reported cases of people losing their lives to lions alone whilst travelling to and from fishing. Similarly 48 people were lost to crocodiles and hippos whilst fishing in major rivers, and these statistics are only for the reported cases.

Data shows that old lions that no longer have the energy to hunt other wild animals usually attack human beings, who are easy to eat as they lose their teeth with age. However, community participants indicated that the threats associated with fishing do not deter poor people from engaging in this livelihood activity as a survival strategy.

Wild fruits and their products were ranked the fifth most important livelihood activity in Muzarabani during the past decade, specifically baobab, ilala and ziziphus mauritiana (masau). The market for these wild products is very active in Zimbabwe and that is why they were ranked relatively high among the livelihood activities in the district. The ziziphus trees are wild but over the years they have been domesticated because people benefit from them. Information from the plenary discussions shows that every household harvests fruit from trees within its household boundary to avoid conflict. Most of these trees are now increasingly domesticated for rural livelihood purposes.

Masau fruit can be consumed whilst fresh as well as when dried. Middlemen buyers from urban areas buy the fruit in bulk at low prices and sell them in urban areas at higher prices. PRA participants indicated that this is more cost-effective for them as they do not want the costs associated with transporting the fruit to urban areas.
Baobab fruit is also consumed directly, and the pulp can be cooked as sour porridge with the addition of a little maize meal. The fruit is used for both local consumption and for sale. The commercialisation of baobab pulp for porridge and the seed for cosmetic oils, as well as using masau fruit to make jam and drying it in strips, has added value to the wild fruit and increased the number of people surviving on harvesting wild fruit. Data from both interviews and participatory methods shows that most of the poor who engage in harvesting fruit for marketing are women and children.

The findings also show that *ilala* (thatch) is mainly harvested by men and used for doormat production and for rural hut roofing purposes. Rural District Council officials indicated that the market for *ilala* is viable but its harvesting is considered unsustainable. As a result *ilala* plants were declared an endangered species in the district, with harvesting being controlled by the Forestry Commission Department. As rural people prioritise survival ahead of sustainable harvesting of *ilala* plants they continue harvesting unsustainably without following procedures and limits set by the department. Harvesting of these fruits and plants was a traditional practice but in the past decade it was intensified as people tried to maximise the benefits for survival.

The rest of the livelihood activities listed are ranked middle or low priority activities such as gold panning (fifth), contract labour (sixth), theft (seventh), food aid (eighth), vegetable gardening (ninth) and buying and selling (tenth). All these livelihood activities are considered important for rural people in the district. Information gathered shows that some of the livelihood activities are external interventions introduced by NGOs and the government during the period under study. Activities such as nutritional gardening, food aid distribution and small grain production targeted most poor smallholder farmers and the sick.

Some of the minor livelihood activities such as contract labour, theft and gold panning are initiatives by poor people in an endeavour to survive. Discussions indicated that theft, though not legally appropriate and good for the rural community, increased during election periods. Some of the rural people, particularly youths, resorted to property theft as a desperate and quick means for survival. Property theft targeted livestock, both large and small, household goods and agricultural products. Stolen livestock is either sold or slaughtered for meat that is sold on to unsuspecting butcheries. Gaidzanwa (1994) found
that as smallholder farmers branched out of agriculture they engaged in petty income activities such as selling small items like sweets and fruit in urban areas. She argues that de-agrarianisation reflects rural impoverishment that forces people to engage in any opportunity, legal or not.

Gold panning, according to information gathered from both interviews and participatory methods, has increased during the past decade. This livelihood activity was dominated by young boys and girls as well as economically active men and women. The findings show that there are no gold deposits in Muzarabani, but people travel long distances to neighbouring districts such as upper Guruve, upper Mt Darwin and Shamva, where gold deposits are found. People can stay in gold panning areas for up to three months and after a good harvest and a good sale they return back home to focus on crop farming until time allows them to go back. Generated income is used mainly for purchasing agricultural inputs and payment of school fees. Magorimbo (2003) also found that in rural Zimbabwe income generated from non-farm activities is invested in agricultural activities, showing a relationship between agricultural production and non-farm activities. He concludes that the linkages between agricultural production and non-farm activities are strong enough for them to be seen as inseparable although they are considered two different forms of livelihood activities, and this study confirms that finding.

5.1.3.1 Livelihood Timeline Analysis in Muzarabani District
The time line analysis shows the trend that most rural households in the selected ward are annually affected by floods and crop production is very limited, indicating their high level of vulnerability.
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Crop farming          | Low production | -Fast track land reform programme  
|-Political violence and elections  
|-Drought and floods | Crop failure | -Agric inputs shortages  
|-Increased political violence  
|-Drought and floods | Slight crop output improvement | -Govt and donor support in crop production  
|-Good rainfall received  
|-Political stability due to coalition government |
| Livestock rearing     | High population | -Limited food was still available  
|-Floods produced good pastures | Population decline | -FTLRP relocation  
|-Tick-borne & tsetse fly diseases  
|-Selling of livestock  
|-Political violence and property theft | Slight increase in population | -Reduced marketing  
|-Political stability  
|-Increased food aid, development interventions |
| Fishing               | Limited | -Voluntary  
|-Extra livelihood activity | Increased | -Food shortages  
|-Crop failure | Increased | -Food shortages  
|-Need for cash income  
|-Dollarisation of the economy |
| Wild fruits           | Fair harvesting | -Cash income and local consumption | Increased harvesting | -Commercialisation of the fruit  
|-Increased food shortages, crop failure | Increased | -Need for cash income  
|-Dollarisation of the economy  
|-Available in the communities |
| Gold panning          | Very low | Not a livelihood activity | Increasing | -Food shortages  
|-Crop production failure  
|-Political violence | High | -Cash income generation  
|-Dollarisation of the economy |
| Contract labour       | Very high | -Presence of cotton commercial farmers  
|-Viable cotton ginning centre | Low | -Land reform programme effects  
|-Decreasing cotton production  
|-Crop failure | Very low | -Reduced cotton production  
|-Absence of commercial farmers |
| Stealing              | Very low | -People still had other livelihood options in crop production | Very high | -Hunger  
|-Political violence  
|-Reduced contract labour | Very high | -Dollarisation of the economy  
|-Increasing livestock population |
| Food aid              | Introduced | -Effects of the FTLRP  
|-Crop failure and political violence | Very High | -Severe food shortages  
|-Crop failure, political violence and property theft, floods and drought | Very high | -Food shortages  
|-Failing economy |
| Nutritional gardening | Introduced | -For diversifying rural livelihoods  
|-Crop failure | Increasing | -Food shortages  
|-Crop failure, floods and drought | Very high | -Dollarisation of the economy |
| Buying and selling    | Very low | -People had other options of survival | Increasing | -Food shortages, crop failure | Very high | -Dollarisation of the economy |
The decline in agricultural production forced smallholder farmers to branch out into non-farming activities such as increased food aid, vegetable gardening, gold panning, theft, fishing and increased wild fruit harvesting.

Livestock population declined from an estimated 139,000 cattle to between 112,000 and 115,000 head during the period under study. Smallholder farmers were forced into livestock exchange for maize and cash by severe food shortages, livestock diseases and increased political violence, in which livestock was taken away forcibly for slaughtering by ZANU-PF youth militias. People desperately sold their livestock for survival and to avoid losses to disease.

Prior to the period under study fishing existed as an extra livelihood activity, but it increased during the period due to crop failure, food shortages and reduced availability of contract work in the district. Similarly, gold panning, buying and selling, wild fruit harvesting and theft increased as rural people became increasingly vulnerable to shocks and trends of food shortages and political violence. Trend analysis findings show that some farm and non-farm livelihood activities such as food aid and nutritional gardening were externally induced by NGOs in an endeavour to diversify and improve rural livelihoods of poor smallholder farmers. However, some of the non-farm activities are own initiatives by vulnerable smallholder farmers.

5.1.4 Consolidated Rural Livelihood Challenges
Livelihood timeline analysis findings show an array of challenges faced by smallholder farmers in semi-arid areas. Some are common and others are specific to each of the study areas. Common challenges are linked to semi-arid climatic conditions and the remoteness of communities. As indicated in earlier chapters the study areas are prone to periodic droughts, high temperatures averaging 38%, and low rainfall levels averaging between 250mm and 400mm in all study areas.

Women participants indicated that they had challenges in accessing safe drinking water, and most had to travel long distances to rivers to fetch it, spending much of their time on this task. Although there are a few boreholes in some communities, some are quite far away; others are not functional due to breakdowns and shortages of spare parts.
Efforts to market local agricultural products such as vegetables are hampered by poorly developed markets in all the study areas. The available markets do not absorb all fresh agricultural produce from nearby communities. As a result cash income generation from vegetable gardens is limited. Poor roads and scarcity of transport to and from urban areas – where there are markets, agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, seeds and pesticides, and important administrative and other services – were challenges common to all study areas. Smallholder farmers travel long distances on foot to the nearest points to find transport. These challenges have affected the trends in livelihood activities in all study areas. Evans and Ngau (1991) also found that the unavailability of social services such as road infrastructure and markets was a constraint to livelihood diversification for smallholder households.

Social service centres were identified as poorly developed or even unavailable in some communities. There were not enough schools in all study areas. Primary education is inaccessible for many children due to the remoteness of the areas, and services such as clinics and other government agencies such as veterinary offices and Livestock Department are as inaccessible. Smallholder farmers with livestock indicated that dip tanks are insufficient despite the declining number of livestock. For people living with HIV and AIDS shortages of clinics meant health services are inaccessible. For people on anti-retroviral therapy the distances are just prohibitive for monthly collections.

Due to the limited number of schools in semi-arid areas the teacher/student ratio – which, according to the District Education officials, is supposed to be one teacher per 35 students – is at one teacher per 60 students. During the period under study both primary and secondary education were adversely affected by increased political violence that forced all teachers out of their schools. The government failed to provide replacements and this created teacher shortages in most rural communities in the country.

Crop production due to droughts and floods resulted in continued food shortages and poverty among rural people increased. This was further worsened by political violence during the election years of the decade. Due to high unemployment and food shortages, youths were recruited into violent militias, according to information gathered from NGOs. This led to the destruction of property and people were force-marched to attend numerous rallies, thus neglecting their productive livelihood activities. The findings show that
violence by youth militias targeted the rural rich. Their assets were taken away by the militias and they were accused of having acquired the assets through financial support from the then opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

Inevitably, development interventions by NGOs were also threatened by the local traditional leadership and the youth militias aligned to ZANU-PF. Due to political contestations in rural communities between ZANU-PF and the MDC, relations between rural people were polarised and social networks collapsed. Rural communities became politically charged environments and engaging in livelihood activities became constrained. Some NGOs failed to carry out their interventions, particularly food aid, and the food crisis worsened. For smallholder farmers with livestock the challenge of livestock diseases increased as dipping services were no longer provided by the government. Fear of losing livestock to diseases caused people to sell off some of their livestock, and this in turn threatened their asset holdings. Data gathered from NGOs shows that most of these challenges faced by people in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe prompted NGOs to provide interventions in such communities to avert hunger and severe poverty.

5.1.5 Consolidated Rural Livelihood Trends in Semi-Arid Districts of Zimbabwe

The overall findings on rural livelihood activities from the three study areas show that crop production and livestock rearing were the dominant livelihood activities during the period under study. The commonly grown crops are cotton, maize, sorghum, cowpeas, millet, rapoko and groundnuts, with watermelons and pumpkins among other supplementary crops. However of all the crops cotton and maize production trended downwards during the period under study.

As maize and cotton production declined, small grain and vegetable gardening increased. Smallholder farmers fell back on livestock for survival through increased selling, milk production and meat for household consumption. For smallholder farmers with livestock, it became a source of survival during periods of adverse shocks and trends as indicated in timeline analysis findings.

All study areas are conducive for livestock production as indicated by high populations of both small and large livestock such as goats, sheep, chickens and donkeys. However, in Gokwe and Muzarabani livestock is prone to diseases and populations declined as the government failed to provide dipping chemicals to rural areas. The findings show that after
the signing of the GPA it took about a year before a slight livestock population increase was seen in all areas as dipping chemicals slowly found their way back into the country after the introduction of dollarization, or the multi-currency economy.

In Mwenezi, both small and large livestock populations decreased due to persistent droughts that were peculiar to the district. Animals were sold for cash and also bartered for maize grain. Selling of livestock in all study areas became a lucrative business for middlemen buyers from urban areas during the period of severe food shortages, particularly in 2007, 2008 and 2009. During these years a single goat was exchanged for 12kg of maize meal, and a cow or ox was exchanged for 50-250kg depending on its size and the district. Findings from all study areas show that barter of livestock had market value calculations based on visual estimations and there were no hard and fast rules for it in any of the districts during the period of food scarcity. Households with small herds sold all their livestock for survival and were left with no assets, increasing their vulnerability. Sibanda (2005) points out that livestock rearing generates income under normal conditions due to urban demand for livestock products. Moyo and Nengomasha (2007) concur, and highlight the role that goats play in augmenting cash income and enhancing food security.

During the decade under study the country held national elections four times – in 2000, 2002, 2005 and harmonised elections in 2008, where presidential, parliamentary and local council elections were conducted at the same time. These elections were associated with political violence that led to illegal seizure of property in all semi-arid areas. This contributed to a decline in livestock population.

The findings also show that all study areas benefited from government and donor interventions, though different terms were used to refer to projects and food aid as external interventions. These interventions targeted the poor and vulnerable groups in each district to increase livelihood diversification, in both farm and non-farm activities. Small grain production, vegetable gardening, open pollinated seed varieties, agricultural input distribution, agricultural mechanisation support, vocational skills training, irrigation schemes, small dam rehabilitation, commercialisation of non-timber forest products, establishment of community based enterprises and food aid have been introduced in
semi-arid districts since the year 2003, just after the FTLRP. However, the number of beneficiary households varies according to each study area.

Commercialisation of mopane worms is found largely in Mwenezi district. Although mopane worms are found in Gokwe there is no commercialisation of the product there. Mopane worm harvesting and processing for income generation became one of the non-farm activities where rural people were trained in sustainable harvesting, processing and marketing. Harvesting the worms for local consumption is a traditional activity but it was not seen as an important livelihood activity until commercialisation.

The commercialisation of mopane worms during the past decade saw an increased number of people engaged in the harvesting. This resulted in privatisation of mopane trees. Interviews with Mwenezi Rural District Council officials revealed that, as a local authority, they now control the way this local resource is marketed to middlemen, who in turn sell to regional and international markets. As a result of the commercialisation, the local authority passed local bylaws to regulate the harvesting and marketing of the local products as they are the custodians of all communally owned resources.

In all study areas the role of natural resources, especially non-timber forest products, became more noticeable during periods of food shortages, particularly the period 2003-2009. Considerable income is generated from various commercialised products such as baobab pulp and oil, marula jam and oil, mopane worms and masau jam. Income is used to purchase maize grain and other basic goods for food security and rural livelihoods.

Findings show that for years, forests have provided people in semi-arid districts with food, medicine and fibre as well as income from various products, but it was observed that the introduction of commercialisation made non-timber forest products important sources of livelihood during the past decade as the socio-economic and political situation in the country became unstable. As in Mwenezi, masau was put under regulation in Muzarabani by the local authority in an endeavour to also benefit from the local communally owned resources.

Parinari fruit is dominant in Gokwe district and can be boiled to eat as porridge, or roasted for eating as nuts or for grinding into a paste resembling peanut butter. Parinari fruit is also
directly consumed when ripe, but is poisonous if wrongly consumed. This wild fruit was not commercialised in any of the study areas although there is evidence of its commercialisation in other districts not covered by this study. Among other fruits indicated as important for rural livelihoods (although fruit harvesting is ranked low in Gokwe) are mangoes, guavas, bananas and tomatoes, and these are sold along the major road into Gokwe for cash income generation.

Neumann (1996) points out that the extraction of non-timber forest products is a common feature in geographically and economically marginalised rural communities where alternatives are limited and the outlay is low. PRA participants confirmed that extraction of non-timber forest products during the period under study provided a continuing source of livelihood in the form of food and nutrition, as well as non-farm income at a time of periodic crop failure. Perez (2001:203) also noted that in an agricultural economy, non-timber forest products constituted a small part of overall food consumption and income generation, and findings from the field showed that for some specific households’ non-timber forest products constituted a substantial part of household food consumption as well as a source of income.

The endowment of dry communities with natural resources or non-timber forest products played a role in the establishment of community based enterprises for the processing of natural products in study areas. Data gathered from NGOs indicated that rehabilitation of small dams was an intervention specific to Mwenezi because of limited water sources whilst rehabilitation of irrigation schemes took place in both Muzarabani and Mwenezi. The same districts also benefited from vocational skills training centres established for training youths in skills such as building, welding, carpentry and dressmaking. Based on these prioritised livelihood activities, rural people were able to diversify their livelihood portfolios in a politically charged environment. Although contract labour is not a new livelihood activity in all study areas, it declined during the period under study along with a decline in commercial agricultural production after the FTLRP.

Fishing increased in all study areas in major rivers in these areas due to limited control by the Department of Wildlife Management, especially in Muzarabani with its proximity to the Zambezi River. Gold panning emerged as a growing livelihood activity in both Muzarabani and Mwenezi. In Gokwe gold panning does take place but was not listed as an important
livelihood activity. Poaching was more pronounced in Gokwe and Muzarabani because of the proximity of wildlife reserve areas. Theft emerged as a surprising livelihood strategy, ranked at the middle level in Muzarabani, where it was discussed as a desperate livelihood by unemployed youths. However, theft also took place in all study areas although it was not openly discussed in the other two. As contract workers were made redundant in a sharp decline in contract work in all study areas after the FTLRP, they engaged in political violence in an endeavour to forcibly take property from people in their respective communities.

Although gold panning increased in all study areas, it quickly declined as the government took over all small gold mines and Chiadzwa diamond mine using military force. As a result rural poor people risked their lives to continue panning. This shows that this livelihood diversification was a desperate measure for survival.

5.2 Rural Livelihood Interventions
Using Venn diagram analysis with community participants in small groups of 8-15 people during participatory methods, government departments, NGOs and the private sector working in all study areas were listed and ranked based on the number and size of interventions they carried out in each district. The same method also gathered information on the types of interventions, the category of target beneficiaries and the selection criteria. Information gathered through interviews mostly generated data on the specific interventions and the statistics of the number of people benefiting from each of the interventions. The combination of data collected from these two methods provided a reliable picture of rural livelihood development interventions in all the study areas. Government departments intervened in all districts whilst development organisations are different in each of the districts. The number of development organisations varies depending on the type of interventions in each district.

5.2.1 Development Interventions in Gokwe District
Using Venn diagram analysis during participatory methods, people in the district identified government departments, NGOs and private companies as major players in rural development in Gokwe. These government departments and NGOs were ranked based on their interventions and the number of people they benefited. This information was corroborated with statistics gathered from interviews and secondary data sources. The
Venn diagram below is a graphic representation of the importance of each organisation in supporting the rural communities under study in Gokwe.

Figure 13: Venn Diagram Analysis graphics. Source: Participatory Venn diagram information
Table 7: Government Interventions in Gokwe (Source: District Administration Statistical records)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Interventions</th>
<th>Number of Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Agricultural input distribution, agricultural equipment mechanisation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rural District Council</td>
<td>Dip tank development, marketing of agricultural and non-agricultural products, basic services provision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 District Development Fund</td>
<td>Road construction and maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Department of Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock breeding and management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation</td>
<td>Dam construction, and borehole provision</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources</td>
<td>Protection of environment and natural resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Department of Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Protection of wildlife</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development</td>
<td>Community projects for women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Ministry of Youth Development and Indigenisation</td>
<td>Community projects for youths</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Hospitals and health provision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Schools and education provision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Department of Social Welfare</td>
<td>Protection of orphans</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Department of Veterinary Services</td>
<td>Livestock disease control and prevention</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Agricultural Extension Technical and Services</td>
<td>Agricultural technical services and production</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Interventions</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Administration Statistical records
The Venn diagram shows that government departments provided limited rural development interventions in Gokwe district. The small size and long distance of the circles representing government departments from the community of focus show that smallholder farmers do not value the government support. Smallholder farmers indicated that before 2000 the government provided most of the services indicated in the table but in the decade under examination this changed to very limited or no support at all. The Ministry of Agriculture was singled out for the distribution of agricultural inputs to very poor people, but the inputs were said to be inadequate.

The Grain Marketing Board was hailed for distributing maize grain and other cereals to vulnerable rural people during periods of severe food shortages. Data gathered from government officials attributed shortcomings in government support to sanctions imposed on the country by Western donor countries. As a result rural infrastructure rehabilitation and construction was crippled because of very old and obsolete equipment. Procurement of new equipment and its financing from Europe was hampered by sanctions. As a result the government failed to play its role in providing development interventions to its own people.

However, the government informants claimed that despite the sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe, the government's 'Look East' policy has produced the desired results for adequate interventions in rural development. Most of the government inputs to support rural people are from Asian countries, particularly China, and as a result the government has adequately supported rural interventions. Despite these government claims, community participants maintained that government departments are not visible in rural areas, nor are they adequately supporting rural people in development programmes. As a result most government departments were ranked least important compared to NGOs and private companies supporting cotton production.
Table 8: Private Sector Interventions in Cotton Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Interventions</th>
<th>Number of Interventions</th>
<th>Total households reached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Company of Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1. Contract buying</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Input distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Cotton ginning services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cargill Cotton</td>
<td>1. Input distribution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphacs</td>
<td>1. Free cotton buying</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Input distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orlam Cotton</td>
<td>1. Free cotton buying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alliance Cotton</td>
<td>1. Input distribution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Contract buying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dynamics</td>
<td>1. Free cotton buying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Cotton Companies Statistical records

The table supports the data gathered in the PRA exercise. The Venn diagram shows the circles representing the cotton companies as closer to the communities they support and bigger than those representing government departments. The private sectors are largely cotton companies supporting cotton production through the provision of inputs to farmers on a contract basis. Cotton contract farming guarantees smallholder farmers the market for their product. This has enabled smallholder farmers to generate cash income for rural livelihoods.

Community participants indicated that cotton companies are visible in rural communities in the district. A total of six cotton companies were listed and ranked. Cottco was ranked the most supportive cotton company in the district, and this information was triangulated with interviews and statistics from secondary sources. It supports 3 467 households through contract farming. Cargill was ranked second in terms of reach, supporting about 2 112 farmers in the district. Graphacs and Orlam were ranked third and fourth respectively as late comers in contract farming. Dynamics and Alliance are cotton buyers that offer competitive prices compared to contracting companies.
Table 9: NGOs and interventions in Gokwe District (Source: NGO records)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Type of intervention</th>
<th>No. of interventions</th>
<th>No. of households benefiting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Concern World Wide International</td>
<td>Conservation farming, small livestock distribution, input distribution</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small grains production, vegetable gardens, cotton basket, HIV and AIDS support and food distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 German Agro-Action</td>
<td>Conservation farming, small grains production, general input distribution</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Water points rehabilitation and food distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Merlin</td>
<td>Input distribution, water and sanitation, food distribution</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and small grains production</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Christian Care</td>
<td>Small livestock distribution, food distribution, input distribution</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation farming, water and sanitation, HIV and AIDS support programmes, Small grains production and educational support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 CADEC</td>
<td>Water and sanitation support, income generating projects</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Input distribution, small livestock support</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nutritional gardens and food distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Population Services Zimbabwe</td>
<td>HIV and AIDS testing and clinical services</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 MSF</td>
<td>Clinical services and HIV and AIDS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Fachig</td>
<td>Food distribution and conservation farming</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Venn diagram analysis placed the circles representing NGOs larger and closer to the community than the government or private sector, indicating that NGO interventions were more important and consistent in the PRA participants’ lives than the other two. Further analysis of the eight different NGOs identified and their interventions in Gokwe revealed that Concern World Wide (CWW) was ranked the most important and closest organisation to poor people in the district. PRA participants indicated that CWW covered all 48 wards in the district and provided eight different interventions. Participatory data shows that CWW supports 3664 households in all its interventions.

CWW officials indicated that their largest interventions with most beneficiaries are conservation farming, agricultural input support, vegetable gardening and food distribution. These interventions are aimed at developing smallholder farmers’ resilience to shocks. A total of 30 lead farmers in conservation farming were trained to in turn train other beneficiary farmers in conservation farming technologies. Conservation farming is a less expensive technique for crop production in semi-arid areas. It advocates zero tillage where only planting holes are dug to retain moisture and nutrients around the specific plants.

Conservation technologies are used for maize, sorghum, groundnuts, and cowpeas, sunflower and, more recently, cotton. Interviews with NGO officials indicate that the technology has improved crop output by about 50%. Secondary source statistics show that, on average, maize crop output before the introduction of conservation farming was about 0.7 tons or 7 x 50kg bags of maize per hectare. After conservation farming crop output increased to about 1.2 tons of maize per hectare.

The organisation supported the rural poor with small livestock such as chickens, goats, pigs and rabbits. It also distributed cash to beneficiary households to buy small livestock of their choice. Statistics show that this intervention benefited 1339 households directly. Its general input distribution programme targeted both the very poor and capable as well as successful smallholder farmers to increase crop production and reduce food shortages.

Smallholder farmers were given 10kg of maize seed, 25kg of top dressing fertiliser, 50kg of basal fertiliser, and 2kg each of small grain seed such as cowpeas, sorghum, millet,
round nuts and sunflower. The NGO established 35 vegetable gardens in six wards, benefiting 580 households. Vegetable gardening was observed during field visits and cabbages, tomatoes, carrots, butternuts, onions, okra, beans, peas, cucumbers and cauliflower were being grown. The produce is meant for both household consumption and cash income generation.

CWW also supported a cotton intervention to promote cotton production among young smallholder farmers without assets to use as collateral for contract farming. The support targets particularly newly married households. These smallholder farmers became free cotton farmers who could access their own inputs and sell their cotton to cotton companies of their choice. Due to the contract farming system, cotton inputs were very scarce on the open market and free cotton farmers were few. The support benefited a total of 765 households (396 male-headed and 364 female-headed households) in the district.

CWW’s general food distribution programme targets the vulnerable during periods of severe food deficit. Beneficiary households receive food hampers, mainly of maize meal, rice and oil. The programme has benefited a total of 2 138 households for four years. Lastly its HIV and AIDS programme targeted people living with HIV and children orphaned by HIV-related deaths. The HIV and AIDS package is a mixture of projects such as vegetable gardening, hampers of nutritional food, herbal gardens, small livestock, and school fees and uniforms for school-going orphans.

Christian Care International was ranked the second most supportive NGO in the district. It has eight interventions, with six of them similar to those of CWW. Its water and sanitation programme and educational support programme are specific to long-term development. The water and sanitation programme provides safe and clean water to rural people through drilling and rehabilitation of boreholes. Statistics from secondary sources indicate that a total of 26 boreholes were drilled in the district, benefiting a total of 36 000 households. The organisation built 350 Blair VIP (ventilated improved pit) toilets benefiting 350 households in the district. Payment of school fees for vulnerable children and orphans has put 712 children through primary and secondary school, who have since progressed to tertiary education for human capital development, according to interviews with staff at the NGO.
CADEC was ranked the third most supportive organisation in Gokwe. It has six different interventions targeting 1,988 households. It has built Blair VIP toilets, boreholes, established vegetable gardens, distributed small livestock and supported income generating projects such as dressmaking clubs, pottery clubs and burial societies. German Agro Action was ranked fourth with five interventions similar to the ones mentioned above such as conservation farming, general input distribution, water point rehabilitation, and small grains support and food distribution. It contributes to the livelihoods of 1,902 beneficiary households in the district. Merlin was ranked fifth with four intervention programmes benefiting 1,717 households.

Population Services Zimbabwe has two interventions focusing on HIV and AIDS and reproductive health as well as clinical services. Medicines San Frontiers (MSF) offer similar support services whilst Fachig supports conservation farming and food distribution only, targeting about 700 households in the district. Participatory findings indicate that Population Services Zimbabwe and MSF have individually based interventions rather than household-based.

5.2.2 Development Interventions in Muzarabani District
As in Gokwe, the Venn diagram analysis in Muzarabani ranked government departments very low, as indicated by their size and the distance between them and the communities they support. Nine NGOs were ranked as offering the most effective support and six cotton companies were ranked second after NGOs. Generally interventions from the three categories of organisations focus on agricultural promotion and production.
Figure 14: Venn diagram Analysis graphics. Source: Participatory Venn diagram information
Table 10: Government Interventions in Muzarabani District (Source: District Administration Statistical records)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Interventions</th>
<th>Number of Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>Agricultural input distribution, agricultural equipment mechanisation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rural District Council</td>
<td>Dip tank development, marketing of agricultural and non-agricultural products, basic services provision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 District Development Fund</td>
<td>Road construction and maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Department of Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock breeding and management</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Grain Marketing Board</td>
<td>Inputs distribution and food marking at low prices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources</td>
<td>Protection of environment and natural resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Department of Parks and Wildlife</td>
<td>Protection of wildlife</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development</td>
<td>Community projects for women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Ministry of Youth Development and Indigenisation</td>
<td>Community projects for youths</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Hospitals and health provision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Schools and education provision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Forestry Commission</td>
<td>Protection of trees</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Department of Veterinary Services</td>
<td>Livestock disease control and prevention</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Agricultural Extension Technical and Services</td>
<td>Agricultural technical services and production</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Government departments identified are the Rural District Council, the Wildlife Department, District Development Fund, Grain Marketing Board, Health Department, Livestock Department, Environmental Management Agency and Forestry Commission.

Government officials argue that the FTLRP improved rural development for people who were moved from semi-arid areas to prime land in neighbouring districts, and that state agricultural input distribution schemes benefited smallholder farmers with improved agricultural production. However, data gathered from community participants shows that although government support is there it is not consistent and is highly selective as it is not adequate to cover a substantial number of farmers. These findings show that the government supported rural people but, in their eyes, not nearly enough.
Table 11: Cotton Production interventions in Muzarabani District (Source: Cotton companies’ statistics and participatory methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Organisation</th>
<th>Type of Interventions</th>
<th>Number of Interventions</th>
<th>Number of Total Reach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Cargill Cotton</td>
<td>1. Input distribution 2. Contract buying</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Graphacs</td>
<td>1. Free cotton buying 2. Input distribution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Orlam Cotton</td>
<td>1. Free cotton buying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Alliance Cotton</td>
<td>1. Input distribution 2. Contract buying</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Dynamics</td>
<td>2. Free cotton buying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13 864</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again, Cottco is the leading cotton company in the district, supporting smallholder farmers through contract farming and ginning services. This has created employment for more than 800 contract employees at the ginning point. It supports 3,573 households.

Cargill, the cotton company ranked second in the district, distributes cotton inputs and buys all cotton from its 3,124 contracted farmers at a fixed price. It has established temporary depots in the district where farmers can deliver their cotton. This reduces the distance travelled by farmers to the point of market. Graphacs supports 2,103 farmers, Orlam1 901, Alliance 1,843 and Dynamics Cotton1 320 and this gives a total of 12,000 smallholder household farmers benefiting from cotton contract farming in Muzarabani. The cotton companies were ranked higher than the government because they have distribution and collection points at ward level, close to the people. The government has all its services at the growth point or district centre and people have to travel long distances for the services, including input distribution. The following photograph shows farmers taking cotton to the nearby cotton market at the ward level provided by cotton companies.

*Figure 15: Smallholder farmers taking cotton to the market in Muzarabani (Musevenzi September 2010)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>No. of Interventions</th>
<th>No. of beneficiary households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Vision Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Water and sanitation support, general agricultural inputs distribution, small grains promotion, HIV and AIDS programme, food distribution, educational support, nutritional gardening</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3 421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian care</td>
<td>Water and sanitation, general input distribution, food distribution, HIV and AIDS support programme, educational support, small livestock distribution, nutritional gardening</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2 993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save the Children Norway</td>
<td>Food distribution, children’s rights, educational support, small livestock distribution</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFIRE</td>
<td>Small grains promotion, commercialisation of non-timber forest products, crop pest control</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Sustainable Livelihoods</td>
<td>General input distribution, reproductive health, nutritional gardening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeDHA</td>
<td>Food distribution and water and sanitation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Relief Services</td>
<td>Food distribution, general input distribution, water and sanitation, educational support and HIV and AIDS support</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2 564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Promotion of small grains production and input distribution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LED</td>
<td>Vocational skills training and open pollinated seed varieties promotion, Nutritional gardening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>16 850</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Venn diagram analysis shows that Muzarabani has nine NGOs providing development assistance. The NGOs were ranked based on the number of their interventions. Interviews with NGO officials reflected corresponding statistics. World Vision Zimbabwe was ranked the most supportive, with seven interventions benefiting 2,129 households. The organisation provides agricultural input support, particularly with maize, sorghum, pearl millet, cowpeas, groundnuts and rapoko. Each household receives 10kg of maize seed, 5kg of cowpeas and 2kg of sorghum, millet and rapoko each in an agricultural cropping season over five years. Unlike Gokwe there is no need for fertiliser support because the soil is rich.

World Vision Zimbabwe’s food distribution benefits both vulnerable people and the better-off, although the programme was aimed at the vulnerable and the very poor. The better-off benefited by avoiding their fall into the food insecurity and vulnerability trap. Statistics from World Vision show that food distribution helps 2,998 households including those benefiting from other interventions. Out of 32 wards in the district 19 wards benefit from World Vision interventions. Its small grain production intervention initially supported 600 farmers in 2003 but by the end of 2007 the number of smallholder farmer beneficiaries had increased to 2,119. Farmers adopted the small grains support largely focusing on white Macia sorghum for food security. Production also increased among smallholder farmers during the period under study.

The organisation also rehabilitated 63 boreholes for safe drinking water and built 137 Blair VIP toilets. Information from interviews also shows that 123 orphans receive support in the form of schools fees and monthly food rations. It has trained 35 community home-based caregivers to provide support such as bringing anti-retroviral drugs and food to patients living with HIV in the community. These interventions are at the ward level and this makes the services close to the target beneficiaries.

Christian Care was ranked the second most supportive NGO in Muzarabani, supporting 2,993 households and working in eleven wards. It provides general input support and small livestock and food distribution, which are popular interventions. Information from plenary discussions shows that water and sanitation intervention is popular among rural women, who have benefited from borehole drilling and rehabilitation of safe drinking water points.
Catholic Relief Services (CRS) was ranked third. It provides similar interventions to World Vision and Christian Care, working in eight wards in the district. Interviews with CRS officials show that they support 2,564 households with five interventions. FAO was ranked fourth with two interventions reaching 1,122 households and focusing mainly on small grains promotion for food security. It provided sorghum, cowpeas and groundnuts to smallholder farmers for a four-year period from 2006. Save the Children Norway was ranked fifth with four interventions and working in four wards. It provides food and small livestock to 1,121 households with orphans and vulnerable children as well as educational support.

International Sustainable Livelihoods was ranked sixth, supporting 1,010 households with three interventions. It supports the general input distribution and vegetable gardens. It has established 23 vegetable gardens in the six wards not covered by World Vision and Christian Care. PRA participants indicated that the organisation provides construction material for the communal vegetable gardens, drip irrigation equipment and seeds.

Southern Alliance for Indigenous Resources (SAFIRE), Liechtenstein Development Service (LED) and Methodist Development Relief Agency (MeDRA) were the last three NGOs. SAFIRE introduced the commercialisation of non-timber forestry products such as baobab and masau fruit and *ilala* products. It established nine community-based enterprises for baobab and masau products. SAFIRE provides production technologies such as oil presses and hydraulic machines for baobab and marula oil production and dehulling machines for separating baobab pulp from seeds. It also promotes the production of small grains, particularly sorghum, for food security. These two interventions benefit 910 households in four wards.

LED supported vegetable gardening, open pollinated seed varieties and a vocational skills training centre focusing on carpentry, dressmaking, welding and building in Muzarabani. From the training centre a total of 898 students were trained for human capital development. The open pollinated seed varieties intervention benefits 687 farmers who are now certified seed producers for the variety. These are organically produced maize varieties that require less rainfall than modern maize seeds. MeDRA supports 612
households through food distribution, targeting orphans and vulnerable children in three wards.

There is evidence of complementary roles in NGO interventions in the district as wards are shared amongst intervening NGOs. Most NGOs provide similar support but in different wards and targeting different groups of people. Based on the type and number of interventions and the number of beneficiary households, NGOs are even more highly ranked in Muzarabani compared to cotton companies and government departments than in Gokwe.

5.2.3 Development Interventions in Mwenezi District

Venn diagram analysis in Mwenezi revealed that Mwenezi has the largest number of development interventions of the three districts. Eleven NGOs working in 43 wards of the district were identified. Again, the government was ranked the lowest and the cotton private sector second to NGOs. Community ranking of individual NGOs was not easy as community participants disagreed on the interventions they considered most important to rural livelihoods. However, the results corroborated with statistics collected from the Rural District Council. The table following the Venn diagram lists and prioritises the various interventions.

*Figure 16: Venn diagram analysis graphics
Source: Participatory methods*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Number of Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Ministry of Agriculture</td>
<td>FTLRP, Agricultural input distribution, agricultural equipment mechanisation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Rural District Council</td>
<td>Dip tank development, marketing of agricultural and non-agricultural products, basic services provision</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Water and Irrigation Department</td>
<td>Irrigation schemes, small dams construction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Department of Livestock</td>
<td>Livestock breeding and management</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Grain Marketing Board</td>
<td>Inputs distribution and food marketing at low prices and market for products</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources</td>
<td>Protection of environment and natural resources</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development</td>
<td>Community projects for women and clubs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Ministry of Health</td>
<td>Hospitals and health provision</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Schools and education provision</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 District Development Fund</td>
<td>Road construction and maintenance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Department of Veterinary Services</td>
<td>Livestock disease control and prevention</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Agricultural Extension Technical and Services</td>
<td>Agricultural technical services and production</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above ranks government departments and their interventions using participatory methods. The Ministry of Agriculture is the most important because of the FTLRP, agricultural input distribution and food distribution to the vulnerable groups in Mwenezi. The Rural District Council is the second most important for development programmes such as the construction of dip tanks, provision of markets for local products, its control of the livestock market and its important role in the distribution of agricultural inputs and food to the vulnerable groups in Mwenezi during periods of food scarcity.

The Department of Water and Irrigation Development, with NGO support, has rehabilitated water points in the district. The Engineering Department provided the earth-moving equipment used by the Mwenezi Development Trust with funding from LED to rehabilitate small dams. However; despite this support, PRA participants maintained that government departments do not function well or provide enough development support to their areas. While the government position remains positive about its interventions, some officials admitted that for the past decade the government has made no meaningful intervention in agricultural or infrastructure development due to limited financial resources and staff, as most staff left for employment elsewhere. As a result government interventions were of limited importance to rural people.

Table 14: Cotton Production interventions in Mwenezi District (Source: Cotton companies statistical records and participatory methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Number of Interventions</th>
<th>Households Reached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cotton Company of Zimbabwe</td>
<td>1. Contract buying</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Input distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cargill Cotton</td>
<td>1. Input distribution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Contract buying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Graphacs</td>
<td>1. Free cotton Buying</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Input distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Orlam Cotton</td>
<td>1. Free Cotton buying</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Input distribution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4 349</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four private companies support smallholder farmers with inputs through contract farming. However, statistics show that the number of smallholder farmers benefiting is very low compared to other districts. Although cotton production in the district has been increasing since the FTLRP, the climate is not conducive to consistent cotton production with its dry
spells. Cotton companies are not aiming to increase the number of contractors, preferring to work with smallholder farmers experienced in cotton production. In cotton producing areas such as Maranda, Mazetese and Dinhe cotton output is affected by erratic rainfall that can be as low as 250mm per annum, with average temperatures ranging between 35 and 37 degrees Celsius, according to the Agricultural Extension Department. These findings corroborate with findings by Muchara (2010) and Manganga (2009). Muchara (2010) argues that climate change has contributed to the decline in cotton production as rainfall patterns are no longer predictable and temperatures are rising.

Cottco leads through its contract farming with 1,731 mostly new farmers, despite scepticism over its support for them. However, Mwenezi district has no cotton ginning services as Gokwe and Muzarabani do. The nearest ginning centre is in the neighbouring Chiredzi district. Cottco has marketing points in Mwenezi and transports the cotton at no expense to the contracted farmer. Cargill, ranked second, supports 1,114 farmers, and is followed by Graphacs with 903 and lastly Orlam Cotton with 601 farmers.
Table 15: NGOs intervention in Mwenezi District (Source: NGO statistical records and participatory methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>No. of Interventions</th>
<th>No. of households Reached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Care Zimbabwe International</td>
<td>General input distribution, conservation farming, vegetable gardening, food distribution, small livestock distribution, HIV and AIDS support, commercialisation of non-timber forestry products, water and sanitation, educational support and small grains support</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6 789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Christian Care International</td>
<td>Conservation farming, vegetable gardening, general input distribution, HIV and AIDS programmes, food distribution, water and sanitation, small livestock support and educational support</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4 753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Red Cross Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Food distribution, general input support, HIV and AIDS support, small livestock, educational support, vegetable gardening and small grains support</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5 820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mwenezi Development and Training Centre</td>
<td>Small livestock support, small dams rehabilitation, vegetable gardening, Open pollinated seed varieties, irrigation rehabilitation and support, Small grains support, input support, vocational skills training, Enterprise development, water and sanitation and income generation projects</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7 393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Plan International</td>
<td>Educational support, food distribution, HIV and AIDS support, and infrastructure development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>LED</td>
<td>Irrigation schemes rehabilitation, small dams rehabilitation and vegetable gardening</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>SAFIRE</td>
<td>Small grains promotion, non-timber forest products commercialisation, Irrigation schemes rehabilitation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Heifer International</td>
<td>Large and small livestock support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lead Trust</td>
<td>Seed multiplication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CAMFED</td>
<td>Educational support and sexual and reproductive health</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>CADEC</td>
<td>Food distribution and educational support, small grains support and small livestock support</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27173</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Venn diagram exercise identified eleven NGOs operating in the district. Mwenezi Development and Training Centre (MDTC), with external donor support, was ranked the most supportive. It supports 7,393 households with eleven interventions across all 32 wards in the district. The organisation supports agricultural improvement and production interventions such as vegetable gardens; general input distribution, water and sanitation, small grains promotion and income generating projects such as chicken production. The most notable long term development projects are small dam and irrigation rehabilitation and crop production support, open pollinated crop varieties, community-based enterprise development; vocational skills training and construction and rehabilitation of social services infrastructure. MDTC also distributed small livestock, largely goats, to female- and child-headed households and other very poor households in the district. It has established 83 community vegetable gardens for both consumption and cash income generation.

Interviews with officials revealed that MDTC rehabilitated nine small dams that were destroyed by floods in 2001. Participatory findings show that the rehabilitation of small dams revived a number of livelihood activities that depend on water such as vegetable gardens, brick moulding, keeping livestock, and construction of houses and social services infrastructure, as in the case of Chemvana dam, which in turn enabled the construction of Chemvana secondary school and rehabilitation of the primary school.

The rehabilitation of irrigation schemes increased both irrigation and dry land crop production support. Out of six irrigation schemes in the district, two were rehabilitated at different levels, namely Dinhe and Murove, which benefit 917 households directly and countless people indirectly. Night water storage dams, in-field canals, clearance of arable land, installation of both diesel-powered and electric pumps; and the erection of perimeter fencing around the irrigation schemes enabled crop production to start.

A Vocational Skills Training Centre was observed in which trainees are trained in dressmaking, carpentry, building, and welding. The director of the training centre indicated that a total of 3,317 graduates have been trained in various skills since its establishment in 2002. The establishment of community-based enterprises – two in carpentry, one in dressmaking and two in fisheries – are therefore attributed to vocational skills training. The
entrepreneurs were also trained in business management, enabling them to generate cash income through self-employment.

Care International Zimbabwe was ranked the second most supportive NGO in Mwenezi with ten interventions. It also works in all wards of the district and its programmes benefit 6 789 households. Areas of intervention are general input distribution, conservation farming, vegetable gardening, food distribution, small livestock distribution, commercialisation of non-timber forest products, small grains production support, HIV and AIDS support and support for primary education.

Under input distribution, smallholder farmers benefit from basal and top dressing fertilisers, 10kg of maize seed per household and small grains seed such as sorghum, cowpeas, pearl millet, and sunflower. Conservation farming focuses on most crops in the district. Care Zimbabwe International partnered with SAFIRE for the commercialisation of non-timber forest products focusing on marula products, mopane worms and, to a lesser extent, baobab products.

Red Cross Zimbabwe was ranked third and its food distribution programme is the most popular as well as its support to people living with HIV and AIDS. Operating in ten wards it supports 5 820 households with seven interventions. Smallholder farmers benefit from 100kg of both basal and top dressing fertiliser per household. They also benefit from 10kg of maize seed, 5kg of sorghum and 4kg of cowpeas for food security. Christian Care, the fourth ranked NGO, supports 4 753 households. Christian Care is the only NGO operating in all three study areas. The fifth ranked is Plan International with a focus on educational infrastructure development, educational support, vocational skills training and child protection support. It has built 29 classroom blocks and 14 blocks of Blair VIP toilets in the district for different primary schools. PRA participants indicated that its target group is vulnerable children. It pays school fees, mostly at the primary level, and intends to support secondary education as well.

Ranked sixth is SAFIRE, supporting 1 565 households. Secondary data from the NGO shows that it supports small grain production and commercialisation of non-timber forest products. It also partnered with LED to rehabilitate an irrigation scheme in the district. Other NGOs – LED, Heifer International, Lead Trust and CAMFED – were ranked low but
their interventions are different in nature. Heifer International is the only NGO supporting smallholder farmers with large livestock, specifically cattle. It supports rural people with an improved cattle breed for milk production. It has supported 367 households over a period of four years in the district since 2005. Most beneficiaries were trained in livestock husbandry to reduce death rates.

The Lead Trust promotes crop seed multiplication to ensure that smallholder farmers produce their own seed for various crops to reduce costs of purchasing the seed. The intervention benefited 3490 households over six years. CAMFED focuses on educational support for girls, who are considered to be educationally disadvantaged for cultural reasons. According to community participants, it supports girls with school fees and uniforms and sexual and reproductive health education to reduce sexual abuse of young girls in rural communities.

5.2.4 Consolidated Livelihood Development Interventions in Semi-Arid Districts of Zimbabwe

Generally government support in all semi-arid areas is limited due to financial and human resource constraints. The number of NGOs providing development support in semi-arid areas is high, and they focus on both farm and non-farm livelihood support. Most interventions by different NGOs in all study areas are similar, with the largest component being agricultural support. The following paragraphs detail the findings on each of the specific interventions.

5.2.4.1 Small Grain Production

Small grain production is a general intervention in all study areas aimed at food security in response to the decline of maize production. As indicated by Manyani (2010) the impact of persistent drought in the study period influenced a shift from maize to small grain production in Gwanda. This is also found in all study areas of this study, although with the difference that the production is externally induced. Small grain crops grown are sorghum, millet, rapoko, cowpeas, groundnuts, sunflowers and open pollinated varieties of maize that are more drought and heat resistant. The Department of Agricultural Extension Services indicated that the promotion of small grain varieties aimed to cushion smallholder farmers during drought years. However, the government has no financial support for the programme and this is the gap taken over by NGOs.
NGOs conducted research in semi-arid areas aimed at ascertaining appropriate crop varieties that would guarantee food security in these areas. The findings show that with technical support from the Department of Agricultural Extension Services, NGOs have introduced and promoted increased production of small grains for food security at the expense of cotton and maize since 2003. This became a reversal of a vigorous promotion of maize production in semi-arid areas undertaken since 1980, which did not take into account the unsuitability of maize varieties in agro-ecological region four and have thus created food shortages over the long term since independence, according to interviews with the Agricultural Extension Services Department. Findings from NGO officials show that based on their study on food security the food deficit in most semi-arid areas over the years was worsened by the government’s focus on increased cotton production as a cash crop at the expense of cereal crops.

Although the NGO study recommended an increased focus on small grains, the same study indicated that switching people from maize to small grain production was a challenge as smallholder farmers believe in maize production as a staple and food security crop for livelihoods. Berkvens (1997) also found that smallholder farmers in rural Zimbabwe stuck to maize production as a cultural activity that they are used to. Despite efforts to promote small grain production NGOs were also sceptical about the success associated with its production.
Findings show that after five years of small grain intervention, each beneficiary household produced an average of 21 bags of white Macia sorghum for consumption. Based on World Food Programme calculations of 10kg of maize meal per person per month, such a harvest provides food security for a household of seven people for nine months, leaving a deficit of three months in a year. Sorghum production in all study areas was promoted under conservation farming. Its production has also been increasing since 2003 with a household producing a minimum of 1, 5 tons per hectare. It was found out that before the intervention sorghum production levels were very low because not all smallholder farmers produced the crop. For those who produced it the average production was 0, 7 tons per hectare. The intervention increased small grain output by 60-100%.

Evidence shows that conservation farming technology has increased crop output in all study areas. The output of groundnuts and cowpeas increased from 0, 2 tons per hectare to 0, 8. The table below shows increased land under small grain cultivation in Muzarabani district compared to land under maize.

**Table 16: Small Grain Production Hectarage: The Ten-Year Trend in Muzarabani District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Season</th>
<th>Hectares Under Sorghum</th>
<th>Hectares Under Cowpeas</th>
<th>Hectares under maize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-2002</td>
<td>Below 200</td>
<td>Below 100</td>
<td>Above 18 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>19 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>16 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>1 300</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>14 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>14 151</td>
<td>1 200</td>
<td>10 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>11 954</td>
<td>1 500</td>
<td>7 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>20 000</td>
<td>2 083</td>
<td>5 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The increase in sorghum and cowpea production is attributed to small grain production advocacy by NGOs and increased free distribution of inputs. The increased number of hectares under small grains also indicates an increase in the number of households taking up small grain production to improve their food security as a strategy against the uncertainties of maize production. The findings also show that NGOs mostly distributed more small grain inputs compared to maize in all study areas. This is reflected by a sharp increase of hectarage in 2008 due to drought predicted in 2007 and political violence that affected the distribution of some of the inputs. Based on calculations for an average household of six people, 300kg of sorghum could last for about six months and for about
four months for a household of eight people if it is consumed daily with no major alternatives.

Community level findings show that, although there is an increase in small grain production, the harvesting and processing of small grains – particularly sorghum, millet and cowpeas – is very labour intensive and only households with economically active age groups performed better in terms of increased yield. This indicates that vulnerable groups such as widows, the elderly and orphans or child-headed households face challenges harvesting and processing small grains. These households gradually went back to maize production despite its limited output.

5.2.4.2 Small Grains Market
Despite an increase in small grain production, particularly white sorghum, the most promoted crop does not have a well developed market in Zimbabwe. Although small grains were meant for food security, people’s consumption levels of the product are very low in all study areas. The crop was widely adopted, but it has not filled the food security gap left by maize production. Rural people failed to consume small grains on a daily basis, and as a result people remained with large stocks of white sorghum that could not be sustainably consumed. The option of selling the surplus for cash was not available as there was no market for it.

The failure of sorghum exposed the weaknesses of the recommendations of the food security research reports by NGOs in relation to consumption and marketing suitability. The effort put into the promotion of small grains did not equal the benefits, in other words it has not reduced food insecurity. The large reserves of white sorghum observed in semi-arid rural communities show that it was an ill-advised intervention that missed its intended objective. Small grains have failed to meet the requirements for improving rural livelihoods in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe, despite their increased production.

5.2.4.3 Conservation Farming
Conservation farming technologies are meant to improve crop output under very limited rainfall conditions. The technology significantly improved maize production in some parts of Gokwe and Muzarabani districts with relatively more fertile soils during the 2006 agricultural season. In Gokwe statistics from Concern World Wide shows that by the end of 2008, 948 poor farmers were trained and practising conservation farming.
The number of conservation farmers increased significantly in all study areas and on average the use of conservation farming in maize production produced a total yield of 0.5 tons of maize per hectare. This is corroborated by Gwimbi’s (2003) findings that crop production technologies coupled with the production of appropriate crops increases crop output in Gokwe. This is evidenced in the three study areas. Conservation farming increased maize output from 0.2 tons per hectare – enough to feed six people for about four months – in some parts of Gokwe and Muzarabani to 0.5 tons per hectare. This shows that some agricultural interventions changed crop output for the better during the period under study.

Free input distribution has improved crop output for food security at no cost to smallholder farmers for the past six years. Findings from interviews show that although poor smallholder farmers are still food insecure, their livelihoods did in fact slightly improve due to free inputs compared to the period before external support. Interviews with conservation farming experts from different NGOs reveal that applying a 50kg bag of ammonium nitrate to a 0.4 hectare plot using conservation farming would yield a maximum of 3 tons per year if it is correctly timed. This is a remarkable improvement in output compared to conventional cropping, which yields 1.3 tons with the application of the same amount of fertiliser on the same size plot.

Findings from interviews show that conservation farming technology is important for soil nutrition and moisture retention, both important for increased crop output. However, community participants indicated that despite output increases the technology is labour intensive, particularly in digging and weeding, and is more suitable for households with economically active people who could provide the labour. The technology may not be best suited to vulnerable households with limited labour.

5.2.4.4 General agricultural input distribution
General input distribution is a common intervention in all study areas. It is important that the seeds reach farmers in time for early cropping as the amount of rainfall is so limited. Farmers in all study areas received inputs for a period of seven years from after the FTLRP. Generally most smallholder beneficiary households received 50kg of top dressing fertiliser, 25-40kg of compound D fertiliser, 5-10kg of maize seed, 5kg of white Macia sorghum, 5kg of cowpeas, 5kg of groundnuts and 2.5kg of sugar beans, as well as two hoes per household from both the government and NGOs.
NGOs targeted capable farmers who were trained as lead farmers to assist poor farmers in various crop production technologies. The farmers selected for the general input scheme are different from farmers selected for conservation farming although both groups receive free inputs. Conservation farmers were selected based on their access to manual labour because it is labour intensive whilst farmers for general inputs are all vulnerable poor people targeted for conventional dry land agriculture. Input distribution increased after a drought year and after severe floods, particularly the period 2000-2004.

Although agricultural support interventions like input distribution were intensified in all study areas, the much expected food security improvement was limited due to difficult climatic conditions, particularly in Mwenezi, where there were floods from 2000 to 2004 followed by dry spells from 2006 to 2009. Input support from the government and NGOs was evident but production remained very low and people stayed poor. Similar challenges were experienced in Muzarabani and as a rural population they remain dependent on donors for food aid as some of the long-term interventions have not produced the desired results. It was found that, on average, a household in Mwenezi district has 11-14 members compared to the other two study areas, which average eight.

5.2.4.5 Interventions on Open Pollinated Varieties
This is a common intervention in Mwenezi and Muzarabani districts. It is a component of small grain production but with a different focus. A total of 196 lead farmers were trained in both districts and provided with open pollinated varieties of seed such as maize, Macia sorghum, pearl millet and cassava. The seed varieties are produced organically and organic manure is used instead of basal fertilisers. Crops are harvested before they are completely dry (about 16% moisture retention). The seed is not removed from the cob and traditional medicinal plants are used for protecting the seed from borer beetles. This has strengthened the use of indigenous knowledge systems at local level for improved agricultural production.

This intervention ensures that poor farmers are able to produce cereals for own household consumption and food security. Farmers were provided with 1kg of small grains per household and during the first season a farmer harvested an average of 300kg of small grains, mainly sorghum, which can be consumed as either thick porridge or as sorghum drink.
Under this intervention smallholder beneficiaries managed to produce a seed bank that was adequate for 1,565 farmers during the 2006-2007 agricultural seasons in both districts. This intervention focused mainly on crop diversification and seed production at the local level as a prerequisite for food security at a time when the economic crisis was severe and agricultural inputs were not available. During the 2008-2009 agricultural seasons the intervention was adopted by about 2,678 farmers in both districts who are now certified seed bank producers of the open pollinated variety seeds for the District Agricultural Extension Services Department.

The general seed shortage experienced in 2007 in the country enabled the producers of open pollinated seeds to generate considerable income by selling their seed reserves to local community farmers. The seed was sold at prices affordable to poor rural farmers as encouraged by NGOs. According to the Agricultural Extension officials, the intervention provided adequate seed to poor farmers during this period of crisis. For the producers themselves, the intervention lengthened the food availability period and shortened the food deficit period.

**5.2.4.6 Cotton Production under Contract farming**
Generally the findings show that cotton contract farming is a common intervention in all study areas spearheaded by the cotton private sector. Gokwe and Muzarabani are ranked first and second cotton producing districts respectively, whilst Mwenezi district is 12th, with a number of new cotton farmers emerging since the FTLRP in 2000. Findings from interviews show that cotton production in Gokwe and Muzarabani started in the 1960s and increased after independence in 1980. Promoting cotton production in semi-arid areas became a government policy aimed at improving rural livelihoods. This was guided by the export oriented government policy inherited from the colonial period.

Information gathered from department officials in the districts is that the government used to provide support for cotton production, as the second highest foreign currency earning crop after tobacco, just after independence. The government controlled cotton production through Cottco until the liberalisation of the sector to private players in 1999. Community level findings show that since 1999 a number of private cotton companies have supported cotton production. This created competition among cotton companies and to counter this Cottco initiated contract farming in order to guarantee its supply. Community participants
indicated that the competition among cotton companies for the product has now been replaced by competition to register smallholder farmers as contractors.

However, contract farming only targets farmers with property they can use as collateral. This means smallholder farmers interested in cotton farming but without collateral are excluded. Monopolisation of cotton inputs after the introduction of contract farming worsened the situation for smallholder farmers as cotton inputs are no longer found on the open market. Smallholder farmers complained that this was done to promote contract farming at the expense of farmers who are not interested in contract farming.

Trend analysis results show that generally cotton production in all study areas declined during the period under study. The decline is attributed to a number of reasons including severe food shortages, difficulties with contract farming and a decline in cotton prices on the international market. Most rural farmers faced funding challenges because they could not borrow from financial institutions as they used to do before the national economic crisis. Although cotton is the major cash crop in semi-arid areas, farmers have no access to inputs and their cotton is sold at low prices. During the 2007-2010 seasons cotton farmers withheld their cotton in protest at prices as low as USD0, 33 per kg. Cotton smallholder farmers in all study areas complained that they are subsidising the government and cotton companies instead of vice versa.

Statistics from the Agricultural Extension Services Department show that cotton hectarage declined in all study areas during the past decade. This is attributed to food shortages and intensified advocacy by NGOs for increased small grain production for food security. However, during the same period the government encouraged rural farmers to engage in contract farming for improved cotton production to generate cash income for multiple livelihood activities.
Table 17: Declining Cotton Production Hectarage in Muzarabani District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Season</th>
<th>Gokwe</th>
<th>Muzarabani</th>
<th>Mwenezi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>16 000</td>
<td>10 000</td>
<td>1 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>16 000</td>
<td>12 000</td>
<td>3 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>17 000</td>
<td>14 000</td>
<td>7 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>19 000</td>
<td>16 000</td>
<td>9 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>35 000</td>
<td>29 000</td>
<td>11 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>27 000</td>
<td>21 000</td>
<td>15 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>22 000</td>
<td>21 000</td>
<td>16 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>17 000</td>
<td>17 000</td>
<td>17 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>13 000</td>
<td>15 000</td>
<td>11 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>11 000</td>
<td>13 000</td>
<td>9 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>10 000</td>
<td>7 000</td>
<td>5 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Vision, Care and CWW 2009

The table indicates that there was an increase in cotton production between 2001 and 2004 in all the districts. This was attributed to increased cotton buyers and contract farming that was slowly being adopted by farmers. During the 2007-2008 cropping season, support to cotton smallholder farmers was cut back and the number of farmers who produced cotton declined, resulting in lower production. Before the liberalisation of the cotton sector, cotton production was high and there was only one cotton market that was tightly controlled by the government. However, this changed in 2001 with more cotton companies coming into the sector. Since 2004 a number of new cotton buyers entered the sector, mainly Indian and American companies, and this saw a boom in the cotton market with increased demand. The new cotton companies offered higher prices than those offered by Cottco.

NGOs also supported the contract farming model. However, NGOs, particularly in Gokwe district, started supporting rural and poor farmers without collateral in 2006. Their policy of targeting young people and newly married young families between the ages of 18 and 25 years saw the emergence of free cotton farmers who were trained in the use of conservation technologies that improved their production and could choose who they sold to. However, this undermined the hold that contracting companies had on the smallholders and interviews with cotton company staff revealed that in 2009 the Agricultural Marketing
Authority (AMA) passed new legislation requiring all cotton farmers in Zimbabwe to register with a cotton company of their choice before they could access inputs. Farmers had to register every year and pay a registration fee of about USD50, but this has contributed to a sharp decline in cotton production as smallholder farmers could not afford the fees. This legislation was aimed at reducing competition among cotton companies. As this was made mandatory it prompted NGOs to assist free cotton farmers to produce cotton without being tied to any particular company and sell it to buyers of their choice and increase profit. However, the number of free cotton farmers who benefited was very low (157 households in total).

Cotton production in Mwenezi district increased as new farmers in new settlement areas that were formerly under wildlife took it up. Cotton contract farming interventions were introduced in these areas as production declined in some traditionally producing areas. As a result there was a rapid increase in cotton production in the district, attributed to the quick response by cotton companies in supporting new farmers who benefited from the FTLRP. As shown in the table above, cotton production increased until 2007, but declined after six years. This was attributed to poor market prices compounded by severe food shortages that prompted people to increase cereal production for food security. Information gathered from the Department of Agricultural Extension Services predicted that 16,700 hectares would be under cotton cultivation during the 2009-2010 agricultural seasons in Mwenezi, but only 5,450 hectares was confirmed, signalling a sharp decline. Generally cotton production became less and less a major livelihood activity in all study areas despite efforts to revive its production.

5.2.4.7 Cotton Marketing
Findings show that despite its downward trend, cotton remained the largest cash crop in all semi-arid areas under study. Prices for cotton are determined on the international market; therefore price bargaining by smallholder farmers is limited. With a fall in the global price, smallholder farmers do not get the expected returns, prompting many to partially abandon cotton farming as a non-viable crop.

Cottco is the largest local market for cotton. However, the market for cotton remained very poor despite the establishment of cotton buying centres in all study areas. Cotton prices have ranged over the past decade from USD0.30 to USD0.85 per kg depending on its quality and grade, which is determined by the buyer. Smallholder farmers complained that
in most cases they are forced by desperate poverty to sell their cotton at low prices. The structure of the cotton market is regulated by the AMA, which favours the cotton companies at the expense of smallholder farmers. Interviews with the Cotton Farmers Association indicate the price has been fixed as despite increasing numbers of buyers they offer the same price and no longer compete.

5.2.4.8 Large and Small Livestock Interventions
Generally, livestock production, both large and small, declined in all study areas as outlined earlier. In Gokwe and Muzarabani the decline was attributed to livestock diseases (see Table 6) and increase in sales, whilst in Mwenezi the decline was more because of drought and destruction of livestock drinking water points by floods in 2002 to 2004. The table below summarises the decline in livestock populations. NGOs have since helped with restocking in all study areas.

Table 18: Large Livestock (Cattle) Decline in all Study Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>No. of Livestock per District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gokwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2005</td>
<td>220 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>193 693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>167 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>161 839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>160 438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>162 932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Livestock, 2010

The table shows that the sharpest decline came in 2007. Participatory livelihood trend analysis tallies with these figures, revealing that Gokwe initially experienced a gradual decline in livestock populations but it became sharp between 2006 and 2009. Livestock in Mwenezi declined from 320 000 cattle to 256 000 between 2000 and 2005. This was attributed to the floods that destroyed the small dams the livestock drank out of. As Mwenezi experienced the steepest decrease in livestock, despite being a disease-free district, Muzarabani’s decline was the smallest – from 139 000 to about 115 000 cattle during the ten-year period. Of the three study areas, large livestock interventions were mainly observed in Mwenezi district. Heifer International supports poor households with cattle for milk and other rural livelihood activities as indicated in previous sections.
Table 19: Small Livestock Decline in all Study Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>No. of Livestock per District</th>
<th>Gokwe</th>
<th>Muzarabani</th>
<th>Mwenezi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2005</td>
<td>136 110</td>
<td>115 374</td>
<td>89 879</td>
<td>11 324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>117 208</td>
<td>112 767</td>
<td>76 658</td>
<td>10 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>71 244</td>
<td>69 860</td>
<td>53 341</td>
<td>8 561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>63 458</td>
<td>42 521</td>
<td>41 089</td>
<td>6 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>52 328</td>
<td>34 534</td>
<td>31 440</td>
<td>5 134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>66 102</td>
<td>32 795</td>
<td>23 054</td>
<td>4 783</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Livestock Statistics, 2010

The table shows that the decline of small livestock in all study areas was in larger numbers and at a faster rate than the large livestock, with Gokwe and Muzarabani showing particularly dramatic losses. As with the large animals, NGOs helped to restock small livestock among the poor target groups. The interventions enhanced asset holdings of poor people in all study areas. Substantial support focused on chickens, goats, sheep and rabbits. Sender (2007) argues that promoting small livestock, particularly goats, contributes to risk mitigation and empowerment of vulnerable smallholder farmers in semi-arid areas. PRA participants indicated that investments in small livestock were premised on less labour required for looking after it, particularly for sick and very poor households. Small livestock tend to multiply at a faster rate than larger livestock, thus allowing target beneficiaries results within a shorter period of time. NGOs dominated interventions in livestock both large and small, with technical training and advice on breeding and management of the livestock coming from appropriate government departments.

In some areas the intervention targeted the labour-constrained households, particularly those that could not engage in conservation farming such as the elderly and child-headed households. The intervention was in two forms, with the first being livestock distribution and the second, cash handouts for beneficiary households to purchase small livestock of their choice such as chickens, goats, pigs, sheep or rabbits. Information gathered from both interviews and participatory methods is that USD50 was given out to each beneficiary household during 2007, whilst in Mwenezi Care International increased the amounts to USD160 per household using a voucher system. While most beneficiary households bought female goats and some chickens for rearing, some households sold their vouchers for cash for other livelihood activities, particularly food. Government officials complained that other small livestock, particularly in Mwenezi district, distorted the value of goats. But
despite these challenges the intervention gave disadvantaged households access to physical assets that they could either slaughter for household consumption during times of crisis or use for income generation. Similarly Barret (1991) shows that in years of drought and other domestic crisis livestock is a major asset that can be turned into cash for survival or used in other ways.

The intervention had a training package where beneficiaries were trained in goat rearing and management to reduce the death rate. They were also trained in dipping and dosing of small livestock to reduce vulnerability to disease, and in marketing and negotiating skills, focusing on where and when to market or sell their livestock how to negotiate reasonable prices for maximum benefit. Some of the recipients used goat milk for feeding their children. According to a field officer from Care Zimbabwe, the nutritional value of goat milk is the highest of all milk and very beneficial to the growth of young children. This training and capacity building programme ensured that the new assets were managed appropriately for maximum benefit.

5.2.4.9 Livestock Marketing
Generally as rural people were increasingly forced to rely on selling livestock for survival they had to depend on a local market that was not viable as cash drained from the economy. Selling of livestock in rural Zimbabwe is regulated by the Rural District Council. Livestock marketing points were established in each ward in the colonial period. This was meant to levy commercial meat buyers. The Rural District Council regulated the levies by setting minimum and maximum prices for livestock using an auction system on a monthly basis. However, the findings show a changing trend in livestock marketing from cash exchange to largely barter exchange in all study areas. As food shortages worsened, livestock buyers began bypassing designated livestock marketing points and going directly to farmers for barter exchange. This further disadvantaged rural people, who were already negotiating from a disadvantaged position because of their food crisis and now, as they became increasingly desperate for survival they sold off their livestock for minimal returns while buyers directly targeted the vulnerable for barter exchanges that the Rural District Council could not control.

At the height of the political violence and food crisis, livestock was bartered for maize in grain or meal form in all study areas to meet the immediate needs of rural people. Community participants indicated that proceeds realised from livestock barter were only
adequate for short-term survival. Although this became a survival strategy for people with livestock, the exchange further worsened their vulnerability as their asset base was depleted. The market for livestock became largely disorganised and reduced to an individual level without the involvement of the regulating authority. Interviews reveal that in all study areas the chaotic state of the market pushed some of the poor, who had fewer livestock, into a vulnerability trap from which they could not escape. People who had at least ten head of cattle lost everything in an endeavour to survive without improving their livelihoods. Livestock as an asset to fall back on was reduced to a means of survival worth a fraction of its true value during the politically charged environment.

5.2.4.10 Small Dam Rehabilitation
Study findings show that the rehabilitation of small dams was one of the prominent interventions in both Mwenezi and Muzarabani districts. As discussed above, the floods that destroyed farmers’ small dams between 2000 and 2002 threw smallholder farmers into a livelihood crisis. Livestock was lost in all areas that do not benefit from the few seasonal rivers in the districts.

Most of the dams were built during the colonial period as water sources for livestock and irrigation purposes among other livelihood purposes such as vegetable gardening and brick moulding. PRA and interview data revealed that in both districts a total of nine small dams were rehabilitated by NGOs with technical support from relevant government departments. By the end of 2009 all rehabilitated dams had water, benefiting an estimated 19,414 households. As a result some of the livelihood activities that depend on water such as vegetable gardening, irrigation schemes, and brick moulding were revived whilst livestock started having access to drinking water within beneficiary communities.

*Figure 18: Livestock drinking water from rehabilitated Chemvana dam in Mwenezi (Musevenzi August 2010)*
Community participants in Mwenezi district indicated that before the dams were mended people travelled more than 20km to Mwenezi or Runde rivers to fetch livestock drinking water. During that period livestock was not allowed to share water with people from the few functional boreholes. The distance and this community regulation meant large livestock could only access drinking water once a week as people could not afford to travel the distance on a daily basis. The rehabilitation intervention involved considerable investment. Development agencies hired earthmoving and other heavy equipment from the government to rebuild the dams. Technical advice was provided from the departments of Water and Engineering Services. PRA data revealed that during the rehabilitation manual labour was provided by the residents, and consequently there was a transfer of knowledge of dam rehabilitation to local people in rural communities.

Livelihood activities such as brick-moulding for own use and for sale; vegetable gardening and infrastructure rehabilitation were observed during fieldwork. These activities increased in study areas benefiting from the intervention. Community level findings show that livestock populations started increasing, as did their products such as milk from cattle. Infrastructure rehabilitation that restored people’s access to water enabled them to diversify their rural livelihoods. The long distances travelled to rivers were drastically reduced to less than two kilometres, and the extra time gained could then be invested in other livelihood activities. The dam rehabilitation process also allowed people to establish strong social networks as they worked in groups. This intervention is a long-term infrastructure development that will assist the livelihoods of future generations.

Figure 19: Rehabilitated Small Dam in Ward 3 of Mwenezi District (Musevenzi, August 2012)
5.2.4.11 Vegetable gardening interventions
Findings from all study areas show that vegetable gardens were widely cultivated in rural communities for both food security and cash income generation. This is one of the livelihood activities revived by the rehabilitation of water sources, both small dams and boreholes. The study found that NGOs also promoted communal gardens where target households would have access to pieces of land for vegetable gardening. This also strengthened social networks in communities.

5.2.4.12. Community horticultural products marketing
The findings show that marketing of vegetables for cash is not well developed in any of the study areas. Although most rural smallholder farmers sell fresh vegetables – tomatoes, cabbages and carrots among others – the long distances they have to travel using ox-drawn carts to nearby townships are problematic. The local community as a market is unviable because most people are engaged in the activity.

Increased vegetable gardening inputs from NGOs led to increased outputs. Comparing the food security and cash income roles of vegetable gardening, community participants indicated that they benefited more from the food security component. However, depending on the district, some households found it worthwhile to sell vegetables. The findings show that on average women generated about USD21 per month in a good month, even though the market was quite a distance away. This is a considerable income, considering that the average rural income per household in semi-arid districts is between USD0, 50 and USD1 per day. However, they do not sell vegetables every month, only when they have surplus. Women dominate vegetable gardening and travel on foot or on ox-drawn scotch-carts to market.

Poor roads and long distances are damaging to fresh produce, and increased vegetable production raises the danger that supply will exceed demand at the local market. To counter this, where possible, produce like tomatoes are dried to lengthen their shelf-life. This is one strategy adopted to reduce losses from spoilt vegetables. This is also why the intervention contributed more to food security than cash income generation. This is an indicator for a positive impact on rural people in terms of food security. Compared to white sorghum, vegetable gardening contributed immensely to food security despite the absence of a developed market.
5.2.4.13 Vocational Skills Training

Vocational skills training as part of human capital development is evident in two districts, Mwenezi and Muzarabani, where LED has established vocational training centres. It was observed that there are training programmes such as carpentry, welding, building, tie and dye and dressmaking, indicating the diversity of human capital being developed. Statistics indicate that since 1999, 3,134 students from Mwenezi benefitted from the training skills and in Muzarabani, 4,520. Most of the training is offered in communities to reduce accommodation and transport costs. Information from interviews shows that vocational skills programmes target vulnerable people, particularly young people from vulnerable households who have failed to gain entry into prestigious tertiary institutions. The main purpose is to develop their human capacity in various vocational skills for sustainable rural livelihoods. Heyer (1996) for example argues that limited availability of education and skills training is a constraint to the ability of individuals to diversify livelihoods.

Community level findings show that the intervention made an instant impact, as graduates are using their new skills for livelihoods at different levels. Records from the centres show that between 2004 and 2008, 75 dressmaking graduates were recruited into the police force textile department, and 148 carpentry graduates into the police carpentry department. Although Rural District Council officials complained about the quality of the training programmes, government departments recruited them due to the drain of such skills out of the country. The vocational training centres are certified by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, indicating that the government recognises the skills training despite concerns around the quality.

Some graduates used their new skills to earn a living in the informal sector, such as building rural houses for income, others establishing community enterprises for survival. Community participants indicated that brick-making as a livelihood strategy increased not only due to water availability but also to cash remittances meant for building corrugated houses. The graduates increasingly found employment building the houses. As some graduates remained in their communities some crossed the border into Mozambique, particularly Tete Province, South Africa, Botswana and Namibia in search of employment where such skills could easily be used for a livelihood. Although graduates who migrated to neighbouring countries could not be tracked for further information, it is understood from interviews with community leaders that some of them have remitted some financial
resources back home, though not regularly, and this has become a livelihood source for those who remained back home.

5.2.4.14 Small Irrigation Schemes Development
This intervention revolves around the rehabilitation of colonial irrigation infrastructure that became derelict after the rehabilitation of small dams in some areas whilst in other areas underground water pumps are used for the re-agrarianisation of the semi-arid areas under study. Data from interviews with government schools shows that all irrigation schemes are owned by the government through the Department of Irrigation within the Ministry of Agriculture. In most cases the intervention is a joint venture between the government and NGOs because the government owns the infrastructure. NGOs financed and managed development and crop production but the government owns the old and new infrastructure through its community structures. The following photograph shows secondary irrigation water canals with irrigation running for watering crops down the scheme.

*Figure 20: Rehabilitated canals with irrigation water in Manjinji irrigation scheme in Mwenezi (Musevenzi August 2010)*

The study findings show that after independence in 1980, productivity in small irrigation schemes in semi-arid districts declined due to poor management of irrigation equipment and other resources, as well as poor management systems and structures. Interviews with government officials revealed that government policy in the early 1980s did not value small irrigation schemes and irrigation infrastructure in semi-arid districts due to increased focus on prime land crop production on large commercial farms. As a result, irrigation canals, night water storage dams, water pipes and water pumps were not maintained, and when they broke down they were not mended.
Interviews with NGO officials indicate that the rehabilitation of all non-functional irrigation schemes and improved crop production technologies is a solution to food shortages in semi-arid areas. In 2003 the government realised the importance of small irrigation schemes in rural semi-arid districts of the country for improved food security but had no financial resources to rehabilitate them. This is the gap covered by NGOs, as Scoones (1999) also found – they complement the government where the state has neither the financial nor the human resources to do the job. The study found that NGOs also provided technical engineers to assist government engineers during rehabilitation of this infrastructure.

Three successfully rehabilitated irrigation schemes in Mwenezi district – Dinhe, Murove and Manjinji – were observed in this study. These schemes lay idle for almost 15 years after the infrastructure collapsed in 1994. Information gathered from the provincial administrator’s office shows that to counter the successive droughts in the country, LED in cooperation with SAFIRE rehabilitated Manjinji and Murove irrigation scheme, whilst Dinhe was rehabilitated with support from the European Commission to diversify and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. This intervention rebuilt infrastructure such as canals and night water storage dams, improved crop production and moreover, established a viable, community-based irrigation scheme management committee and systems to ensure sustainable management. The following photograph shows sugar beans crop under irrigation in Murove irrigation scheme in Mwenezi.

*Figure 21: Green sugar beans in Murove Irrigation Scheme (Musevenzi June 2010)*

Statistics from the NGOs show that a total of 7500m of secondary canals and infield canals were rebuilt, 60 hectares were cleared for agricultural production, six diesel engines were repaired and two new ones procured to facilitate underground water pumping for the Manjinji scheme. For the Murove scheme 3121m of secondary canals
were rebuilt and 40 hectares of irrigable land was cleared. Night water storage dams were repaired for pumped water to be stored at night before canal irrigation. Perimeter security fencing was erected to protect crops from both domestic and wild animals such as buffalos, impalas and elephants, as in the case of Manjinji the scheme shares the boundary with the Gonarezhou National Park.

Statistics from NGOs show that 272 smallholder farmers benefited directly from the three schemes. They accessed pieces of land within the irrigation schemes whilst more than 7,000 farmers indirectly benefited through labour provision and access to the products of the labour for food security. Crop production focuses on maize, cowpeas, beans, wheat, vegetables, cabbage and tomatoes for both food security and income generation. In Manjinji scheme each individual smallholder farmer holds 0.5 hectares out of the 60 hectares. According to information gathered from the Department of Agricultural Extension Services, half a hectare can produce up to 12.5 tons of maize a year if everything in the scheme runs according to plan.

Community level findings show that most direct beneficiaries are widows and single women (107 women and 13 men). Group discussions with direct beneficiaries show that marginal areas of Mwenezi district have a higher female population because most of the men migrated to South Africa before finishing high school in search of employment on mines and farms there, and they simply send remittances back home.

The high proportion of women in semi-arid areas prompted NGOs to intervene to diversify and improve the livelihoods of rural women, most of whom head households. Mariwo (2010), in her study of women’s empowerment in rural Mutoko district east of Zimbabwe, argues that NGOs create stereotypes of rural women as vulnerable and so come up with petty projects that fail to address the real issues of women. However, community participants indicated that the intervention has resulted in crop diversification and livelihood improvement in semi-arid areas affected by perennial droughts and severe food deficits. It was observed that some farmers are doing well compared to others in the scheme. Some competent farmers increased their maize harvest to the extent that they could exchange surplus for both small and large livestock. This indicates some degree of livelihood diversification.
5.2.4.15 Marketing of Products from Irrigation Schemes in Semi-Arid Districts

Findings from both PRA exercises and interviews revealed that the irrigation intervention offers great potential, not only for food security but also for income generation. The rural economy also requires cash income for livelihood activities such as transport, agricultural inputs and school fees. This means that agricultural production under irrigation schemes in marginalised areas requires well developed and maintained transport infrastructure and cash markets for sustainability of farming activities. Government officials indicated in interviews that road rehabilitation budgets suffered as a result of smart sanctions by the EU and USA.

As irrigation improved crop production output, smallholder farmers exchanged agricultural products for other assets such as livestock and this in turn enabled them to acquire property and other assets. However, this also revived the barter economy in rural livelihoods. PRA participants complained that the barter system did not provide the cash needed for school fees, hospital fees and so on. Thus, although it led to property accumulation, in the absence of a cash market bartering became a desperate form of exchange in all study areas.

5.2.4.16 Water and Sanitation Interventions

The findings show that water and sanitation programmes were implemented in all the study areas.

Most NGOs ensured that all rehabilitated boreholes were well maintained to reduce breakdown levels. They provided funds for District Development Fund (DDF) to train 283 pump minders and borehole rehabilitation technicians for community level borehole maintenance in all study areas. Community level finance committees were established to handle cash contributions towards the procurement of spare parts for borehole maintenance when needed. This enabled the transfer of borehole rehabilitation skills to villagers, ensuring the sustainability of water sources.

The findings also show that the intervention constructed a number of Blair VIP toilets to benefit rural people. Collectively, a total of 5,787 Blair VIP toilets were built in the three study areas to ensure a clean and safe environment and reduce the incidence of cholera outbreaks. It was understood from discussions with district level officials that the intervention reduced waterborne diseases, including a repeat of the 2008 cholera
outbreak in rural areas. The government provided technical support to ensure that the development programmes met the set standards. It was also a way of monitoring development work by NGOs in rural communities.

5.2.4.17 Education, HIV and AIDS Programmes
All three study districts benefited from HIV and AIDS and health interventions that focused on home-based care and support for people living with HIV. The same intervention provides support for orphans and vulnerable children from the HIV and AIDS pandemic. During this intervention NGOs worked together with the Department of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare for regulatory and monitoring purposes. People living with HIV in all study areas benefited from nutritional food handouts. Vegetable gardens were established for people living with HIV and AIDS and home-based caregivers were trained to provide support for them.

Collectively, the findings show that in all the study areas, a total of 13,287 orphans and vulnerable children benefited from this intervention through educational support such as payment of school fees, procurement of books and school uniforms and the provision of monthly food packs for children. A total of 781 community home-based caregivers were recruited and trained in all the study areas to provide support for those living with HIV and AIDS at the community level. Educational support is part of human capital development to reduce the vulnerability of these orphans and children.

5.2.4.18 Community Based Entrepreneurship Development
Study findings show that entrepreneurship development projects focused on two areas, namely vocational skill based entrepreneurship and non-timber forest products based entrepreneurship benefiting two districts, Mwenezi and Muzarabani. Community-based entrepreneurship became one of the thriving livelihood diversification strategies for poor minorities with basic qualifications, according to NGO officials. This intervention was implemented with the Ministry of Small to Medium Enterprises and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources. Rural District Councils are also directly involved for the support of community level entrepreneurship.

For the vocational skills and entrepreneurship training intervention in carpentry, dressmaking, fishing and welding, both the government and NGOs were involved, providing technical support and small capital respectively. Of these enterprises, fishing
and carpentry were observed during a field visit to be fairly successful as members generate income adequate for their own survival without generating surplus income.

It was also observed that carpentry and dressmaking enterprises were operating at a space provided by the Ministry of Youth Development and Indigenisation. Respective entrepreneurs were trained in business management skills, including financial management, bookkeeping and marketing principles such as product pricing and negotiation. They were also trained in market identification and market research. They learnt to produce products and items that were in demand and appropriate for the local market. Common carpentry products observed were coffins, bed bases, kitchen trays, television stands, stools, chairs, wooden spoons and so on. These have a ready market although cash is still a challenge to rural people particularly after the dollarisation of the economy.

The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) complained that the carpentry business is not environmentally friendly as it has resulted in uncontrolled cutting down of specific tree species. Despite this concern, the entrepreneurs indicated that carpentry has become a lucrative livelihood strategy in rural communities. Coffins were in demand due to increased HIV and AIDS related deaths in rural areas in a country where the health service had almost collapsed due to the flight of trained medical and health staff. According to the UNAIDS report of 2009, the flight of trained medical staff from the health sector was considered the highest in the world at 75%.

Rural entrepreneurs indicated that there is flexibility in this rural industry. In selling carpentry products they can accept either cash or kind to enable them to survive. An adult size coffin was exchanged for a single large beast and a child's coffin for a single goat or a number of chickens. This enabled carpenters to accumulate a number of livelihood assets in the form of either cash or both small and large livestock. They could also deliver the product and then allow the buyer to pay later. This was one of the strategies used in ensuring that they continue to benefit from their enterprises. The same strategy was also observed in dressmaking, where local school uniforms and simple clothes were sold cheaply. To most consumers, quality was no longer a factor as long as they had access to the product and could pay at a later stage.
Fishing enterprises were largely found in Mwenezi district and supported by the Wildlife Management Department and NGOs. Fishing cooperatives were initially provided with hard plastic and wooden fishing boats, fishing nets and fishing rods to enable the cooperative to start a business, whilst the government through the Wildlife Department provided fishing permits to the cooperatives. Entrepreneurs indicated that the business is seasonal and members of the fishing enterprises divide their time every year between fishing in rivers and dams during the fishing period (February-September) and agricultural production (October-January). During the fishing season wives and children grow crops at home.

Interestingly, the fishermen indicated that their wives are not allowed to visit fishing points in rivers and dams as it is believed that they bring bad luck to their husbands, particularly if they engage in sexual activity. Good harvests are experienced during the period March to September whilst the fish breeding season is from October to February, and no-one engages in fishing during this period. During the breeding season, fish harvests are very low and members of the cooperatives or enterprises return to their rural homes for other livelihood activities that are usually done by their wives during their absence.

Findings show that during the period under study the fish market has been very lucrative since 2006, as meat was beyond the reach of the majority of both rural and urban poor people in Zimbabwe. Cash was instant because intermediary buyers preferred buying from the community entrepreneurs than from Kariba dam, where prices were higher. Fish buyers come from as far as Bulawayo over 450km away, Harare over 430km, Masvingo over 100km and Mutare over 350km to buy fish for resale. Interviews with the entrepreneurs show that they are also trained in business management skills, particularly pricing and negotiating with middlemen.

Based on the fishermen’s calculations, an enterprise during the fishing season yields an average of about USD150 per month for a group of 14 people during periods of good harvest, translating to a little over USD10, 70 per person per month. This is not enough to feed a household of four for a month. Although an important livelihood activity, fishing is considered by the participants during group discussions as a high-risk activity because the
dams and rivers are full of dangerous animals such as crocodiles and hippos, which have killed a number of fishermen.

Operationally the enterprises also face challenges such as inadequate supply of new fishing nets on a monthly basis, which is necessary because crocodiles hunting for fish around the nets destroy them. Fishing in Zimbabwe is highly regulated by the Wildlife Management Act of 1975, amended in 2001. Findings show that only fishing rods are allowed when fishing in major rivers. The use of any fishing nets except certain prescribed ones is forbidden because they lead to the destruction fish eggs and very small fish. These specified nets are costly and not easily accessible to most fishing enterprises, resulting in the use of prohibited material such as mosquito nets that are handed out by NGOs for malaria control. Fishing enterprises are also required by the Wildlife Management Act to register and operate within the confines of this law. They are only allowed to fish during certain hours of the day.

5.2.4.19 Entrepreneurship Based on Commercialisation of Non-Timber Forest Products

According to FAO (1987:137) small-scale rural enterprises were seen as a major source of livelihood in developing countries as the capacity for agriculture declined. Sola (2006:97) also observed that small forest-based activities, mostly in dry districts, accounted for a substantial proportion of the total income of rural populations in developing countries. This corroborates with the study findings on the commercialisation of non-timber forest products. There is also evidence in this study similar to findings by Bryceson (1999) that the decline in agriculture, or de-agrarianisation, forced many smallholder farmers to branch out from agriculture into non-farm activities where non-timber forest product-based enterprises were established. Sola (2006:101) similarly believes that non-timber forest enterprise development is considered not only a stimulus for economic growth and livelihood improvement in rural semi-arid areas, but also a means for providing economic incentives for sustainable natural resources management. This brings a new dimension to engaging in non-timber forest products: now it is focused not only on livelihood diversification but also on sustainable natural resources management.

Findings from interviews with NGO officials show that non-timber forest products play an important complementary role to agricultural production in semi-arid districts where
species suitable for this intervention are found. The role of non-timber forest products was more noticeable during periods of food deficit and considerable income was generated to purchase maize and other basics for food security. The intervention was aimed at diversifying rural livelihoods and enhancing dry communities’ benefits through the development, production, expansion and marketing of non-timber forest products in areas of marginal agricultural potential.

Although community level findings show that it is a challenging task to convert poor rural smallholder farmers who are largely dependent on agriculture into small-scale entrepreneurs producing non-timber forest products for consumption and food security, smallholder farmers had no choice but to co-operate with supporting NGOs. According to officials from SAFIRE, a lot of investment is needed to develop marketable products, identify and develop markets for the products, ensure production capacity and link them to private partners for sustainability and growth. They indicated that this is the challenging part of this intervention that is largely dominated by NGOs. Specific sub-interventions focused on product development and improvement, natural products technology development and production, market identification and marketing, and capacity building of poor people as well as natural resource management to ensure sustainable harvesting to avoid depletion. Below is a summary of specific interventions under the entrepreneurship based on commercialisation of non-timber forest products.

5.2.4.13.1 Product Development and Improvement
NGO officials indicated that product development is a continuous process involving exploratory, development and improvement work even after commercialisation of the product. The process involves considerable investment in equipment and highly skilled personnel to conduct regular reviews of the product performance, production systems and technology performance. During the past decade a number of products were developed and marketed to both local and international markets to generate cash income for rural people to buy cereals for food security.

i) Marula products
Marula (sclerocarya birrea) trees are found in abundance in most semi-arid regions of Zimbabwe. The fruit is usually eaten fresh, and there are also edible nuts. People crack the nuts to eat the kernel inside. Before commercialisation these were the only two ways they were eaten but now there are three major products that are developed, both for local
consumption and marketing, and a fourth by-product. *Marula jelly*, made from ripe marula fruit pulp, is developed for food security at community level. The fruit is picked from the forest, the skin is removed and the fresh pulp extracted. The pulp is then cooked with sugar to produce the jelly, which is used mostly for feeding children. This is convenient to produce at the community level because sugar is the only addition.

In Mwenezi district 11,258 households were trained by SAFIRE and PhytoTrade technical personnel to produce the jelly for household consumption during the period 2003-2007. In Muzarabani a further 11,643 households benefited from the same intervention during the same period. Ripe fruit is harvested from February to May. The introduction of marula jelly enables people to consume it in a more edible state.

The fresh fruit is also used to produce *marula jam* for sale and for household consumption. Rural people during the harvesting season pick the fruit and sell it to Specialty Foods of Africa, a company based in Harare that specialises in commercialisation of wild fruit products. Community level findings show that not all people were engaged in harvesting, processing and marketing the natural products, only certain target groups that adopted the activity. It emerged in the PRA sessions that the commercialisation process was not very popular because rural people found that the proceeds from selling fresh fruit to Specialty Foods of Africa were too low to be attractive. People preferred to consume the fruit in the form of jelly for food security purposes.

*Marula oil* is the third marula product. It is extracted from the nut for both commercialisation and local consumption. SAFIRE links various households from producing communities to Specialty Foods for commercial purposes. SAFIRE has qualified food scientists who test and develop products from wild fruits in an endeavour to commercialise as well as to increase various products for rural people to benefit. Marula crude oil was developed for the purposes of local household consumption since very few rural households can afford to buy conventional cooking oil from the local stores. The crude oil product observed is thick and has more residues from processing and is recommended for household consumption by local people.

The oil can be further processed to reduce the residue. This improves its quality by removing impurities and facilitates its use as edible oil as well as lengthening its shelf-life,
making it more viable for marketing, according to an interviewed food scientist from SAFIRE. The refined marula oil generates more cash income if sold to international markets. The SAFIRE product development officer indicated that the oil attracted a number of international and local markets after further purification. However, community participants are comfortable with crude marula oil because the refining process is very expensive due to high technology requirements. Moreover, the process cannot be done at the community level, only in urban areas where electricity is available.

Government officials from the Department of Natural Resources indicated that the products are only meant for commercial purposes, because the final quality product is too expensive for local communities to process and the markets are international and beyond the reach of the local poor from marginal areas. The government assists with the quality control of the products before they are sold on the international market. Community level findings show that marula oil production is very labour intensive, particularly marula nut cracking to access the kernel inside. These products are developed by skilled people from NGOs based in Harare and then brought to rural communities. Government officials indicated that this process takes away the ownership of the product development from the community level. Community beneficiaries are largely trained in areas of production that are not the actual development of the product. During the period 2004 to 2007, 1 800 people were trained in Mwenezi and Muzarabani for production to a point but had no idea of how the products were developed further. The majority of these people produced crude marula oil on a small scale for their own household consumption and marketing.

*Marula butter* is a by-product of marula oil processing. It comes from the residues that remain behind during the marula kernel pressing for oil production. This product is developed for local consumption at household level. Looking at the poor food availability situation in areas under study, this product has diversified food availability at household level as communities use it as butter on homemade bread and as a replacement for cooking oil. More than 125 000 households, according to statistics from SAFIRE, benefit from the consumption of marula butter either directly or indirectly in communities where marula oil production takes place.
ii) Baobab Products

The baobab tree is common in all semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe and has been used by rural communities for various livelihood activities since time immemorial. Baobab interventions are aimed at income generation for the rural poor. Three products (baobab oil, baobab cake and baobab pulp) have been developed for commercialisation in Muzarabani district since 2005 because of the area’s high density of baobab trees. A number of by-products such as baobab flavoured yoghurt and chocolate were developed from baobab pulp with support from SAFIRE in partnership with Specialty Foods of Africa.

Baobab oil was extracted from baobab seeds with an oil pressing machine developed and procured from ATA, a technology development centre, and distributed to the local producing communities. However, apparently the oil, unlike marula oil, is not recommended for home consumption because it is believed to have side effects on the reproductive system of human beings if consumed in excess. One of the health nutrition officials in Muzarabani district from the Ministry of Health indicated that the oil, if consumed continuously, would cause sterility, especially among men. Despite these warnings, local people during group discussions indicated that they still consume it for food security because it is the only oil they can afford as they now have the oil pressing machines.

The baobab oil producers sell baobab oil to local people for consumption despite health recommendations, and generate their own income for other livelihood activities. On a commercial basis, the oil is used in the cosmetics industry. SAFIRE collects large quantities of oil produced by rural communities and sells it to international markets in Europe and Asia on their behalf. Based on statistics from SAFIRE, large quantities of baobab oil are produced in the dry districts including others that are not covered by this study, intended for export to Australia, France, Switzerland and India. Findings also show that the product requires high hygienic standards during production to meet the quality needed for international markets.

Baobab pulp, the second product from the baobab fruit, is the main product from the baobab tree consumed by rural people. Baobab pulp is used for cooking porridge in rural areas without necessarily generating income. This has added more value and a different dimension to how rural people benefit from the common natural product that they have
been using for many years. Rural communities in Muzarabani and Mwenezi districts were provided with a crushing machine for free from SAFIRE and a separation machine that separates pulp from seed. This technology increased the uptake of baobab commercialisation in rural communities.

Well sieved pulp from selected quality baobab cobs is packed into 10kg or 20kg bags, mainly for a local market. According to SAFIRE officials, baobab pulp is used for producing infant porridge and in children's homes in Zimbabwe. Since 2007 baobab pulp has been used to produce baobab flavoured yoghurt, a product formulated by the Dairy Development Programme in association with SAFIRE and community producers. The yoghurt is produced from a mixture of milk and pulp and other additives for preservation and colouring. This product increased the range of the baobab pulp market for rural people.

In 2007 a new baobab product, the bao-bar chocolate, was developed from baobab pulp mixed with different cereals or nuts, such as crisped rice, roasted oats, dried apricot, syrup, sesame seeds and other additives. The new product was developed by SAFIRE and Specialty Foods for Africa to increase the range of baobab products create a new demand and expand the market for the baobab pulp for rural people to remain in business. The product has been commercialised and community producers are now marketing the baobab pulp to the partner (Specialty Foods of Africa) for baobab chocolate production.

*Baobab cake*, the fourth baobab product, is the residue left behind after pressing the baobab for oil. It is used for cattle feed, mainly in semi-arid districts. After a vigorous marketing strategy by Specialty Foods for Africa, commercial livestock farms buy the cake from the community producers and this has become a key livelihood activity for the producers in producing communities. The intervention has enabled rural people to generate income from the by-products of baobab processing, which was not a common activity before the intervention.

**iii) Mopane Worm**

Interviews with officials from SAFIRE and CARE Zimbabwe show that a variety of insects are widely used across Zimbabwe and form an important part of many rural people’s diets.
Among these insects is the caterpillar that feeds on the mopane tree known as the mopane worm. It is found in most semi-arid districts but has been commercialised only in Mwenezi and Muzarabani districts. The mopane worm, according to community participants, is a delicacy for poor rural people, and increasingly so in urban areas.

The interventions focus on value addition through the improvement of the quality of the mopane worm for marketing locally, nationally and regionally. The quality of processed mopane worm has improved over the past eight years through processing and packaging, including canning. The trade in mopane worms, according to the interviews, is now worth several thousand USD a year. However, during plenary discussions community participants indicated that the mopane worm breeds unpredictably and most of the value is captured by mobile, large-scale traders rather than poor local communities because middlemen buyers buy in large quantities at low prices from local harvesters and processors.

Specialty Foods of Africa in Harare is the largest buyer of the mopane worm for canning and marketing, which requires controlled drying and processing. The product has a nutritional component, assisting people living with HIV and AIDS as a source of protein. Information gathered from The Centre, an NGO that provides medicinal products and nutritious food to people living with HIV and AIDS, revealed that mopane worms help to control the CD4 count in HIV-positive patients. The improvement and marketing of this product increased the levels of harvesting and processing of mopane worms, mainly by children and women, as a key livelihood activity. This is evident and shown by the protection and increasing number of mopane trees in rural communities that are jealously protected by each household, and this has encouraged sustainable use of natural resources.

**iv) Honey Production and Processing**

This intervention in Mwenezi and Gokwe districts benefits collectively 3 206 bee keeping farmers trained by Practical Action, an international NGO, with technical support from the Department of Agricultural Extension Services. The support developed rural technologies for improved bee keeping in partnership with German Agro-Action and Care Zimbabwe in Gokwe and Mwenezi respectively. The training, according to PRA participants, focused on
honey harvesting, processing and marketing and this helped improve the quantity and quality of honey from rural communities.

The intervention also established collective representation at the national level, fostered collaboration and information sharing among beekeepers and established networks among beekeepers and relevant supporting institutions. Community level data shows that on average, each farmer has a minimum of 30 Kenyan Top Bar (KTB) hives and at least 20 traditional bark hives for honey production. During the 2007 harvest season one farmer in Gokwe produced 500kg of honey, realising about ZD400 million, which was equivalent to USD9 000 at the time. This shows that the intervention contributes to cash income generation for rural livelihood diversification.

German Agro Action officials indicated that in Gokwe, all wards benefit from honey production for income generation. A number of beekeeping associations and enterprises were established in the two districts with both government and donor support because the districts are found to be conducive for honey production. For commercialisation purposes, harvested honey is processed and packaged in clean bottles for selling locally and nationally. The various enterprises were provided with honey pressing machines to ensure that quality honey without residue would be acceptable for sale, generating income for other livelihood activities such as procuring inputs for agricultural production.

v) Masau Jam and Strips
Muzarabani district is one of the few areas along the Zambezi Valley in Zimbabwe endowed with masau fruit. The district is renowned for its indigenous masau trees, which have been a source of livelihood for its inhabitants for years. They grow naturally and the seeds are very strong and drought resistant, so they grow during the rainy season. Although the tree is common in the district it is highly valued in this hot, dry region and people have privatised the trees in their fields, meaning the owner of the field has the sole right to benefit from the trees within. Besides fruit, the tree provides good shelter and its leaves are eaten by goats and other livestock browsers. Large tracts of the trees are communally owned but over the past years most families have privatised communal land where there are fruit trees to control the trees.
Rural District Council officials indicated that the fruit is sold to urban areas in both their fresh and dried state. The raw fruit can be sold for up to USD40 per 50kg bag in Harare. The trade is dominated by middlemen who travel to Muzarabani district to purchase the fruit at low prices and bring it for resale in urban areas where it is sold at higher prices and in small quantities. One local farmer during plenary discussions indicated that although the fruit is seasonal, he earned more income from the fruit than from the maize and rapoko or millet he grows for subsistence. Some farmers use the raw fruit to barter for maize, chicken, goats and even clothes with the middlemen who come to buy it.

Ministry of Health nutrition officials indicated that the fruit is very rich in vitamin C and carotene. It is also used to produce locally brewed alcohol (kachasu) in the community, for sale mostly by women, to generate income. PRA participants indicated during plenary discussions that the fruit is also used to treat different ailments including colds and flu.

Hendrix Phiri (2003:51), a researcher into African fruits, estimated that Zimbabwe produces 200,000 tons of the fruit per year, but most of this is subject to post-harvest losses. In fact over 60% is wasted due to incorrect methods of drying and storing. In an endeavour to reduce this loss, Specialty Foods of Africa developed masau strips as a new product to improve its nutritional quality, appearance and shelf-life for commercialisation. The masau fruit pulp is ground to produce the strips, which are dried using a solar drier. This is usually used for food security and local consumption, with limited marketing because the market for the product is not readily available, nor is it familiar.

The intervention has produced the most popular product among middle to upper class people in Zimbabwe. Masau jam was easily commercialised in the local market and it is one of the products sold in most retail chain shops such as Spar and the Thomas Meikles Retail Chain Group. The fruit’s skin and nut are separated from the pulp and the pulp is then made into jam with a few additives to that increase its appeal and shelf-life before it is canned. PRA sessions revealed that rural people harvest fresh ripe fruit for selling to Specialty Foods of Africa for jam making, but the income is limited because they are not involved in processing the fruit into the final commercial product.

The development of this product established a ready market for poor rural people in the district. This enabled them to generate income when the fruit is in season, usually from
April to August. The challenge is that local people simply harvest the fruit and market it without adding any value, and this does not generate sufficient income for harvesters. Information gathered from the participatory methods indicates that due to transport challenges it is the middlemen who benefit. However, the intervention has increased demand for the fruit, and consequently more rural people are harvesting it.

5.2.4.13.2 Natural Products Production Technologies
For successful development and commercialisation of the products, appropriate technology development is required. Different processing technologies have been developed locally by different companies for the non-timber forest products since the industry started in 1999. Interviews with officials in these companies revealed that the objective of technology development is to improve the processing, packaging and storage of processed products.

Concerns were raised by these officials that technology for non-timber forest products is not readily available, and requires adaptation and modification of other processing technologies. This indicates that most of the technology is modified and more time is taken in experimenting with various technologies to meet the requirements of crushing, separating and grinding specific fruit, depending on their texture. The findings show that during the past eight years this aspect was at the centre of the production of natural products by rural communities, driven by the partnership between NGOs and the private sector. Adoption of each technology by rural communities determined the levels of commercialisation of each of the wild fruits discussed above. The following are the specific technologies developed to ensure the success of non-timber forest products in the two districts.

i) Natural Oil Expressing Technologies
Various oil pressing machines were observed during the study field visits. A total of 26 rural enterprises in Mwenezi and Muzarabani districts benefited from this technology. Two types of oil pressing machines were observed. The first is for marula oil, a relatively simple machine for pressing soft marula kernels. The second is for pressing baobab oil and this is a far more powerful machine because baobab seeds are very much harder than marula kernels. The third machine type observed during the visits is the baobab fruit dehulling machine that separates baobab pulp from seeds. According to the SAFIRE head of
programmes, it is difficult to separate baobab pulp from seeds on a large scale to produce the required quantities without this technology. This challenge presented the opportunity to develop a dehulling machine to speed up the process.

*Figure 20: Baobab Oil Pressing Machine in Muzarabani District (Musevenzi, August 2010)*

Dehulling machines have a thick sieve that shows great resistance and low wear and tear. It has the capacity to process about 150kg of unsieved pulp per day, which produces about 145kg of clean and marketable baobab pulp. Using a manual process, ten people can produce only about 10kg of pulp per day. The SAFIRE technology expert indicated that one dehuller, operating at full capacity and maximum efficiency, can produce up to 21 750kg in six months. Based on the 2007 calculations by SAFIRE, this translates to USD32 625, assuming that raw material supply and technology performance remains constant. This demonstration shows that the development of this crushing and separating machine increased the efficiency levels of processing baobab products at an early stage.

The baobab oil pressing machine has the capacity to produce up to 15kg of crude oil per day, translating to 300kg of oil per month. If the machine operates at maximum efficiency for six months, it can produce about 1 800kg of crude oil, and generating a total income of USD19 800 if sold to international markets where higher prices prevail. However, officials indicated that there is a lot of training investment required for the appropriate use of these technologies at community level. The performance of the machines also depends on the entrepreneurs’ skills, availability of electricity and labour turnover in the use of the machine. At the community level, it was observed that there was no selection test of
expertise or educational level for those who join the enterprises, resulting in continuous inappropriate use of the machines and regular breakdowns, thus reducing production. These machines facilitate both baobab and marula oil production in the two study areas as well as the successful establishment of oil pressing enterprises.

**ii) Honey Production Technologies**

Information from the Bee Keepers Association of Zimbabwe shows that the Kenyan Top Bar beehives were introduced to commercialise honey production, and replaced the traditional beehives made from tree bark. The new beehives have a bigger carrying capacity, make harvesting easier and allow bees to continue making honey after the harvest. In essence, they are bee-friendly. Communities were provided with honey harvesting kits such as veils, hats and smokers that do not kill bees, unlike traditional approaches that use fire during harvesting. A new honey pressing machine was also introduced for processing. The technology, though manual, produces quality honey for marketing in bigger quantities, which generates higher income.

**5.2.4.13.3 Markets and Marketing of Natural Products**

The natural products industry is a relatively new one at nine years old. Developing the right market for the products means the industry can evolve at the community level and become viable by generating income for both livelihood options and business recapitalisation. The slow development and growth of markets is attributed to the generally slow uptake of new products by consumers who were used to agricultural and other conventional products. It was also affected by risk-averse companies reluctant to undertake new product development, as well as by low levels of disposable consumer incomes in the increasingly inflationary economy during the period under study.

Despite these challenges, statistical information collected from PhytoTrade indicates that most of the already developed and new products attract the interest of a small but growing market. The available markets were identified on behalf of the rural communities by NGOs through public exhibitions such as Zimbabwe International Trade Fairs, Harare Agricultural Shows and Travel Expo among others, including e-marketing. The available information from the small industry shows that there are 14 markets (six international and eight national markets) excluding individuals interested in the products.
Aldivia from France and Nature Shop from Australia are international markets for baobab oil and marula crude and refined oil, whilst Dioniso from Switzerland is a market for baobab pulp. Nationally, Specialty Foods for Africa is a market for baobab oil, marula oil and mopane worms, and Makonde industries for baobab pulp and Natravista for baobab and marula oil. During the intervention, particularly during the period 2005-2008, concerted efforts by different supporting stakeholders, including PhytoTrade Africa, resulted in a steady growth in demand for these oils, particularly for cosmetic purposes. During the mentioned period the stakeholders recorded a considerable increase in the size and number of orders for oils from both international and local markets.

During the period 2006 to 2007, 3 200kg of marula and baobab oil was ordered by both international and local markets, but the producing communities only managed to produce 830kg (730kg baobab oil and 100kg of marula oil) and realised a total of USD9 530. The international market identification is disadvantageous to local communities because they are not directly linked to these markets, but are dependent on intermediary organisations. Development agencies act as intermediaries for the local communities and there are transactional costs involved when marketing the products to international markets. Community producers do not benefit as expected from the production process. Below is a summary table that shows production figures and what was ordered by the markets as well as income generated for the year 2007.

Table 20: Summary of non-timber forest product markets and revenue generated in 2007 Mwenezi and Muzarabani Districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Client</th>
<th>Quantity Ordered/kg</th>
<th>Actual Quantity Supplied</th>
<th>Product Price in USD</th>
<th>Total Revenue generated in USD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baobab pulp</td>
<td>SFA, Extra care</td>
<td>200 000</td>
<td>4 874</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>7 311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baobab oil</td>
<td>Nature Shop, Natravista</td>
<td>1 600</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>8 030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marula oil</td>
<td>Nature Shop, Natravista</td>
<td>1 600</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>1 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mopane worms</td>
<td>SFA, Jaggers</td>
<td>17 500</td>
<td>1 270</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3 175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>Local markets</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>2 638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masau jam</td>
<td>SFA</td>
<td>1 500</td>
<td>1 200</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>26 854</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SAFIRE Marketing Statistics, 2009
The figures in the table indicate that although international markets are readily available, local communities do not meet the demand. Operational challenges that hinder production include the newness of the interventions and the fact that the technology is a challenge for rural people not familiar with it. This leads to frequent breakdowns of pressing machines.

Statistical information from PhytoTrade shows that total revenue of USD26 854 was generated within a year, benefiting 100 people. According to the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe report (2009:19), the average income for rural people in dry districts is between USD0, 50 and USD1 per day. Based on these calculations there is evidence that the intervention increased average income for beneficiaries to USD7, 10 per day. A total of USD26 854 for 100 people translates to USD2 600 per person per annum or USD213 a month – seven times more than the average income in dry districts of Zimbabwe. This intervention contributed to increased income in dry areas used for procuring livelihood assets and food for immediate survival.

The failure to meet demand also indicates that due to food deficits in semi-arid regions of Zimbabwe, most of the producers consumed what they produced for their own survival and only sold the surplus. This explains why rural communities did not meet market demand. One local producer in Mwenezi pointed out that marula seed produces more oil than baobab, so people prefer to consume it and sell the surplus for cash income generation.

5.2.4.13.4 Producer Capacity Building

For maximum commercialisation of natural products to diversify rural livelihoods, the established or developed enterprises need to be viable, with continuous production and efficient use of machinery. The capacities of rural people need to be sound as well.

Most rural enterprises were observed to be facing viability challenges and as a result livelihood diversification became difficult to attain. Recommendations from the intervening organisations indicated that for rural enterprises to be successful, some level of entrepreneurship was required. This meant that capacity building was required to produce quality products for both food security and marketing. To achieve this, entrepreneurs were trained and capacity built in business skills such as planning, record keeping, budgeting and financial management, technology use and maintenance, quality control, and
monitoring and evaluation. However, it was difficult to assess how the training was being put to use by those trained.

**Baobab and Marula Enterprises** - Findings show that rural enterprises adopted different models. In Mwenezi district, most of them are owned by the community groups of about 15-20 people and run by a management committee of seven members. In Muzarabani most of the enterprises are run as companies wholly owned by either two or five people as shareholders but this only happened after registration of the enterprise as a company. They employ workers for the operations of the enterprises. This shows that these two models require different levels of capacity building. The main business is the production of baobab pulp, oil and cake for livelihood improvement.

The management committee and a few employees from both models were trained in basic business management aspects, technology use and performance monitoring. This was meant to improve production capacity of all baobab enterprises. Production records from the visited enterprises showed that production levels increased after capacity building training programmes. This shows that interventions in skills or human capital development aimed at diversifying rural livelihoods did improve production.

Technical experts in enterprise development from development agencies indicated that the cooperative model is difficult to manage because it accommodates an increased number of people. There are about 14 marula enterprises and two baobab enterprises in Mwenezi and nine baobab enterprises and one marula in Muzarabani. All these enterprises were provided with all necessary equipment such as oil presses and dehulling machines to start producing quality products. Technological resources are one of the most important components of enterprise capacity building.

The baobab enterprises employ local people to harvest baobab fruit for crushing, pulping and oil pressing. The enterprise records indicated that some of them received small loans from a commercial bank to facilitate their production. This is an intervention facilitated by SAFIRE as a development agency and a guarantor for the enterprises that qualified for the small loan scheme. This enabled rural entrepreneurs to access the financial capital for their personal investment as a rural livelihood option.
**Honey production enterprises** - These are modelled along the lines of associations where a group of 52 members is led by a management committee of seven members. The management committee and a few members were trained in apiary construction, fair price negotiation, standardisation of production and processing skills. Each member of the association in both Mwenezi and Gokwe districts has apiaries around his or her homestead for honey production. The target markets are local towns and communities for income generation.

Community participants indicated that a proportion of the product is channelled towards food security and household consumption. The market for honey, according to officials from the National Association for Beekeepers, is controlled by the local District Councils as honey has to be monitored and tested during marketing to avoid poisonous honey being sold. Contaminated honey is common where apiaries are set up near poisonous trees. There are specific trees that are recommended for best quality honey which beekeepers are encouraged to plant to improve bee forage.

The capacity of members of various cooperatives was improved when they were trained in beehive construction, honey harvesting and processing for marketing. The National Association officials indicated that the quality of honey has improved over time since the introduction of the interventions. To produce more quality honey to supply lucrative markets, more intensive support is needed in natural resource management, focusing on improving quality bee forage for honey production by planting recommended trees species.

**5.3 Access to and Control of Resources**

Study findings show that all study areas have different tribal and ethnic groups and gender disparities whose access to and control of rural resources vary. The wealth ranking exercise generated data to identify various categories of rural people based on their economic status. Community participants categorised wealth groups based on both their economic status, tribe differentiation and gendered inequalities. Peters (2003) found that social differentiation is well recognised in Africa but there is no single interpretive model for its understanding. Differentiation in this study is interpreted according to three models. The first differentiates by access to means of production as it results in the emergence of rich and poor categories (Cousins 1993). The second model follows ethnic and tribal lines as found by Beach and Ranger (1989). The third model also follows the gendered nature

This shows that rural people have access to different resources based on their economic and tribal differentiation, and this influences their capability to diversify livelihoods. Asset holding by each household determines its level of rural livelihood diversification during times of vulnerability. Ellis (1998:81) pointed out in his rural livelihood studies in sub-Saharan Africa that rural people require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes and no single category of assets on its own is sufficient to yield the varied livelihood outcomes that rural people seek. Below is a discussion of the social groups that households in each of the study areas fell into.
5.3.1 Access to and Control of Rural Resources in Gokwe District
The wealth ranking exercise used the ‘stone calculation’ method. In groups of 15-20, participants picked a number of stones from a pile of ten to represent the estimated number of the rich, the better-off, the poor and the very poor based on their categorisation of the wealth groups in their ward. This exercise helped in coming up with estimated figures for each category.

Wealth ranking in Gokwe identified four tribal groups linked to their economic status. This was assessed by looking at the number of rural assets they possessed such as the number of livestock, agricultural output, type of houses, number of meals per day, type of clothes worn, type of schools their children attend, school fees payment, the quality of school uniforms and shoes, and whether the household provides contract work or not. These are the indicators of access to and control of resources used during the participatory methods exercise in Gokwe and replicated in the other two districts. The following is a summary table of the findings.
Table 21: Wealth Ranking Exercise in Gokwe District (Participatory methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wealth Category</th>
<th>Asset Holding</th>
<th>Rural Lifestyle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | Rich (10%) | • 50-1500 cattle, own grinding mill, store and scotch carts  
• Over 100 goats, 10 donkeys and drives a truck  
• Large sizes of good rural arable land, house under asbestos  
• Lead farmers in contract farming and have a bank account  
• Have children working in urban areas and in the diaspora | • Eat 3 meals a day, send children to boarding schools  
• Employ local people for casual labour, have excess food supplies all the time and receive remittances from children  
• Hold positions of influence and political positions  
• Purchase agricultural produce at very low prices from the poor |
| 2 | Better-off (10%) | • Own about 20 cattle, scotch cart, 30 goats, 5 donkeys  
• Involved in contract farming and have ploughs and good arable land  
• Have chickens and house under asbestos | • Eat 3 meals a day and send children to good local schools  
• Have adequate food supplies, lead a decent rural life  
• Travel to urban areas for other services and goods  
• Afford agricultural inputs and good school uniforms and shoes |
| 3 | The Poor (50%) | • A maximum of 3 cattle, houses of homemade brick under grass  
• Borrow cotton and maize, own about 5 goats  
• Have medium size poor arable land and own about 10 chickens  
• Do not have scotch carts, ploughs and donkeys  
• Provide contract labour for the rich and run vegetable gardens for selling vegetables | • Eat a maximum of twice a day  
• Children go to local day schools but sometimes sent back home for school fees  
• Children do not have a complete uniform and use plastic sandals as school shoes, inadequate food most of the time  
• Depend on food aid mostly during difficult years |
| 4 | Very Poor (30%) | • Have no livestock either small or large, and no agricultural assets  
• No food, always begging, always work for others  
• Have one to two pole and dagger huts looking dilapidated  
• Have small piece of land that is hardly arable | • Put on torn and dirty clothing and no shoes  
• Children herd cattle for the rich in the community  
• Children do not go to school at all, even with support from the basic education assistance module  
• Go for few days without food and eat from neighbouring households |
Community participants categorised further the four identified social groups into various tribal and ethnic groups in the district. The district has four tribes, namely the Shangwe people as the original inhabitants, the Tonga people, who were moved from the Zambezi River border with Zambia in the 1960s during the construction of the Kariba dam; the Deruka, who migrated from both Masvingo and Manicaland provinces in the east and south of Zimbabwe; and finally the Ndebele people, who occupy the southern parts of the district closer to the border with Matabeleland north province. This contradicts findings by Nyambara (1999 & 2003), who identifies only the Shangwe and the Deruka. However, the findings corroborate with Nyambara’s conclusion that tribal identities were used for modernisation and development of the area during both the colonial and post-colonial era. Community level findings show that the Deruka migrated to the area as master farmers with a role to train the local inhabitants in agricultural production methods.

The poor and the very poor in Gokwe district comprise the largest category or group of people and these groups were linked to the Shangwe and the Tonga tribal groups. Their control of and access to resources is limited and they are vulnerable to external shocks. The rich and the better-off were easily grouped into one cluster of the rich because of their similar asset holding levels. These two socio-economic groups were linked to the Deruka and Ndebele tribal groups. Discussions with community participants indicate that the rich and the better-off have access to all movable and non-movable assets. They also have children who are gainfully employed as professionals in urban areas or abroad and have access to cash remittances. They own a number of rural investments such as rural stores and grinding mills powered by diesel. They send children to quality boarding schools, thereby increasing their children’s chances of upward progress in relation to academic and professional or human development.
At the community level, the rich and the better-off have access to contract farming and loans from the Agricultural Bank of Zimbabwe, because they have assets they use as collateral such as livestock, vehicles, tractors and bank accounts. They can afford to employ people in most of their agricultural production processes, leading to increased output of both cash and food crops. It was also observed that the rich are a minority and their numbers have become smaller during the past ten years as some succumbed to shocks and lost their assets whilst others relocated to prime land areas during the FTLRP. Some of the better-off lost their assets in the past ten years from droughts and through political violence that targeted smallholder farmers with noticeable wealth.

**5.3.1.1 Tribal Differentiation**

Most of the Deruka people are in the rich category. They are experienced conventional farmers, subsistence cotton farmers, rural entrepreneurs and political leaders who usually have children working abroad and in urban areas. They are well educated and their livelihoods revolve around conventional agriculture, mainly focusing on cash crops such as cotton, maize and livestock rearing. Similarly the Ndebele are generally considered better-off, have access to education and to conventional agriculture assets.

Nyambara (1999), documenting the migration of the Derukas into Gokwe, explains how traditional chiefs were moved without losing their chieftainship, so that a number of them moved to Gokwe and Muzarabani districts to become traditional leaders on land owned by other people.
In 1980 the Zanu-PF government adopted a similar policy of moving people into marginal areas for different reasons, such as promotion of conventional agriculture to increase output. This was coupled with the concept of developing rural growth point centres as a way of promoting rural development in the marginal areas. The other reason was political – most of the migrants were supporters of the ruling party. Beach and Ranger (1989) similarly show that capitalist development in rural Zimbabwe thrived on polarised and reconstructed colonial tribal and ethnic identities that prevented the development of nationally integrated identities. Tribal identities identified in this study are therefore a manifestation of polarised colonial identities.

Political volunteers from the south-eastern parts of the country were allowed to migrate to the marginal districts in the north to acquire vast tracts of agricultural land with government support for agricultural inputs and rewards for appointed traditional leaders as chiefs and headmen, while some of them were appointed into political leadership positions. The migrants were given the task of persuading rural people in these marginal areas to support ZANU-PF. Findings show that Gokwe was once considered a ZAPU district. This policy promoted the establishment of the rural rich in Gokwe at the expense of the original inhabitants.

Historically the Shangwe and Tonga depended largely on stream bank cultivation, hunting in the Chirisa Conservancy, fishing from the Sengwa River and rearing livestock. They were linked to the poor and very poor categories in the PRA wealth ranking exercise. They are considered uneducated and they do not invest in education or human capital development. PRA findings show that they used to depend on a particular tuber grass that can be ground into meal. They harvest wild fruit, particularly a wild tuber (nyenya) which is like a sweet potato. Conventional agriculture was not readily adopted and most opted for gold panning, providing contract labour to the rich, wildlife poaching from the nearby game reserves, vegetable gardening and fishing for income generation.

The Tonga people are known as ‘people of the waters’ and they inhabit the northern and western parts of the district. They are estimated to comprise the majority of the 30% of very poor people in the pie chart above. Traditionally they are hunters and fishermen from the Zambezi river. Government officials indicated that during the construction of the Kariba dam in the 1960s, most of the Tonga people were moved to southern Zambia, some
distance from the Zambezi river, where there are good soils, while most of the wildlife and a few groups of people were moved to the north-western parts of Zimbabwe including the northern and western parts of Gokwe, which is more suitable for wildlife than for human settlement, and the soil is not suitable for conventional agriculture.

The poor soil requires more water than the region receives, yet the Tonga are expected to engage in conventional agriculture, which was and is still of limited interest to them. Discussions with some of the Tonga participants during group discussions indicated that the tribe is still bitter about their forced removal from the Zambezi river banks during the construction of the Kariba dam and they feel that engaging in conventional agriculture would be tantamount to acceding to their removal from their place of origin.

The Tonga is one of the minority tribes in Zimbabwe whose culture is considered to be under threat from the majority Shona and they are not interested in mixing. Today, their livelihood activities continue to be stream bank cultivation, usually conducted during winter, and sand agriculture whereby they plant crops on the river bed just after the rivers dry up. They usually produce maize and a limited output is harvested.

Their interest in dry land agriculture is limited and they invest in non-food security crops such as cowpeas, groundnuts and some small grain crops. They engage in wildlife hunting, fishing and poaching as well as natural resources harvesting and processing, particularly baobab fruit, bark and leaves. Baobab bark is used for producing doormats, hats and handbags, which are usually sold to tourists visiting the area. Baobab leaves are used for direct consumption whilst baobab fruit pulp is used for porridge and the seeds are used to produce coffee coffee-like drink as well as baobab oil. However it was also observed that some of the Tongas are engaged in conventional agriculture, focusing on cotton production as a livelihood activity, and this indicated a change from traditional to modern agricultural activities although they are still categorised as poor.

5.3.2 Access to and Control of Rural Resources in Mwenezi District
Community level findings in Mwenezi identified four categories of people based on asset holdings and lifestyle indicators. The Central Statistical Office indicated that, based on the census of 2002, Mwenezi district has about 130 237 people. As in Gokwe, access to resources was linked to various tribal groups in the district.
### Table 22: Wealth Ranking Exercise in Mwenezi District (Source: Participatory methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wealth Category</th>
<th>Asset Holding</th>
<th>Rural Lifestyle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1 Rich (10%)**      | • 300-1500 cattle, own grinding mill, bottle store, scotch carts and ploughs, over 300 goats, drives a car  
• Owns large pieces of arable land, house under asbestos, solar panel, radio  
• Sufficient food supply with all extras such as cooking oil, tea, bread and milk, involved in various projects, not involved in contract farming  
• Has a bank account, does not receive donor aid  
• Has children working in urban areas and/or the diaspora, particularly in South Africa                                                                 | • Eats three heavy meals a day with extras in between  
• Sends children to high profile boarding schools  
• Employs local people for casual labour  
• Has excess food supplies all the time and also sends some for the market  
• Receives remittances from children on a monthly basis  
• Hold positions of influence and political positions  
• Sell various goods to local people                                                                                                                                 |
| **2 The Better-Off (20%)** | • Owns less than 15 cattle, scotch cart but homemade model, about 20 goats  
• Sells goods but of poor quality, involved in contract farming and fishing  
• Has good arable land and chickens  
• Children go to government day schools  
• House under rural thatch                                                                 | • Eats at most two meals a day, limited to adequate food supplies, leads an in-between rural life  
• Travels to urban areas for other services and goods  
• Can buy some agricultural inputs but not in large quantities  
• Children have complete school uniforms and shoes, some gainfully employed                                                                                                                                 |
| **3 The Poor (50%)**   | • Has goats but no cattle, huts under thatch grass, borrow cotton and maize seed  
• Sells nutritional garden products such as tomatoes, vegetables and onions, medium size piece of poor but arable land  
• Owns about 10 chickens, no scotch carts, ploughs or donkeys  
• Sometimes provides contract labour for the rich, runs nutritional gardens for selling vegetables  
• Very involved in gold panning, contract farming and fishing  
• Very involved in donor supported projects                                                                 | • Eat a maximum of two meals a day but not always  
• Children go to local day schools but sometimes sent back home for school fees  
• Children go to school with no uniforms and shoes, inadequate food most of the time, depend on food aid mostly  
• cannot afford to procure agricultural inputs, poor clothing  
• Some children in the diaspora but not sending anything back home                                                                                                                                 |
| **4 The Poorest (20%)**| • Orphan-headed households, widows, the elderly with no family  
• Has no livestock, either small or large, no agricultural assets  
• Ragged clothing, no food, always begging  
• Always works for others, lives in one to two dilapidated pole and mud huts  
• Has small piece of arable land, no access to education  
• Sometimes engages in gold panning but has no tools, receives donor aid  
• Not engaged in contract farming, but in harvesting of non-timber forest products                                                                 | • Put on torn and dirty clothing and no shoes  
• Children herd cattle for the rich in the community  
• Children do not go to school at all, even with support from donors  
• Go for few days without food and eat from neighbouring households                                                                                                                                 |
Using the stone exercise the rich social group is estimated at 10% of the total population and has access to important livelihood assets compared to the better-off, the poor and the very poor and they control most of the rural resources.

The rich were accused of engaging in various development projects despite having adequate rural assets. They send children to private or mission boarding schools, employ rural poor for casual labour, and send agricultural products including meat to the market. They benefit from cash and goods remittances from family members and children working in the diaspora and urban areas, and they hold political positions of influence in the community.

The better-off category is between the rich and the poor, and is also estimated at 10% of the total population. They also have access to most of the resources and assets similar to the rich but at a lower level. During periods of food scarcity they depend on livestock in the form of milk and meat as well as selling meat. It was noted that although they have children employed in the cities or diaspora who send money home, these children are not in high status jobs like those of the rich, and so what they send home is limited.

*Figure 23: Wealth Categorisation of People in Mwenezi*

The pie chart shows that the rural poor are estimated at 50% of the total community population. They own small herds of five to ten cattle per household, about 20 chickens, have inadequate agricultural equipment, provide contract labour to the rich, engage in vegetable gardening for cash income generation, benefit from food distribution support by NGOs and government, and increasingly engage in gold and diamond panning. They may have two meals a day but experience shortages of food during a particular period of the
year. They have been increasingly engaged in wood carvings, fishing and donor funded projects as livelihood activities.

The lowest ranked are the poorest, estimated at 20% of the total community population. They own no key livelihood assets such as livestock, do not send children to school, and are mostly orphan- or widow-headed households. They are mostly dependent on food and donor support from development agencies. They also engage in gold panning, fishing and harvesting of non-timber forest products, particularly mopane worms for consumption and local selling. Their involvement in conventional agriculture is very limited because they have no access to basic agricultural assets and agricultural inputs. Their asset holding is very poor and their lifestyle is characterised by food shortages, torn and dirty clothing and their huts are of poles and mud, in a very poor state.

5.3.2.1 Tribal Differentiation
The wealth ranking exercise in Mwenezi also revealed that wealth is linked to tribal affiliation. The local tribes are the Pfumbi, Shangani, Karanga and Ndebele. The Pfumbi people are the original inhabitants of the district, who are considered uneducated and who inhabit the western and south-western parts of the district. They are largely livestock breeders and the men have multiple wives and children for labour and protection. Despite limited levels of education, a big herd of cattle and flock of sheep and goats is a sign of higher social status. Interviews revealed that the Pfumbi people do not slaughter their livestock for household consumption and are reluctant to sell them for income generation during times of crisis because they represent wealth and social status.

However, the trend among the Pfumbi of not disposing livestock easily for other livelihood activities has since changed due to the economic crisis, worsened by the politically charged environment. Although findings largely link the tribe to the poor category, it has a mixture of rich, better-off, poor and poorest within it. Each household has to be understood on its own and in this culture having shops and sending children to boarding schools is not a sign of wealth, owning large numbers of livestock is. This generally means they have access to resources including control over water points, and they now dictate the market price of livestock at all market points. Bernstein (2007) pointed out that rural social differentiation is fluid and blurred, and sometimes difficult to operationalise.
PRA findings show that despite having access to livestock, most of the Pfumbi are very poor. Their access to other livelihood assets such as crop production and financial assets is limited. Their lifestyles are characterised by food shortages, houses under pole and grass and large numbers of children not going to school. This shows that having access to one livelihood asset does not necessarily improve a household’s economic status. As they don’t subscribe to Western education all members of the household stay in the rural areas and no remittances are sent home.

The Shangani people inhabit the eastern, southern and central parts of Mwenezi. They are also cattle breeders and historically they were pushed further east, closer to Gonarezhou National Park, to create more space for commercial cattle ranching during the colonial era. The soil of the eastern part of the district is poor, being stony and not productive agriculturally. During the FTLRP some Shangani people re-invaded the white-owned commercial cattle ranching areas and wildlife conservancies for agricultural purposes, claiming back their land. These areas became new cotton producing areas.

These newly resettled areas fall within ecological region four, which receives annual rainfall between 300-450mm. Community level findings show a changing trend from largely livestock rearing to a combination of cotton production and livestock. Some Shangani engage in contract farming. They were categorised as the poor and the very poor of the district. This shows that among the Shangani tribe, there are all socio-economic groups from the rich to the poor and the very poor, according to the social differentiation and asset holding PRA exercise.

This tribe has an increased number of women in the community due to the migration of men and young boys to neighbouring countries for employment. Children among the tribe are not well educated because young boys cross the border before completing basic education. Community level findings show that some people among this tribe received an increased inflow of cash and food remittances from neighbouring countries. This is also the tribe that has benefited most from irrigation schemes and has the highest number of women in those communities.

The Karanga tribe occupy the north and north eastern parts of the district. Some of them also moved to occupy the southern parts to gain access to former cattle ranching and
wildlife conservancies for cotton production. Findings from both interviews and the participatory methods show that the Karangas are considered more educated and better off than other tribes. The northern parts of the district they occupy fall within ecological region three, with annual rainfall between 600-800mm. The tribe concentrate on conventional agriculture and vegetable gardening coupled with livestock rearing as the main livelihood activities.

The rich among the tribe have houses under asbestos and bricks, small businesses such as rural stores, send children to private boarding schools and have sons and daughters who are employed in urban areas and the diaspora. The majority of the Karanga tribe constitutes the majority of both the rich and the better-off in Mwenezi district. This information indicates that some of the identified livelihood activities in the dry districts of Zimbabwe are based on access to resources and control of rural assets by different tribes and their historical backgrounds.

5.3.3 Access to and Control of Resources in Muzarabani District
The wealth ranking exercise in Muzarabani produced slightly different categories compared with the other two study areas. Three major groups were identified reflecting the socio-economic differences in the district. However, there are similarities in a number of areas, particularly concerning asset holding and linkages between tribes and the socio-economic categories identified during wealth ranking exercise.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wealth Category</th>
<th>Asset Holding</th>
<th>Rural Lifestyle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Rich (10%)</td>
<td>80-300 cattle, over 150 goats, owns grinding mill and bottle store</td>
<td>Eats three heavy meals a day with extras in between</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drives a car, has ox-drawn carts, ploughs, large pieces of good arable land, house has asbestos roof, solar panel, radio</td>
<td>Sends children to high profile boarding schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sufficient food supply with all extras such as cooking oil, tea with bread and milk, involved in various projects and not involved in contract farming</td>
<td>Employs local people for casual labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has a bank account, does not receive donor aid</td>
<td>Has excess food supplies all the time and also sends some for the market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has children working in urban areas and in the diaspora, particularly in South Africa</td>
<td>Receives remittances from children on a monthly basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hold positions of influence and political positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sell various goods to local people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> The Poor (60%)</td>
<td>Has goats and two to five cattle, huts have thatch roofs, borrows cotton and maize seeds</td>
<td>Eat a maximum of two meals a day but not always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sells nutritional garden products such as tomatoes, vegetables and onions, medium size plot of poor but arable land</td>
<td>Children go to local day schools but sometimes sent back home for school fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Owns about 10 chickens, no ox-drawn carts, ploughs or donkeys</td>
<td>Children go to school with no uniforms and shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes provides contract labour for the rich, runs nutritional gardens for selling vegetables</td>
<td>Have inadequate food most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very involved in gold panning, contract farming, fishing and donor supported projects</td>
<td>Depend on food aid mostly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cannot afford to procure agricultural inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wear poor clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some children in the diaspora but not remitting anything back home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> The Poorest (30%)</td>
<td>Household is headed by orphans, widows or the elderly</td>
<td>Wear torn and dirty clothing and no shoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has no livestock, small or large, and no agricultural assets</td>
<td>Children herd cattle for the rich in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor and torn clothing, no food, always begging, always works for others</td>
<td>Children do not go to school at all, even with support from donors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has one to two dilapidated pole and mud huts, small piece of land that is barely arable</td>
<td>Go for few days without food and eat from neighbouring households</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No access to education, sometimes engage in gold panning but has no tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Receives donor aid, not engaged in cotton contract farming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Engaged in harvesting of non-timber forest products such as baobab and masau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The stone exercise indicated that the first category of ‘rich’ is estimated at 10% of the community. They own between 80 and 500 cattle, about 150 goats, grinding mills and rural stores including butcheries; they drive old vehicles and live in brick houses under asbestos with a solar system. They have children working in urban areas and surplus food, and provide contract work to the poor. They have access to all resources including political leadership positions to influence rural development policy in their respective communities.

Figure 24: Wealth Categorisation of People in Muzarabani

(Analysed from figures from participatory data calculations)

As indicated in the pie chart the poor are estimated at about 60% of the rural people. They have fewer assets and a less attractive rural lifestyle. They own three to six cattle, two donkeys, about 10-15 goats and sheep and about 20 chickens. Their huts have thatched roofs, they borrow agricultural inputs from others or they work for their agricultural inputs. They provide contract labour to the rich and engage in gold panning and fishing for survival to supplement other livelihood activities.

They eat two meals a day, wear sub-standard clothing and their agricultural output does not guarantee food security. They are largely supported by NGOs for rural livelihood improvement in the form of vegetable gardening and food assistance over a long period of time. They send their children to local day schools with incomplete school uniforms and limited learning materials. They do not engage in contract farming because they have no access to cotton production inputs. They have limited access to and control of resources important for livelihoods.
The third category is of the very poor, estimated at about 30% of the people in the community. Their pole and mud huts under grass roofs are in a poor state and usually accommodate a family of six in one hut. They have no access to education due to lack of financial resources and sometimes engage in gold panning. They do not receive agricultural support from NGOs and therefore they are not engaged in agricultural production due to lack of agricultural inputs. They are mostly engaged in the harvesting and marketing of non-timber forest products.

Most rural people who benefit from the commercialisation of non-timber forest products are not the very poor but the poor, who have limited education compared to the very poor, who have no access to education at all. PRA data shows that children from very poor households herd cattle for the rich households as a livelihood strategy. They are sometimes paid with food packages rather than cash. These findings show that the very poor and the poor combined constitute about 90% of the population in Muzarabani, compared to Gokwe’s 80% and Mwenezi’s 70%.

5.3.3.1 Tribal Differentiation
The district has distinct tribes, the majority being the original inhabitants, the Tavara sub-tribe of the Korekore; as well as the Karanga who, like the Deruka in Gokwe, are migrants into the district. The Tavara tribe occupies the major part of the district that falls under ecological region four, the semi-arid region along the Zambezi river.

This district has few government day schools and there are no notable boarding schools. This means the children from poor households have access to low quality education due to poor educational facilities. The Tavara is the tribe linked to about 90% of both the very poor and the poor. They have limited access to rural resources, do not occupy positions of influence and do not have the education to occupy them.

The Tavara people are historically linked to stream bank cultivation, hunting and fishing, and dominate the harvesting and marketing of natural resources in the district. They rarely send their children to school and do not subscribe to the notion of human capital development as a long-term livelihood asset that requires investment. The findings also show that even if they develop an interest in sending their children to school, they do not
have access to the financial resources to do so. Tavara girl children are often married at about 15 years old.

The Tavara people, the original inhabitants of Muzarabani district, herd cattle and work for the Karangas (Derukas) who migrated from other provinces attracted by government incentives such as land and the booming cotton production of the early 1980s. The Karangas and Manyikas (Derukas) constitute the rich category in Muzarabani. They are well educated and send their children to better equipped schools outside the district for human capital investment. They invest in conventional agriculture as their main livelihood. They have a number of physical assets such as livestock both small and large, corrugated houses, ox-drawn carts and their agricultural output in both cash crops (cotton) and food security crops is high.

Their sons and daughters are formally employed in urban areas and send remittances to rural areas. They occupy various positions of influence in the district, particularly political positions and traditional leadership positions granted by the colonial and post-colonial government. In all study areas, although tribal groups are distinct, intermarriage is blurring tribal lines but it was also observed that despite intermarriage, people still maintain their tribal identities.

5.3.4 Consolidated Access to and Control of Rural Resources by the Poor in Semi-Arid Districts

Generally wealth ranking exercise findings in all the study areas show that the rich are the minority, constituting about 10% in each study area. They are smallholder farmers with access to agricultural inputs; they do contract farming and have livestock to fall back on in adverse times. The findings also show that on average the very poor constitute 20-30% of the total population in the three study areas, a very high proportion of vulnerable people. The poor constitute 50-60%, which is also a high percentage of people to be vulnerable to adverse conditions. There are similarities in the asset holdings by the rich in all study areas. Their rural lives are well diversified as reflected by multiple assets and various portfolios that support their financial, human, physical, social and natural capital. The rich have access to and control of all important resources and assets compared to the poor and the very poor.
The better-off category identified in Gokwe and Mwenezi districts was not found in Muzarabani, indicating that the better-off are part of the rich category but the difference is in the levels of their surplus. They have three meals a day, the same as the rich, indicating that they have access to adequate resources, unlike the poor and the very poor, who on average have a single meal per day.

5.3.4.1 Consolidated Tribal Differentiation
The findings identified various tribes linked to different wealth ranking categories. Generally the original inhabitants – the Shangwe and the Tonga in Gokwe, the Tavara in Muzarabani and the Pfumbi and the Shangani in Mwenezi – were socially differentiated as the poor and the very poor. However, this does not mean that all households from these tribes in all the study areas were poor – some were rich. The findings showed that the migrants from the south constitute the majority of the rich and the better-off in all three study areas and are from the same tribe. Ranger (1989) found the same tribal identities determined access to and control of rural resources in the country.

This has a strong bearing in determining rural development in the dry areas of Zimbabwe where rural development interventions did not recognise the differences between the different tribes and their livelihoods. The very poor are usually food assistance recipients, a short-term solution, whilst the rich benefit from long-term interventions in agricultural support, particularly contract farming in cotton production, and other large communally-owned programme interventions such as small dam rehabilitation and other infrastructure and agricultural support. At the same time, it was observed that just because one tribe is not educated that does not mean that they are automatically poor. The Pfumbi have large herds as an indicator of high societal status and wealth in Mwenezi. Other tribes such as the Tavara and the Shangwe in Muzarabani and Gokwe consider wildlife hunting and wild fruit harvesting and control as a sign of wealth and higher social status. Most interventions have based wealth assessments on modern assets and conventional Western agriculture, without looking at the specific livelihood activities particular to each tribe. As a result the preferred livelihood activities of each specific tribal group are ignored in development with more focus on what is perceived by NGOs or the government as appropriate for the rural people.
5.3.4.2 Gender Role Differentiation

Using gender analysis different identified livelihood activities were assigned to each gender category, either male or female, during the period under study. It was observed in all study areas that the role of women has been changing. The study found that women have increasingly been diversifying/adopting different livelihood strategies. This corroborates with findings by Mariwo (2008) in her study of rural Mutoko that the position of rural women has greatly improved due to the increasingly entrepreneurial and enterprising characteristics exhibited by rural women, who were already highly skilled in ways not previously appreciated. Gender role differentiation was observed as a strategy for survival, in households where both the husband and wife are alive. The following table is a summary of consolidated data on gender role differentiation.
### Table 24: Consolidated Gender Analysis on Rural Livelihoods in Dry Districts of Zimbabwe (source: Participatory methods)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Livelihood Activity</th>
<th>Women’s Roles</th>
<th>Associated Reasons</th>
<th>Men’s Roles</th>
<th>Associated Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Crop Production</td>
<td>-Production of groundnuts, round nuts, cowpeas, and vegetables&lt;br&gt; -Lead in harvesting small grains</td>
<td>-Considered female crops&lt;br&gt; -Land belongs to husbands so women are allocated plots for soft crops, assist husbands in all crop production</td>
<td>-Cash crop production such as cotton&lt;br&gt; -Food security crop production such as maize and small grains</td>
<td>-Have primary rights to all household land so decide on all crops for each year&lt;br&gt; -Responsible for cash income generation in the household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Livestock Rearing</td>
<td>-Responsible for rearing chickens, goats, pigs and rabbits</td>
<td>-Do not own large livestock, own small livestock for household consumption, property usually taken by relatives upon their death so property accumulation is limited</td>
<td>-All large livestock such as cattle, donkeys even goats and sheep</td>
<td>-Men are the heads of the household&lt;br&gt; -Large livestock used for paying bride price for the sons so it’s a male asset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Poaching</td>
<td>-Responsible for carrying from the bush and for drying meat and cooking</td>
<td>-A difficult activity associated with risk so suitable for men</td>
<td>-Hunting all types of wildlife</td>
<td>-Men are real warriors who can even fight dangerous wild animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Projects</td>
<td>-The majority of recipients</td>
<td>-Responsible for running the household although they are not the head.</td>
<td>-Limited number involved in projects</td>
<td>-Claim that projects are for the lazy and mainly women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Selling</td>
<td>-Women are responsible</td>
<td>-To generate cash for household survival</td>
<td>-Men only sell large livestock</td>
<td>-Associated with masculinity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Nutritional gardening</td>
<td>-Dominated by women</td>
<td>-Quick selling horticultural products for survival</td>
<td>-Few are engaged</td>
<td>-For cash income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Food Aid</td>
<td>-Dominated by women</td>
<td>-Women control food in the household</td>
<td>-Limited number</td>
<td>-Inhibited by their wives because of the small house challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Gold &amp; Diamond Panning</td>
<td>-Women are involved</td>
<td>-For cash income generation</td>
<td>-Men are equally involved</td>
<td>-For household survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Contract Labour</td>
<td>-Women are part of it</td>
<td>-For food and cash income</td>
<td>-Men are part of it including children</td>
<td>-For household survival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Wild Fruits</td>
<td>-Women are dominant in harvesting and processing</td>
<td>-For food security and cash income</td>
<td>-Limited number and in specific fruit such as masau</td>
<td>-For cash income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Wood carvings</td>
<td>-Women not involved</td>
<td>-Not their domain</td>
<td>-Dominated by men</td>
<td>-For cash income as a survival strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Stealing</td>
<td>-Limited number</td>
<td>-Not head of the households</td>
<td>-Dominated by men</td>
<td>-A survival strategy for those without options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Fishing</td>
<td>-Not involved</td>
<td>-Remain at home for other activities</td>
<td>-Male domain</td>
<td>-Traditional beliefs that women are not associated with fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Remittances</td>
<td>-All part of it</td>
<td>-All benefit</td>
<td>-Part of it</td>
<td>-All benefit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table shows that men and women are involved in various activities to diversify their portfolios and increase their chances of survival. The two prioritised livelihood activities of cash crop agriculture and large livestock are male dominated whilst women only have usufruct rights. Women have limited rights to select land with good soils for their own crop production. They are allocated a piece of land by their husbands for soft crop production such as groundnuts, cowpeas and round nuts. Community level findings show that women are considered to have secondary rights in agricultural production. In female-headed households women decide where they will plant what, but in female-headed households with older male children, decisions on crop production are made by the eldest male child, as he takes over the role played by the father.

Gender analysis results show that most of the agricultural inputs support by government or NGOs targeted husbands in situations where both spouses survive. However, for female-headed households the target was the head of the household. It was found that large livestock rearing is dominated by men. Women are responsible for rearing small livestock such as chickens, goats and pigs that are easy to dispose of. This is influenced by the fact that a married woman’s property is considered the property of her original family. As a result they are not expected to own large livestock and property which would cause problems for her children if she died.

The table shows that poaching, fishing and wood carving are linked to men whilst women are relegated to the so-called ‘soft’ livelihood activities of growing and selling vegetables, contract labour, harvesting wild fruit and receiving food aid, as well as engaging in most donor funded projects.

Women are dominant in all donor funded projects such as vegetable gardening, irrigation schemes, rehabilitation of small dams and commercialisation of non-timber forest products. This shows that targeting rural women, who are considered a vulnerable group by NGOs, has made women the largest group of recipients of NGO support in all study areas. Mariwo (2008) argues that such targeting leaves women not benefiting from real development projects but only from petty projects that do not address real issues of development. Community level findings show that women are an obvious target for NGOs because they are responsible for providing food for the household in a society depleted of men by labour migration and HIV-AIDS. Women accused some men of irresponsibility for
engaging in extra-marital affairs and drinking, which distracts them from their duties to provide food for the household.

While gold and diamond panning was considered a male activity, findings from the gender analysis show that during the period under study, women were increasingly engaged in it, despite the risks. Gold and diamond panning are associated with confrontations with government security agents, who use force and dogs to prevent panning in all prohibited areas. This shows a shift in the gendered nature of rural livelihoods.

Community level findings show that single mothers, unmarried women and widows largely engaged in gold and diamond panning because of the lure of ready cash associated with it, unlike fishing and wildlife poaching which are risky and associated with limited cash income. This shows that the involvement of women in specific risk-associated livelihood activities also depends on the level of returns in that activity. Generally, the findings show that during the period under study most women engaged in various livelihood activities including those dominated by men as a survival strategy.

5.4 Consolidated Changing Institutional Arrangements and Policy Development

Using participatory analysis methods various institutional arrangements and policies were discussed to ascertain how they enabled or inhibited rural livelihood development during the past decade. Rural people at community level were critical of the institutional arrangements and some of the policy changes that restricted their livelihood options. This resulted in increasing emergence of informal livelihood activities. In sharp contrast, leadership from the district level down are enthusiastic about the various institutional arrangements and policy changes made during the past decade. This shows a disjuncture in perceptions between above and below of how supportive institutional arrangements are.

The study shows that there is a limited understanding of various policies and institutional arrangements at community level. Most of the information in this section was obtained through interviews with people from the various government departments, NGOs, Rural District Council officials and other influential people. However, it was found out that a number of institutional arrangements and policies have inhibited rural livelihood development rather than assisted it. Below is a discussion of specific institutional arrangements at district level and how they were found to have enabled or inhibited rural livelihood development during the period under study.
5.4.1 The Centralisation of Rural District Councils

Most smallholder farmers do not understand how Rural District Councils are organised and how they are supposed to support rural development. Interviews with Rural District Council officials in all study areas show that Rural District Councils are run according to the Rural District Councils Act of 1980 (amended in 1981, 1982, 1989 and 2005) as it is applied to communal lands. This act revived the local government system in line with majority rule after the period of guerrilla insurgency, and consolidated the previously fragmented authorities from 224 rural councils under colonial rule to 55 in 1980 and now 59.

The consolidation of rural councils enabled the democratisation of the system of local government. However, this has since changed as Rural District Councils consist of both elected officials and those members nominated by the president through the minister responsible. The information gathered shows that the consolidation was done through the amalgamation of Rural Councils and District Councils to end a dual system of local government in rural Zimbabwe – a colonial legacy of separate development institutions based on race – and to permit a more equitable distribution of public services and rural resources.

According to interviews with key informants in government, Rural District Councils have an enabling role in rural livelihood development and improvement through the provision of a range of services, including basic education and health, sanitation, housing and social welfare, which are all part of human capital development. Through the Rural District Councils the government provides infrastructure in all agricultural development programmes such as borehole drilling, irrigation schemes development, construction of clinics, schools, dip tanks, disease control, and the provision of agricultural inputs at designated ward points. This is in contrast to the findings from the PRA exercises, which showed that people find these points inaccessible.

Through departments based at the district level, the government in theory plays an enabling role by developing and maintaining rural infrastructure such as road and transport networks, and engages in some business ventures to generate income to help finance service provision to rural communities.
However, there are many challenges to the way this is arranged and how various functions are allocated, particularly between different levels of government. Study findings show that it is not apparent where central government activities should stop and where local authorities should start. This corroborates with Mutizwa-Mangiza’s (1990) study of the dual local government system in Zimbabwe. They noted the issue of overlapping activities from central government to local government as a source of controversy in some areas regarding various services such as primary education. The Ministry of Education centralises vital elements and delegates a few to Rural District Councils. Although the central government provides education in the country, the support and maintenance of rural schools is the responsibility of local authorities but central government controls administration. However, a number of overlaps inhibit the role of Rural District Councils in providing human capital development through basic education services to the poor in rural communities.

Although the Rural District Council has authority and general powers relating to the administration of a local government authority and legislation regarding rural development, this has not happened as expected, particularly during the past decade. The findings show that as bylaws are made by the council they have to be approved by the responsible minister, who can rescind the resolutions or approve changes without consultation with the responsible local authority. This means that central government can interfere in specific development resolutions at the local district level. This has delayed and derailed some of the rural development plans by local authorities.

Since independence there have been important institutional changes that broadly favour decentralisation to ensure development of the neglected former tribal trust lands. However, this was accompanied by lack of financial autonomy, limited influence of the local authorities over their development plans, limited powers of taxation and the dominance of the central government, limiting the enabling role of this institution to foster rural development in the communities in its jurisdiction.

Most of the powers of the local authority are checked and controlled by the minister responsible, resulting in the centralisation of local authority. The responsible minister has substantial control over the finances of a council, and also approves any borrowings by any council, even if it is in the interests of the people the council serves. The minister has
powers to give directions to a Rural District Council, to ask for reports and to investigate the affairs of the council. This has adversely affected development.

According to the act, the minister can dismiss a democratically elected councillor on certain specified grounds, such as gross mismanagement of funds, property or affairs of the council. In addition to democratically elected councillors, the minister appoints 25% of the total number of councillors as ‘special interest’ councillors. Most rural district councillors from the MDC interviewed in all study areas indicated that the ZANU-PF Local Government Minister had been dismissing MDC councillors to ensure Rural District Councils are largely loyal to ZANU-PF. This has resulted in continued political tension in Zimbabwe even after the GPA. For most MDC councillors, this is a major concern affecting and inhibiting rural development in rural Zimbabwe. This corroborates with findings by Frendenburger (1994) that the operational context of any development activities affects the livelihood diversification efforts of the poor in marginalised areas.

Rural District Councils are overwhelmingly dependent upon grants from central government, but they are tied to specific purposes, and this result in the centralisation of all financial powers. On average, the districts raise only about 15% of their total revenue through local taxes on the marketing of wildlife, livestock and other local products, rates for local services and other charges. Their income declined because they no longer have white commercial farmers who used to bring in revenue for Rural District Councils before the FTLRP. The rest of the operational income and capital for rural development projects such as roads, infrastructure development comes in the form of ring-fenced transfers from central government.

For the decade under study most Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe were run by appointed councillors from ZANU-PF by the Minister of Local Government, who has held the position for the past twelve years. Issues such as natural resources, agricultural production, and marketing of rural products, infrastructure development, educational support and land issues are dealt with by the Rural District Council through officials and their functionaries, headed by the chief executive of the rural council. However, since the GPA the elected MDC councillors have not executed their duties as expected because of the excessive powers of the minister. The act was amended again in 2008 before the harmonised elections when ZANU-PF had the majority in parliament to ensure that a
ZANU-PF minister controlled local authorities that might have been won by the MDC. The changes were intended to ensure that local development in rural communities was centrally controlled rather than being seen as driven by the democratically elected MDC councillors. Evans and Ngau (1991) observed that an unfavourable macroeconomic and policy context inevitably constrained livelihood diversification and development at any given period.

Observations made at one Rural Council meeting in Mwenezi district show that security agents from the army, Central Intelligence Organisation, police, traditional leadership and ZANU-PF sit in Rural District Council meetings as ministerial appointees for rural development programmes. This change was introduced to frustrate the MDC councillors, who in addition are not allowed to chair the meetings even if elected to do so because the chair is reserved for the District Administrator – who is also an appointee of the minister.

These measures have helped to limit rural development in rural communities, as most local bylaws and policies are no longer based on the need for development but aimed at political protection and the prevention of political penetration into rural areas by other political parties.

5.4.2 The Controlled Traditional Authority
Study findings from interviews with traditional leaders in all the study areas show that they retained their powers after independence through the Traditional Leaders Act (1998) (amended in 2004). The act gives all chiefs, headmen and village heads the powers to co-ordinate development, allocate land as agents of the Rural District Council, manage natural resources, preserve and maintain family life, culture, health and education, keep population records, try a range of community crimes, and collect levies and taxes payable to the Rural District Council. Thus for all rural communities, the most common form of local governance is the traditional and customary one, which is given the authority of statute and which runs parallel to and, in some instances, in conjunction with Provincial and Rural District Councils.

In terms of the amended act, traditional leaders may have their houses electrified for free by the government, are allocated vehicles to enable them carry out their duties and receive a monthly salary from the government. Traditional leaders now adjudicate more
political, social and economic issues and disputes in their areas of jurisdiction than before the re-enactment of the Traditional Leaders Act.

However, data from participatory methods indicated that communities are not aware of the existence of the Traditional Leaders Act except for a few in the civil service. Information from interviews with Rural District Council officials indicated that these changes in the powers of traditional leadership have contributed to the politicisation of all development work in the study areas. Traditional leaders have slowly been co-opted into politics by ZANU-PF to protect rural areas from the opposition through gifts and salaries.

According to the act, all traditional leaders are appointed on the basis of custom, which is governed by hereditary, rather than elective democratic principles. However, findings show that this was not followed, particularly after the FTLRP. Information gathered from community participants indicated that only people who are politically acceptable and have liberation war credentials were appointed village heads and headmen in all A1 models of villagised resettlement areas, particularly in the prime land areas of Muzarabani and Mwenezi districts. They were chosen by the newly resettled people with the approval of the district administrator and the local chief. Candidates deemed unsuitable by ZANU-PF were rejected. According to the Traditional Leaders Act, traditional leaders must not be influenced by any considerations of race, tribe, place of origin, creed, gender or political affiliation when carrying out their duties, and are not eligible for election to parliament. However, findings from participatory methods show that from the three study areas a total of five traditional leaders were elected as members of parliament, indicating that the act was violated.

The institution of chiefdoms is constitutionally recognised and established and all chiefs in the country are appointed by the president through the Ministry of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development, having due consideration to the prevailing customary principles of succession applicable to the community over which the chief is to preside. The president in most practical cases must appoint a person nominated by those in the community who traditionally determine issues of succession. However, the study found out that there is shift from custom towards political appointments in the installation of traditional leadership.
This shift has generated conflict in households with legitimate claims to the traditional leadership. In some communities instructions given by the appointed traditional leadership are not heeded; this can impede projects such as agricultural input distribution and infrastructure maintenance. Some people do not attend meetings convened by traditional leaders deemed inappropriately appointed.

Among the extensive duties and powers of chiefs is ensuring that communal land is allocated in accordance with the Communal Lands Act of 1982 amended in 2001. They ensure that laws regarding the use and occupation of communal resettlement land are observed, and oversee the collection of village levies, taxes, rates and charges payable to the Rural District Council.

They adjudicate in and resolve disputes relating to land in their jurisdiction, and are meant to ensure that the land and its natural resources are exploited in terms of the law, particularly clauses controlling cultivation, overgrazing, and indiscriminate destruction of flora and fauna and illegal settlements. The chief also has powers to ensure that no public property, including roads and bridges, telephone and electricity lines, dip tanks and animal health centres, clinics, churches, cattle-sale pens, schools and so on are damaged. These are some of the key functions of the chief laid out in the Traditional Leaders Act.

Village heads (sabhuku) are meant to assist chiefs and headmen and carry out their instructions, lead a village in all traditional, customary and cultural matters, promote sound morals and good and social conduct, and ensure that land is utilised in accordance with the law, as well as maintain an up-to-date register of names of the inhabitants of the village and their settlement permits. The PRA findings show that the qualitative and territorial jurisdiction of traditional chiefs, headmen and village heads overlap in most respects.

Community discussions revealed that during the past decade people were threatened with eviction by village heads if they were believed not to be loyal to ZANU-PF. Traditional leadership at all levels became very powerful during the past decade due to increased political control. Village heads and other traditional leaders were given the authority to distribute government-led agricultural support, another process that targets only those loyal to ZANU-PF and jeopardises the livelihoods of those left out. Moyo (2005) also
concluded that political affiliation became one tool for social differentiation during the past decade that determined access to and control of livelihood resources.

5.4.3 Ineffective Community Level Development Committees
The Venn diagrams indicate that the village development and ward development committees were not playing their role. The functions of these committees, prescribed by the Rural District Councils Act, are to propose and consider development plans, which would then be forwarded to the next level.

According to the act, these community level development structures are intended to foster a ‘bottom-up’ participatory approach to development. They are also meant to deal with development interventions introduced by the government, development agencies and NGOs in their villages and local communities. However, their role of initiating local development plans for onward approval by the Rural District Councils has been usurped by the Rural District Council itself, through the centralisation of all planning powers by the minister.

Field officers for the ministries of Agriculture, Gender, Women's Affairs and Community Development, Youth Development and Indigenisation, Health and Child Welfare are represented at the ward level. As a result, all policies from the respective government ministries are implemented at the district and community level together with the various bylaws developed by each Rural District Council according to its socio-economic activities. This is done under tight control of the central government, which has rendered most of the local planning structures ineffective.

5.4.4 National Policies and District Bylaws that Affect Dry Districts in Zimbabwe
Specific policies linked to rural livelihoods in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe were examined to assess whether they have enabled or inhibited rural livelihood development during the period under study in view of the changing political environment.

5.4.4.1 The Grain Marketing Act of 1991
Interviews with Grain Marketing Board (GMB) officials revealed that the board was established to regulate the production, storage and marketing of all cereal and non-cereal agricultural products in the country. It is run by appointees of the Minister of Agriculture in consultation with the president. The act empowers the minister to declare any agricultural product a controlled product, and the GMB to declare a monopoly over the purchase and
sale of any controlled product. Interviews with agricultural extension workers at district level indicate that the GMB’s extensive powers have had different implications for the livelihoods of people in semi-arid districts of the country during the past decade.

In 2004 most smallholder farmers growing maize were unable to sell it because it was declared a controlled product due to national food shortages. The GMB’s powers include setting prices and forbidding people to store any grain declared a controlled product, as well as outlawing the sale of the product to any institution other than the board itself. Transactions among rural people were restricted to two bags, or 100kg. All purchases in excess of this were confiscated by the police. This exacerbated the food crisis in most semi-arid areas. The transportation of maize was limited to a few bags which were not enough for households considering distances travelled and related costs.

The restriction on the movement of a controlled product in and out of any area had severe implications for semi-arid districts that relied on purchasing agricultural products from other districts. The GMB provided storage, handling and processing facilities for controlled products, and maintained stocks of them where considered necessary. Interviews revealed that agricultural inputs necessary for the production of food staples like maize were also declared controlled products.

The GMB’s absolute control over the movement, sale and purchase of the nation’s staple diet made it a powerful weapon, and one which was abused to control the livelihoods of rural people in semi-arid and marginal areas.

During the period of food shortages, particularly the period 2006-2008, the GMB had the power to ensure that only those who showed themselves favourably disposed politically had access to maize? The board was influenced by various local government authorities, including the traditional leadership, which itself was tightly controlled by the central government. Traditional leaders, chiefs and headmen were instructed on various occasions by the GMB to sell and distribute maize and inputs to people strictly according to political criteria. Those found to be politically incorrect were denied access to it.

5.4.4.2 Reviving and Tightening the Agricultural Marketing Act
The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1989 regulates and administers the marketing of all agricultural products. It provides for the imposition and collection of levies on producers,
buyers and processors of all agricultural products. The authority established through this act is empowered to promote marketing and fair pricing of any agricultural product. It is mandated to promote contract farming of crops considered strategic by the minister. It promotes fair marketing of agricultural products but its relationship with the Grain Marketing Act is not clear because it also covers the marketing of grain, yet in this act the GMB is not referred to.

Interviews with cotton company officials revealed that in September 2009, the Agricultural Marketing Authority (AMA) for seed cotton and its products amended the Agricultural Marketing Act to focus more closely on cotton products. The move was intended to regulate the entire cotton production chain from crop production to marketing as a way to encourage the growth of the cotton industry in the country again after its decline in the latter half of the decade.

The amendment created a Cotton Marketing Technical Committee to promote the growing, ginning, processing, manufacture, preparation and marketing of seed cotton, lint and related products. The committee is empowered to set standards relating to quality, classification, grading, moisture content and packaging of seed cotton, lint or cotton seed acceptable to the committee and ginners. The committee also has the role of training, examining and accrediting cotton seed graders and ensuring fair trade practices. Community level findings show that these changes benefit the cotton companies at the expense of the cotton smallholder farmers.

Smallholder farmers who were not under contract could sell their cotton to companies that offered better prices, as discussed in sections 5.2.4.5 and 6. This affected the amount of cotton supplied to Cottco, in which the government has a 60% share. New policies were aimed at stopping contracted farmers from selling undeclared cotton to companies offering higher prices. Through the AMA uniform cotton prices were introduced across the board by different cotton buyers and free farming was abolished, as smallholder farmers now had to register with a cotton company to access inputs.

The amendment provided for a national association of cotton farming contractors mandated to ensure that cotton production was adequately financed in semi-arid districts of the country and not diverted to non-contracting buyers. The board of cotton companies
was mandated to enter into a common funding arrangement binding on smallholder members, and to establish a common inputs fund resourced by levies on all cotton farmers, who were members of the association, not by choice but by situation if they wanted to improve their livelihoods through cotton production. The levies were fixed each year on the basis of each contractor’s volume of ginned cotton in the previous season. This resulted in tight monitoring and control of all rural cotton smallholder producers and reduced their freedom of choice in the cotton industry.

The act mandated cotton farming contractors to establish common collection points for seed cotton and common warehouses for the storage of seed and inputs. The PRA exercises revealed that cotton smallholder growers are now required through the act to register on or before October 30 every year by submitting a form and paying a fixed fee to an association that was put in place without consulting them.

PRA participants indicated that this reduced the number of cotton farmers in most semi-arid areas because very few can afford to raise the USD50 fee every year. The amended act clearly states that contracted seed cotton should not be purchased by any person other than the contractor to whom the grower concerned is contracted, and this makes it difficult for new farmers to access inputs unless they are registered and contracted.

Thus the amended act empowers contracting companies to manipulate cotton farming at the expense of poor rural smallholder farmers. Bringing together cotton contracting companies weakened the position of smallholders in terms of price negotiation and as a result NGOs encouraged smallholder cotton farmers to concentrate more on food security production as cotton became less viable.

5.4.4.3 The Non-Governmental Organisations Act and the NGO Bill

The Non-Governmental Organisations Act of 1992 regulates the proper registration of NGOs in Zimbabwe supporting development interventions. The law does not give NGOs much choice on areas for operation because it seeks to avoid oversubscription of NGOs in one district. The act also provides a code of conduct for NGOs operating in the country and in various communities.

Interviews with officials from the National Association of Non-Governmental Organisations revealed that the act had no restrictions on the nature and type of work any registered
NGO could do, nor did it require NGOs to disclose the sources of their funding. All donated resources or grants for the purposes of free support of communities were exempt from taxes and this enabled NGOs to increase their support in dry districts. NGO officials at both national and international level were comfortable with the law and their operations produced results according to their plans with limited government interference.

However, the emergence of opposition parties in Zimbabwe during the past decade increased tension between the government and civil society because the leading opposition political party was seen to be propped up by various NGOs in penetrating rural communities. This created the need by government to control the behaviour of NGOs to prevent the alleged flow of donated funds to the then opposition MDC. As a result a new NGO law was proposed.

The Non-Governmental Organisation Bill of 2004 was proposed to replace the NGO Act of 1992, according to government officials from the Department of Social Welfare, which initiated the bill. The bill proposed the establishment of a council whose members are appointed by the minister to re-register all NGOs in the country subject to parliamentary approval. No NGO was supposed to continue or commence with activities unless it was registered under the new law. It also sought to ban all NGOs working in the areas of governance, human rights, political support and election monitoring, arguing that these were the prerogative of the government of Zimbabwe.

It also sought to prohibit all NGOs receiving foreign aid from using the funds for political purposes. Moreover, all NGOs were required to pay a registration fee on application despite the fact that their application could be rejected. The bill proposed that all NGOs were required to divulge their sources of funding to the minister through the council as well as proposed activities for three years. The bill also proposed to empower the minister to cancel any certificate of registration for NGOs suspected of not cooperating with government and to give the minister powers to access the accounts of any NGO without restriction and send inspectors to NGOs suspected of contravening the law.

This bill was passed in parliament because ZANU-PF had the majority in 2004. It was met with national, regional and international criticism as it intended to close or de-register most
of the NGOs operating in the country for refusal to divulge sources of funding, among other requirements.

Information gathered from development agencies shows that if the president had signed the bill into law, most people receiving support from NGOs would have been adversely affected. However, according to the constitution of Zimbabwe if a bill passed by parliament is not signed by the president within four months it becomes null and void, and this is what happened – President Robert Mugabe failed to sign the bill into law. NGOs indicated that due to international pressure and with the intention of avoiding imminent collapse of the economy, the president decided not to sign the bill into law and the old NGO act remained in place.

The development of the bill and its passage through parliament coincided with the period of increased political violence in the country. The rule of law was not being followed. This resulted in the illegal suspension of various NGO operations and interventions in rural communities. This was done by ZANU-PF militias, members of parliament and war veterans who hoped that the president was going to sign the bill since it had passed through parliament.

NGO officials and district authorities indicated that from 2004 until after the parliamentary and senatorial elections of June 2005, most NGOs faced operational challenges in rural communities and this had adverse effects on livelihood interventions, particularly agricultural input distribution. This tallied with information from PRA participants that during this period many intended beneficiaries did not receive agricultural inputs during a time they were not readily found in the open market. As a result the cropping season came and went with no crops in the field.

To the contrary, government officials indicated that some of the donor agencies withdrew their assistance because of the FTLRP, and as a result the bill was not signed into law by the president due to fears of further adverse consequences for ongoing rural development interventions. A few unaffected NGOs continued implementing livelihood development programmes but some organisations completely withdrew as they awaited presidential assent to the bill. Clearly the bill strained government and civil society relations.
5.4.4.4 Environmental Management Act
The Environmental Management Act of 2005 provides for the sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the environment, and prevention of pollution and environmental degradation. It also facilitated the establishment of the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) whose board is appointed by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. This act repealed the Natural Resources Act of 1981 and other related acts.

It was enacted by the president, who oversees all natural resources. The act on paper clearly promotes the needs and interests of rural people and their need to participate in all environmental governance and development in any community. It points out that any environmentally related development must be socially, environmentally and economically sound and sustainable. The act is also intended to promote the development of community-based natural resources management in semi-arid areas of the country.

However, PRA exercises revealed that villagers were frustrated by the law as they were prohibited from cutting down trees in their fields for rural livelihoods. Although the act is unknown to most villagers, it is enforced by traditional leadership. If an individual wants to cut down a tree in his or her field, he or she has to approach the village head or the headman for permission. This stifles the right of access to natural resources by rural people. This was common to all the study areas, and it worsened relations between the traditional leadership and villagers. If someone went ahead and cut down a tree without permission, he or she would be summoned to the traditional courts and in most cases fined in the form of livestock. EMA officials indicated that the act protects the environment for the benefit of the rural people, but livelihood challenges result in many people trying to manipulate their natural environment for survival.

The act also gives the president powers to set aside areas of communal land for environmental purposes such as conservation and improvement of natural resources or for the protection of irrigation works. This was seen as retrogressive in some communities, particularly in Mwenezi, where people are short of pasture areas as they were made to limit their herds to suit the grazing area.

Many youths and men in these two districts are engaged in wood carvings whose products are sold along the Masvingo-Beitbridge highway and in Bulawayo and Victoria
Falls. Due to the challenges faced by rural communities, the environment suffers and is degraded, seemingly beyond repair. The act might have been beneficial in normal circumstances with abundant food supplies available in normal economic and political conditions.

5.4.4.5 Wildlife Management Act
Interviews with Wildlife Management officials revealed that the Wildlife Management Act of 1975 was amended in 1982 and 2001 to transfer ownership of wildlife from the state to the people, particularly in semi-arid areas of the country, with a view to ensuring that benefits also accrue to rural people. The act enshrines numerous aspects of grassroots conservation at the community level and this contributes to the development of community based natural resources management in semi-arid areas of the country.

The act allows most rural community areas harbouring significant wildlife resources to be granted rural council status, including the three districts under study. However, although the act seems to be giving ownership of wildlife to the inhabitants of the area, it is wholly controlled by Rural District Councils, which in turn are controlled by the central government. The act recognises the Rural District Council as the legal representative of rural communities and this has caused mistrust between villagers and the rural councils, which are empowered to give out hunting permits, and usually do so only to hunters from Europe for purposes of foreign currency generation at the expense of local livelihoods.

During the period under study, most rural people hunted illegally and poached wild animals for their own consumption and for sale as a livelihood option although they were prohibited by law, even if wild animals destroyed their crops. This generated conflict between the department and villagers. The findings showed that a number of people had lost their lives to both Wildlife Department game rangers and wild animals. Fishing from major rivers and dams is also prohibited under the same act unless one has a permit, and only certain methods and equipment are permitted. Illegal fishing increased because people were hungry, and they used what they could get, including prohibited fishing equipment such as mosquito nets, to increase their chances of harvesting more fish.

Many illegal fishermen have lost their lives to wildlife. Group discussions with community members revealed that even if the department is called to assist people who are drowning or attacked by wild animals, they do not respond urgently because they believe they have
no obligation to do so for unlicensed people. When they finally come, they also arrest them. This has worsened relations between villagers and the department concerning their survival strategies and livelihoods.

5.4.4.6 Gold Trade Act
A 2005 revision of the Gold Trade Act of 1981 was a response to the increase in gold panning in various rural communities of Zimbabwe. Interviews revealed that the amendment was to ensure maximum control by the state over gold that is mined everywhere in the country through panning. It prohibited the possession of gold by unauthorised people and regulated all dealings in the metal. Permits and licences to deal in it are issued by the Ministry of Mines and Mining Development. The act states that even if one is authorised to deal in gold, one may deal with authorised people only, and may not work with gold panners because they are unauthorised.

The act requires licensed holders record all gold deposited, received, purchased or dispatched or face arrest. Interviews with a number of gold panners indicated that the act does not affect them much, as some of the political leaders are illegal gold buyers themselves, although they are sometimes arrested. The gold panners indicated that they know that gold panning is illegal but the Gold Act affects their own panning activities very little. Interviews with ministry officials show that there were efforts to have gold panning recognised but they failed to make it through parliament.

The Minister of Mines issues gold dealing licences through the permanent secretary. This corroborates with information gathered from the gold panners, who indicated that to the government they are not legally existent because licences are only allocated to high ranking government officials and the military and not to the rural poor from marginalised communities. They also indicated that most of them are employees of political leaders in the government who own various claims. They are paid for panning gold on behalf of political leaders who do not have mining machinery. As a result, the act is difficult to enforce because the same government officials are the employers of most gold panners in rural Zimbabwe. Although there is evidence of arrests and police enforcement in some areas, there is a hidden network of gold panning from community level to senior government officials.
The act gives powers to the police to search any person suspected of having gold without a warrant and to make arrests. In most cases those who are not part of the network are the victims of police arrests. According to gold panners, this has affected mostly young people from the study areas who recently started engaging in gold panning and are not yet in the gold panning network. PRA participants indicated that the problem related to this livelihood activity is the police, who also want to benefit through confiscating gold after arrests that they do not declare to the state. Thus arresting gold panners is viewed as a livelihood strategy of the police.

Information from the gold panners indicates that most of the non-network panning takes place in and around the gold claims owned by various politicians, ministers and government officials, including the army. This has angered a number of these politicians, who don’t want their claims invaded by the panners. As a result many of them are arrested and a sizeable number have been killed in these districts in clashes with security agents, and also in accidents such as the collapse of disused mines. It also emerged in PRA discussions that the focus of government officials when arresting gold panners is not the protection of the environment but protection of their own interests in affected gold claims.

5.4.4.7 The Fast Tracked Land Acquisition Act and Constitutional Amendment No: 16

Interviews indicated that the FTLRP in each district needs to be understood within the context of the Lancaster House Agreement (amended 19 times to date) which laid down the legal framework for land reform and addressed the compelling national economic and social imperatives of poverty reduction and economic development. With agriculture viewed as the cornerstone of the country’s economy, land was viewed as the engine for economic growth and this therefore required a constitutional amendment to ensure that economic growth was realised.

Amendment 16 of 2001 to the constitution led to the amendment of the Land Acquisition Act of 1991 and these amendments introduced three major changes to the overall framework. First, it freed the government of Zimbabwe from any obligation to pay compensation for unimproved land that was to be seized, mostly from white farmers in the country. Second, it defined the process for valuing improvements that required compensation if developed land was acquired by the government. Third, it removed numerous legal and administrative obstacles that in the past had led to successful
litigation in the 1993-1998 periods against acquisition by the state. This shows that the government wanted to remove obstacles in the constitution preventing distribution of land to black people.

The Ministry of Lands and Rural Resettlement officials indicated that it was prudent that the legal framework governing land acquisition be significantly amended to take account of the rapidly changing policy environment in which the FTLRP was being implemented. This shows that the process had started before the legislation was in place and this was one of the reasons why the process was condemned as chaotic, violent and disorderly – there was no regulatory framework in the initial stages.

However, interviews with the Farm Workers Association and some Rural District Council officials indicated that despite the facilitative effect of the legislative amendment enacted by the government, the land acquisition process was fraught with procedural impediments that led to the collapse of the agricultural sector and the creation of large numbers of unemployed farm workers. This amendment also contributed to a number of adverse effects on the livelihoods of rural people in semi-arid districts, directly and indirectly.

5.4.4.8 District Level Bylaws
District authorities are empowered to enact and enforce local bylaws in the interest of rural development, particularly focusing on the protection of the environment and natural resources as well as marketing of various agricultural and non-agricultural products. These bylaws are specific to each district depending on the various endowments. Community level findings show that various bylaws affect them in a number of ways, both positive and negative.

i) Controlled Harvesting and Marketing of Masau Fruit in Muzarabani
As indicated in earlier sections of this chapter masau fruit generates income through marketing in urban areas. The commercialisation of the fruit in the form of jam and strips increased the demand, attracting middlemen to the district to buy the fruit for reselling in cities and urban areas and to companies involved in fruit processing. A bylaw was introduced to ensure that the Rural District Council also benefits from the harvesting and marketing of the fruit. The bylaw declared all masau trees to be the property of the rural council. This bylaw was derived from the Rural Lands Act, revised in 2001, according to which all communal land belongs to the state and traditional leadership.
The bylaw therefore centralises the marketing of the fruit. It is sold only on selected days of the week to ensure control and revenue generation for the Rural District Council through permits and levies on buyers, who have to register to buy more than 100kg of the fruit at any one point. The bylaw does not apply to those who buy less than 100kg because such a small purchase is considered to be for household consumption. The same bylaw also applies to baobab fruit.

To enforce the bylaws during harvesting season, the Muzarabani Rural District Council erected control points at all major exits from the district to ensure that buyers pay all their levies. Inspectors are also sent out to ensure that people don't sell fruit from their homesteads instead of at designated marketing points. The Rural District Council also influences the price of the product and takes a share of the income.

The bylaws affecting marketing of the fruit have received a mixed response. On the one hand buyers approach sellers privately so that they can avoid paying the levy, but they offer low prices that poor people are too desperate to resist. PRA exercises revealed that people feel the revenue generated from the permits and levies is not being ploughed back into the community to develop the services they need, and this makes them reluctant to comply with the system. On the other hand, there is evidence that they benefit from the prices set by the Rural District Council. This generates reasonable income for livelihood improvement.

**ii) Controlled Harvesting and Marketing of Mopane Worms in Mwenezi**

A bylaw was introduced to protect and benefit local people, particularly those who purchase for resale. The bylaw prohibits the harvesting of mopane worms in the district by non-residents. This enables rural people to maximally harvest and benefit from their natural resources.

However, the same bylaw also requires all harvesters to be registered by the Rural District Councils so that they can get harvesting and marketing permits, and this allows the Rural District Council to generate revenue. PRA participants indicated that it is used for the rehabilitation of dysfunctional dip tanks for livestock for the benefit of rural people. The
bylaw set aside a market place for mopane worms where buyers converge on given days and prices are set by officials from the Rural Council for the benefit of people.

**iii) Controlled Livestock Marketing in all Districts**

Department of Livestock interviews revealed that livestock marketing is being tightened in the country due to increased livestock theft into Mozambique and for meat. A Rural District Council bylaw provides for police clearance of all livestock, small and large, before it is sold, to ascertain whether it has been stolen or not, while traditional leaders are supposed to verify that the seller is the real owner.

In both Gokwe and Mwenezi, livestock market days are set aside once a month at a particular location open to everyone. This ensures that stolen livestock cannot be traded. However, it also facilitates the introduction of levies on livestock buyers and frustrates people who might want to sell their livestock between market days.

PRA participants indicated that to sell livestock on a different day they had to have a clearance certificate from the Rural District Council and that is a long process because justifications need to be given. If a household intends to slaughter a beast, they have to notify the village head for approval but this does not apply to small livestock. These bylaws protect the livelihoods of rural people but on the other hand they inhibit rural livelihood diversification and development due to the bureaucratic processes involved in the harvesting and marketing of rural resources.

**5.4.5. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings of the study. The major themes emerging are the types and status of rural livelihoods in semi-arid districts during the past decade from the year 2000 to 2010. The trends in rural livelihoods over the period were documented, with traditional agricultural livelihood activities such as crop production, livestock rearing and contract labour recording a decline. Emerging livelihood activities, both farming and non-farming ones, were identified, showing evidence for livelihood diversification. Such emerging non-farm activities include wildlife poaching, gold and diamond panning, wood carving and non-timber forest product harvesting and processing.

The other emerging theme is the increased categorisation and social differentiation of rural people based on socio-economic status measured by asset holding, access to and control
of rural resources and lifestyle. This social differentiation takes a tribal dimension as a determinant influencing rural livelihood diversification. NGO targeting of beneficiaries contributed to the visibility of tribal identities, inter-tribal differences and political conflict. External interventions by all players contributed to tribal and political differentiation of targeted beneficiaries. The study also confirms the changing gendered nature of rural livelihoods and gender role differentiation among rural people as a strategy for livelihood diversification. The gendered composition of rural households reflects how different roles are divided and shared for survival. This has also become another determinant of livelihood diversification at the household level.

Policy and institutional development during the period under study was found on balance to have inhibited rural livelihood development. The study confirms that institutional arrangements became more centralised in an attempt to prevent penetration by Western donor-funded NGOs. An anti-government attitude by donor organisations and NGOs, perceived to be linked to the emergence of opposition political parties, contributed to increased centralisation of rural institutions such the Rural District Authorities.

The next chapter is a discussion of the findings presented in this chapter. The discussion analyses the extent to which rural livelihood diversification in dry districts has improved the quality of life. This analysis is done in relation to the operating context that was characterised by the severe socio-economic and political environment that is described in this study as a politically charged environment. It is conducted using the sustainable livelihoods framework and the actor oriented approach. The discussion leads to the major conclusions of this study in relation to livelihood diversification and improvement in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe.
CHAPTER SIX

6. Discussion of Research Findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the study findings as presented in Chapter Five as a response to the key study questions, in particular the general research question on the extent to which development interventions, policy and institutional changes diversified rural livelihoods in specific semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe and whether this improved people’s lives.

The previous chapter contributed to an understanding of different types of rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe and how they changed in the first decade of the 21st century in response to political turbulence, economic crisis and extreme weather conditions. The study categorised rural livelihoods into three sets: traditional agricultural livelihood activities, external interventions and emerging locally initiated livelihood activities. The chapter outlined how different categories of people accessed and controlled rural resources and how this was connected to social differentiation. Finally, the chapter outlined policy developments and institutional arrangements and looked at how they enabled or inhibited livelihood development in the three study areas.

This chapter presents a discussion of how the three sets of livelihood activities have contributed to rural livelihood improvement, how people engaged in them and how these activities complemented each other. Rural institutions and policies have changed in the past decade and this chapter assesses how they have enabled or inhibited livelihood diversification and whether they have improved people’s lives. The diversification context is also discussed, focusing on the political, social and economic environment.

6.1 Dominant Rural Livelihoods in Semi-Arid Districts of Zimbabwe

The first objective of this study was to establish and document livelihood activities in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe in the past decade. In line with this objective, three sets of rural livelihood activities were identified and documented. Although these activities responded to the pressures of the decade they also showed continuity with earlier trends studied by Bryceson (1998) and Berkvens (1997). However, clear differences with other scholars emerged in how external interventions were implemented, how target beneficiaries responded and, most importantly, what local strategies were employed by rural people.
The following bar graph shows the three sets of rural livelihood activities in all study areas based on community level rankings.

**Figure 25: Dominant Rural Livelihood Activities in Semi-Arid Districts**

From the bar graph the study shows that crop production, livestock rearing and contract labour (green bars), which are considered traditional activities, form the dominant set. As argued by Berkvens (1997), agriculture is a way of life that rural people do not easily abandon. In other words there is evidence that despite the crises of political turbulence, economic hardship and extreme weather conditions in the period under study, agriculture remained dominant, although there was some branching out from agriculture into non-farm activities and diversification of portfolios in all study areas.

In the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF), people are at the centre of a network of factors that affect how they create their livelihoods, such as what natural resources are around them and what other assets they have, for example technology, skills, health status, social networks and infrastructure. Their vulnerability context takes into account wider trends such as global and national economics and shocks such as floods and disease outbreaks, and thus the vulnerability context partly determines people's access to resources. Smallholder farmers as actors seem reluctant to completely change rural livelihood activities, despite threats to their output posed by adverse trends and shocks. In the three districts in this study, the natural resources on hand such as land and water lent themselves to agriculture, which may be a major reason for its dominance. Scoones (1998) argues that engaging in other non-farm activities together with agriculture can be a
strategy for reducing risk and this is indeed what occurred in the districts under study-
livelihoods diversification did take place. However, sustaining this diversification was
threatened by the continuing vulnerability context of political tension, extreme weather
conditions and economic hardship. The continued dominance of agriculture in the study
areas despite these challenges could indicate that attractive non-farm activities such as
developing rural industries were not that easily accessible. The study shows that despite a
definite de-agrarianisation trend, semi-arid areas remained largely engaged in agricultural
production. From another angle the continued dominance of agriculture can be attributed
to the large number of external interventions that supported it. In other words
organisations supported agriculture as a livelihood strategy despite how adversely it was
affected by exogenous trends such as droughts, diseases and the economic crisis.

The second on the graph category (yellow bars) is intervention activities by the
government and NGOs. The interventions on the bar graph indicated as (projects, buying
and selling) as per field work findings are in two subcategories, namely agricultural
support, off-farm activities the third category is food assistance. In this discussion, projects
are unpacked as both agricultural and non-farm support to all study areas.

As argued above, the increase in agricultural support through projects may be attributable
to limited opportunities outside agriculture. NGOs as actors wanted an intervention that
would be easily accepted and adopted, so they focused on crops that were responsive to
the climate and on rehabilitating irrigation infrastructure. In other words they identified
land, dams and irrigation equipment as assets of the smallholders and facilitated their
rehabilitation, an intervention that was enthusiastically adopted by smallholders, who were
then able to diversify their livelihood portfolios and further increase their asset bases and
strategies such as conservation agriculture and adoption of crops suitable for arid areas
promoted sustainable land use. The dominance of agriculture was also influenced by
government support for smallholder farmers as part of its rural development policy
including the promotion of cotton farming. Thus in SLF terms the mediating role played by
external organisations was aimed at identifying appropriate strategies for livelihood
diversification. This signified a re-agrarianisation strategy in semi-arid districts to counter
the decline of agriculture in the face of climatic conditions, a political crisis, economic
sanctions, a general rural to urban migration, shortages of agricultural inputs and the
impact of structural adjustment programmes.
Food handouts were aimed at supporting the immediate needs of the most vulnerable people in semi-arid areas. This intervention was an externally fostered survival strategy to avert a famine as agricultural production came to an almost complete halt in some areas during a part of the period under study. As discussed in Chapter Five, this intervention reached the highest number of beneficiaries. Inability to produce enough food in semi-arid areas during the period drove people to diversify but food aid became an external option. Although the sustainability of this intervention is doubtful, it contributed towards food availability. However, the intervention is criticised for suffocating innovation and creating dependency on food aid. The SLF accommodates conflicting outcomes and perhaps it is sufficient to say the short-term gain of preventing starvation was accompanied by the negative consequence of increased dependency on an intervention that is neither sustainable nor long-term.

The interventions also focused on a number of non-farm livelihood activities captured as projects as well and buying and selling by respondents such as skills training, rural enterprise development and marketing of produced products. These interventions branched out from agriculture to take advantage of natural resources available in semi-arid areas such as non-timber forest products, fish and timber for carpentry products. Thus people remained engaged in agriculture but added new activities to complement it. The increased portfolio of asset combinations indicates successful diversification although sustainability was limited by the vulnerability context. As discussed in earlier chapters cash income generated from non-farm activities was usually channelled towards agricultural support, so it can be argued that no one livelihood strategy was adequate on its own. Thus the argument is that changes in agriculture in the decade studied influenced other assets such as social and financial capital and how they were used.

The third category (red bars) on the bar graph constitutes initiatives by rural people as desperate measures for survival. As presented in Chapter Five, this set represents other locally initiated non-farm activities. Poaching, gold and diamond panning, wood carving, property theft and lastly labour migration presented as remittances in the graph are some of the ways people branched out from agriculture as determined by the capability of each household. Access to available natural resources became an opportunity to diversify rural livelihoods in the face of failing crops, inadequate support from other external interventions
and increasing vulnerability in an environment characterised by crisis. Evidence presented in Chapter Five indicates that the cash income generated from this set of livelihood activities was invested in agricultural production. Engagement in these activities depicts rural people as innovators rather than docile recipients of external interventions. Although they received external support they also initiated their own activities for survival and sustainability.

The combinations of these three categories show that despite the dominance of agriculture in rural livelihoods, it became a component of the largely reorganised set of rural livelihoods that included external interventions and locally based initiatives. Diversification within each identified set of livelihoods is reflected. Within external interventions, households benefited from agricultural support, non-farm activities and food assistance. In agriculture some households engaged in different crop production together with livestock rearing whilst others engaged in contract work. The livelihood activities identified in this study show a complex set of portfolios. Different households diversified differently despite having access to similar resources. The actor-oriented approach acknowledges that different actors respond differently to similar structural circumstances depending on how the operating context has determined their accessibility to livelihood assets. As a result people as social actors were able to choose from at least two options, and this selection both determined and were determined by the capabilities in each household besides the exogenous trends making up the vulnerability context.

As presented in Chapter Five, external interventions overlapped with existing agricultural production by providing agricultural inputs, rehabilitating agricultural infrastructure and creating vegetable gardens. Similarly, external interventions in enterprise development and commercialisation of non-timber forest products overlapped with local initiatives by commercialising wild fruit harvesting through technology development, product development and improved marketing, regularising through enterprise development illegal fishing and reducing property theft by creating community income generating projects. In SLF terms this juggling of assets is mediated through different community level structures and processes and it reflects asset transferability and capital switching by rural people. Switching from agriculture to non-farm activities and back became a survival strategy but the livelihood outcomes were limited by the politically charged environment and the economic meltdown during the period studied.
External interventions played a critical role in aiding local initiatives and reviving agricultural production in semi-arid districts. It can be argued that unaided, agriculture and local initiatives during the period under study would not have supported rural livelihoods to the same levels as presented in Chapter Five. The study therefore shows a variety of livelihood activities that were both externally fostered and locally initiated and the combination contributed to a diversification of portfolios that improved many people’s ability to make a living. The changing trend in these various intertwined activities is the increase in externally fostered activities and the role they played in livelihood diversification. It is difficult to analyse the identified livelihood sets independent of each other due to these complex overlaps. The interrelationships between the three sets enabled rural people to survive during the period under study. However; an increased number of interventions do not necessarily translate into greater effectiveness or sustainability because the capability to effectively use the external support depended on each beneficiary household, based on its composition in terms of size and the gender, age, health and skills of its members. As presented in Chapter Five, some interventions targeted the elderly who could no longer do manual labour. Thus it was not only the operating context that determined access to assets but also the way institutions and organisations mediated the access.

The three sets of livelihood activities identified in this study contributed differently towards people’s survival and, as seen in Chapter Five, interventions by NGOs, government and the private sector were different in nature and size. The pie chart below shows that 58% of the interventions came from NGOs, 28% from the private sector and 14% from the government. The chart is an indication of the levels of investment by the government, private sector and NGOs based on the number and size of interventions.

Figure 26: Proportion of interventions by external actors
As presented in Chapter Five, NGOs reached a higher number of beneficiary households than the state or cotton companies due to the availability of donor funding. Government support is ranked low because of the economic crisis, smart sanctions and staff shortages. Although the extent of interventions does not automatically correspond with the level of success of the outcomes, by reaching high numbers of people the NGO support became one of the major sources of livelihoods despite being ranked behind agricultural production. The following pie chart also shows the total reach of different intervening institutions.

Figure 27: Reach of External Interventions

![Pie chart showing the total reach of different interventions](image)

The above pie chart shows that the number of interventions can be linked to the number of people they reach. Of the total households reached by external interventions, 66% benefited from NGOs, 14% from government and 20% from the private sector. In Chapter Five it was clear that there was private sector, government and NGO support for agriculture in various ways, making agricultural production as a traditional livelihood activity a major beneficiary of external support during the period under study. However, the success of external interventions in improving livelihoods is determined both by their own systemic weaknesses and external threats to their implementation. Despite having an increased number of interventions such as agricultural input distribution, food distribution and rural enterprises development, the politically charged operating context and the economic crisis limited the livelihood outcomes and compromised the sustainability of the activities.

Although diversification does not necessarily lead to improved quality of life, this study found that, based on accumulated assets, households that engaged in agricultural
activities and external non-farm support improved their rural livelihoods compared to households that engaged only in local initiatives and agricultural production, although sustainability was limited in both cases. Households that benefited from irrigation schemes only also had better chances because of the long-term and widespread results of the intervention. However, not all crop production coupled with other activities resulted in positive livelihood outcomes because under dry land agriculture not all households had good yields. Only households that engaged in successful crop production together with other activities had a better chance of improving quality of life. Although it is difficult to calculate the livelihood outcomes from each of the activities, agricultural activities and external support interventions together tended to show improved livelihood outcomes compared to local initiatives such as gold panning, poaching and wood carving, which involved a number of challenges of illegality, safety risks and difficulties in entry.

6.2 Changing Trends in Rural Livelihood Activities: Evidence of Diversification and Livelihood Improvement

The second objective of this thesis is to document and analyse evidence of livelihood diversification in semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of changes on the ground. As presented in Chapter Five, all the livelihood activities identified underwent changes in the decade studied. Generally the study found that externally driven interventions exacerbated the downward trend of certain crops, mainly maize, and promoted an increase in others, for example sorghum.

6.2.1 De-agrarianisation without De-peasantisation

The study confirms a decline in agricultural production during the period studied, and this decline fits with the wider concept of de-agrarianisation outlined in Chapter Two. The study found that rural Zimbabwe experienced partial de-agrarianisation as agriculture remained the dominant livelihood activity despite the decline, which may even have been slowed by efforts to reverse the trend and re-agrarianise, for example all the external interventions including the government policy of continued support of smallholder farmer production.

The decline in agricultural production influenced many people at different levels to engage in non-farm livelihood activities as a desperate measure. The argument in this section is that semi-arid areas in Zimbabwe experienced a partial de-agrarianisation due to decline
in crop production, but did not experience de-peasantisation because the decline in agricultural production failed to destroy the structure of smallholder production and also failed to offer sustainable and viable non-farm livelihood activities as an alternative to enable a permanent shift from agriculture. Although de-agrarianisation is confirmed by the study, continued access to arable land maintained the peasant farmer and smallholder farm production in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe.

Although switching assets from agriculture to non-farm activities was not always sustainable, it helped build resilience to exogenous trends such as the socio-economic crisis that affected the whole country, as well as shocks such as the droughts that affected semi-arid areas during the period under study and disease outbreaks that decimated the livestock population.

The study found that as people moved from rural to urban areas and to neighbouring countries, agricultural production declined because of manual labour shortages. What changed, therefore, is that people partially switched from agricultural production to available options in non-farm activities for survival. However, continued reliance on agriculture despite its decline shows that the livelihood outcomes in non-farm activities were not enough to warrant a total switch. The study shows that the de-agrarianisation process of the 1990s that was characterised by smallholder farmers' loss of economic capacity, social cohesion and shrinking in rural population has continued. Bryceson (1993) points to a decline in value of cash crops and removal of subsidies on crucial inputs in the 1990s that made smallholder production unviable and forced small farmers into non-agrarian livelihood activities. This trend has remained unchanged.

Manona (1999) argues that rural South Africa’s de-agrarianisation went hand in hand with a de-peasantisation process brought about as colonial regimes reduced access to arable land and introduced an industrial policy that developed industries near rural communities so that they could become reserves of labour. This was not the case in Zimbabwe; it was not affected by limited access to arable land but by a vulnerability context comprising the politically charged environment that adversely affected the availability of agricultural inputs, the movement of smallholder farmers due to the FTLRP, droughts in some areas and floods in others, the isolation of the Zimbabwean government from the international community, the economic meltdown and the political violence that characterised the period under study. However, while these challenges may have forced people into non-farm
activities, they still kept a strong relationship with agriculture in the hope of reviving it when times improved.

The major questions remain, how sustainable was this new combination of livelihood activities in supporting rural livelihoods, and how successful was it in improving the quality of life in a politically charged environment? The following sections are an analysis of changing trends in specific agricultural activities during the period under study amounting to partial de-agrarianisation.

6.2.1.1 Decline in Cotton Production

As presented in the previous chapter, changes in the production of cotton, the major cash crop in semi-arid areas, reduced the financial and physical asset holding of smallholder farmers. The vulnerability context characterised by notably adverse effects of the FTLRP, cotton input inaccessibility, the inflationary economy, withdrawal of government support, shortage of labour due to HIV-AIDS and migration, and lastly the external support for food security crop production contributed to the decline in cotton output. The numbers of cotton farmers declined as some of them were relocated by the FTLRP. The land put under cotton also declined. The following line graph shows a sharp peak in the middle of the decade followed by a decline.

*Figure 28: Declining Cotton Production*

(Adapted from cotton tables in Chapter five)

Under the FTLRP in 2003 most cotton smallholder farmers from Gokwe and Muzarabani were relocated to high plateau areas outside the districts for tobacco production whilst Mwenezi saw an increase in cotton farmers from the FTLRP. The line graph above shows that just after the FTLRP cotton production steadily increased in Mwenezi district during the period between 2004 and 2007 as it received new cotton farmers in addition to those already existing. Similarly the line graph shows a sharp increase of cotton production in
Gokwe and Muzarabani districts during the period between 2004 and 2006 due to the introduction of contract farming that was adopted by better-off smallholder farmers at its early stages as presented in Chapter Five. It sharply declined in the same districts after its 2005 peak due to challenges related to contract farming and low cotton market prices at the international market.

The FTLRP relocated most of the competent cotton farmers, and those left behind in semi-arid districts were largely poor and far less competent – the ones who used to provide contract labour to the landowners. The inevitable result of this was a decline in production and de-agrarianisation. Analytically the policy intervention of relocating competent smallholder farmers from semi-arid areas produced conflicting livelihood outcomes as land under cotton declined and the few competent farmers who remained behind could not absorb all the contract workers, who in turn had to switch to other non-farm activities. These few competent farmers, labelled as the rich in the PRA sessions presented in Chapter Five, continued engaging in cotton production. The decline in cotton production not only led to de-agrarianisation; it also broke down longstanding livelihood social networks between contract workers and the farmers who relocated. Many former contract workers were driven to the desperate measures listed earlier– mineral panning, labour migration, poaching, wild fruit harvesting, wood carving and theft. These changes had a bearing on the quality of rural life for different people with different livelihood opportunities.

6.2.1.1.2 Decline in Maize Production
Maize production also saw a decline during the period under study. Manyani (2010) in her study of Gwanda, another semi-arid district, points to the low rainfall and questions why smallholders continued to produce maize in the unsuitable climate. The line graph below shows the decline in all study areas.

Figure 29: Decline in Maize Production

(Adapted from maize and small grains tables in Chapter Five)
The declining trend is attributed to the vulnerability context characterised by extreme weather, input shortages and political violence during the period under study. Although smallholder farmers produced short-term maize varieties in all semi-arid areas, external shocks of droughts in 2002, 2004, 2006 and 2007 were the main reason for crop failures. The rise in sorghum production indicates the strategic and adaptive behaviour of smallholder farmers who were influenced by intervening organisations that were promoting small grains.

6.2.1.3 Decline in Large Livestock Production
Scoones (1990) argues that agriculture includes livestock because of the integration and interrelationship between the two, and the decline in crop output was indeed concomitant with a decline in livestock, as they succumbed to drought and disease in their numbers, and were sold off or bartered at crisis prices or eaten. As cash drained from the economy and the system returned to one of barter, livestock was exchanged for maize meal for immediate survival. This led to gross undervaluing of livestock as maize was at a premium in all study areas. The livestock price distortion was also affected by a poorly developed rural livestock marketing infrastructure, insufficient management and limited use of management technologies. Although farmers as actors were in the main able to choose between consuming their livestock or selling it, neither of these options were sustainable in the long term, and many people who had small herds lost all their livestock. Thus the potential of livestock’s contribution to livelihood diversification and improvement was not realised. This can be attributed at least partly to the politically charged environment, as the chaotic start to the FTLRF destroyed disease control mechanisms and its unpopularity with the international community at least partly exacerbated the economic meltdown.

As discussed in Chapter Five, without the draft and transport work done by large livestock (cattle or donkeys), and manure for fertilisation, smallholders had less capacity to put land under crop production. These shocks weakened their asset base and reduced their ability to rebuild their livelihood assets. This contributed to de-agrarianisation in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe during the period under study. As loss of the multipurpose large livestock weakened the asset base, it became a challenge to revive semi-arid livelihoods sustainably without first rebuilding the livestock asset.
6.2.1.4 Decline in Small Livestock Production

The sharp decline in small livestock in all study areas may be because they are easier to dispose of than large livestock (cattle). Stanford (1977:127) argues that goats do not easily succumb to drought because they are browsers, and multiply faster than large livestock. As a result smallholder farmers turned to small livestock for immediate survival. Thus the decimation in their numbers was also a serious blow to the asset holding base of smallholder farmers. The following graphs show a decline in small livestock (goats and sheep) during the period under study.
Figure 31: Decline in goat population

Figure 32: Decline in sheep population

(Adapted from small livestock tables in Chapter Five)
6.2.2 Externally Driven Rural Livelihoods Diversification and Improvement

6.2.2.1 Re-agrarianisation Strategies
As discussed in Chapter Five, re-agrarianisation was a strategy used by external organisations to help people diversify their crops and improve yields through infrastructure rehabilitation in semi-arid areas, and this to some extent may have helped slow the decline in agricultural production and contributed to livelihood diversification. In the implementation of this strategy the study found that smallholder farmers and external organisations interacted to develop strategies that brought about positive livelihood outcomes under particular circumstances. Re-agrarianisation as a process was a package of infrastructure rehabilitation, input provision, crop production support and produce marketing. However, it was undermined by other processes such as the economic crisis, political tension, droughts, floods and price shifts, all working to constrain its potential as a livelihood diversification and improvement strategy.

The re-agrarianisation strategy may have been motivated by the limited number of opportunities in non-agrarian livelihood activities but the vulnerability context limited its potential for producing sustainable livelihood outcomes. The post-colonial government continued to promote smallholder farming as part of its rural development policy and this made it easy for most rural farmers to adopt all agricultural interventions. It cannot be ignored that although the areas are marginal, people in all semi-arid districts have access to arable land, and this became a major livelihood asset where external investment in rural development could be directed. Below is a discussion of a range of attempts to reverse the decline in agriculture and an assessment of their sustainability.

6.2.2.1.1 Contract Farming
As presented in Chapter Five, contract farming was a strategy targeted at reviving cotton production as a major cash crop in semi-arid areas. The argument is that smallholder farmers who benefited from this strategy diversified their rural livelihoods compared to non-participants. However, the livelihood outcomes were not sustainable, both because the cotton industry was vulnerable to shifting global prices
and because locally, private and parastatal companies colluded to fix prices so disadvantageous to smallholders that the activity eventually became unviable. Although the strategy revived cotton production in the short term, the number of smallholders who benefited was very low as the strategy only targeted farmers with household assets that could be used as collateral. Although the strategy was externally fostered it limited the adaptive behaviours of intended participants.

Thus it is clear that the potential of contract farming as a strategy to produce the anticipated livelihood outcomes was not realised. During poor agricultural seasons cotton output was so low that smallholders failed to pay back the inputs agreed to in their contracts and as a result they would lose household assets such as agricultural equipment, livestock, and kitchen utensils that they had used as collateral. Although the strategy may have had good intentions it adversely affected the livelihoods and quality of life of the very farmers it intended to support.

The NGO-led cotton farming intervention provided inputs to its beneficiaries without expecting them to pay back the input support. As this strategy was targeted at poor smallholder farmers without collateral, it was viable and produced sustainable livelihood outcomes because poor farmers acquired assets, even though the income was limited due to low cotton prices. At least they could choose who they sold to, and at least in poor seasons with low output they did not lose the few assets they had.

This leads to the argument that different beneficiaries in semi-arid districts diversified their livelihoods differently depending on the conditions under which the external support was being provided. The implementation conditions also determined the sustainability of each intervention strategy. Contract farming as a strategy enabled poor farmers to effectively re-engage in cash crop production that they could not have afforded without this support. However, the sustainability challenges associated with the attempt to revitalise cotton production show that the re-agrarianisation process had some limitations as well, despite its great potential to rebuild smallholders’ asset bases.
6.2.2.1.2 Intensified Small Grains Production

The increase in small grains production could be considered a successful switching of livelihood activities but as discussed in Chapter Five this is not an unqualified success story. On the one hand it was one of the most successful re-agrarianisation strategies, and it was – in theory anyway – sustainable in terms of productivity for food security. The rolling out of this strategy shows that NGOs and other players as external actors could easily influence the actions of local actors. Although people are actors in their own right, in some situations they are influenced by the outside world, especially if their room to manoeuvre is limited.

The sharp increase in sorghum from 2000 to 2005 contributed to improved asset holding, particularly physical assets related to daily subsistence because people had increased quantities of small grains for food security. However, in spite of evidence for crop diversification and increased crop output, the contribution of small grains to livelihood improvement was minimal. Production was sustainable but, although the crops are easy at the cropping stage they are difficult to harvest and process to get the final small grain. The last stages of production were too labour-intensive, as compared to maize, for households headed by children and the elderly to manage and the initiative therefore did not support such vulnerable households despite the provision of free inputs. Only households that were already economically active anyway successfully produced the crop.

In addition, beneficiary households produced white sorghum in large quantities that resulted in a glut of the grain in all semi-arid communities, and the consumption did not match production. It was not eaten as a daily staple as was maize, and neither were there multiple uses for it as there were for maize, for example rural people eat homemade bread made from mixing white maize meal and wheat flour, but the same cannot be done with sorghum. Thus the contribution of sorghum to an improved quality of life for the rural poor was limited. This indicates that crop diversification does not always produce positive results. People reverted to maize production for multiple uses despite the challenges with climatic conditions and availability of inputs. The argument is that despite the significant success in re-agrarianisation through crop diversification, its aim of improving the livelihoods and quality of life of rural people was not realised.
Cowpeas, another promoted small grain crop, also had low consumption levels but its production was complementary to other food crops and it was never intended as an alternative. Its production directly contributed to crop diversification and although its total hectarage was low it contributed to food availability and security. Fieldwork revealed that the crop can be consumed in different forms and this made it more acceptable to its target beneficiaries, although in general its adoption levels were low. One could argue that its limited adoption in rural communities was influenced by the advocacy programmes that focused more on sorghum production.

6.2.2.1.3 Open Pollinated Crop Varieties Production and New Technologies

As a food security strategy open pollinated crop production was meant to contribute to both crop and livelihood diversification. One of its strengths was the use of indigenous knowledge systems such as organic manure, pesticidal plants for storage of harvested produce, and seed storage for the next cropping season. Promotion of locally available natural resources for the production of open pollinated varieties and of drought resistant varieties was a direct response to shortages of modern fertilisers and chemicals due to the economic crisis. People are likely to go back to chemical fertilisers should the political and economic environment normalise and inputs become available. The use of indigenous knowledge systems was meant to promote self-reliance by the rural poor, and external interventions brought about a change in crop production methods with a focus on incorporating traditional methods to achieve sustainability. The strategy was adopted only by smallholder farmers with access to livestock manure as this was a key ingredient in this intervention.

This strategy contributed to human capital development through capacity building and training programmes using locally available knowledge. It contributed to successful development of community seed banks for the promotion and production of open pollinated seed varieties meant for food security. This is evidence for livelihood diversification as people gained access to human development and food. As an intervention in the re-agrarisation process, it introduced technologies that used a combination of indigenous knowledge systems and modern systems in crop production.
This strategy was intended to address the immediate needs of the poor and the challenge of limited agricultural inputs, particularly seeds for different food crops, but had a sustainability component as it promoted community seed banks for both cash income generation and food security through own use.

Although the strategy exhibited potential for sustainability, its adoption by smallholder farmers was slow. One reason for this was that with the traditional seed varieties and organic manure advocated in the intervention, crops took longer to mature than with the quick-growing modern seed varieties and chemical inputs. Secondly, organic production of varieties did not cover a large hectarage due to the increased volume of organic manure required. It can therefore be argued that although it is a relevant intervention, its efficacy in improving rural livelihoods during periods of socio-economic crisis in semi-arid areas was limited, partly because of the longer wait till harvest.

Not all smallholders had livestock and thus inaccessibility of manure could be seen as a structural constraint to adopting this strategy. As Ellis (1998) argues, the rich are more easily able to diversify in both better and poor socio-economic conditions because of their asset holding position. In the study, those with resources could more easily adapt to externally fostered livelihood strategies than those without. Those without livestock and the resources to wait for the later harvest from a long-term crop variety or put in the intensive labour it demanded did not benefit from this intervention. In addition, the output of these slower varieties was low compared to modern varieties produced using modern fertilisers, too low to sustain a household until the next harvest, however, conservation farming results in higher outputs. Farmers who produced seed varieties for these crops sold them at low prices that were not viable. Local actors have choices; but their strategic and adaptive behaviours are bounded not only by structural constraints, but also by their embeddedness in past experiences and cultural meanings. In other words, the slow uptake of this strategy was partly informed by past experience.

Maize and cotton production benefited from conservation technologies as output increased. The study therefore shows that the trend for specific crops changed several times responding to different factors. As presented in Chapter Five the
output trend of maize and cotton slightly increased from two bags and five bales respectively in 2004 to five bags and ten bales in 2006 influenced by new crop production technologies such as conservation farming. Maize production also benefited from the use of indigenous knowledge systems without the use of modern fertilisers to improve the quality of degraded soils for crop production. This directly contributed to food availability as a livelihood outcome of the strategy. As the implementation of crop production technologies was in combination with input distribution, the study found that in this politically charged environment smallholders’ strengths changed as livelihood strategies changed in response to personal or external circumstances.

6.2.2.1.4 Rehabilitation of Small Dams and Irrigation Schemes

The rehabilitation of infrastructure as presented in Chapter Five contributed to asset base rebuilding for smallholder farmers. As argued by Cousins (2007) the agrarian question is not only answered by land reform but also by agricultural support services and infrastructure rehabilitation. This strategy was one of long-term support that guaranteed the sustainability of livelihoods for target beneficiary households. As access to resources and assets determines the extent of diversification in any situation this strategy facilitated both crop and livelihood diversification as reflected by the production of both cash and food security crops. Crop production under irrigation also complemented the dry land agriculture that smallholder farmers continued to engage in. The study shows that during the period under study smallholder farmers experienced a shift from depending entirely on rain-fed agriculture to adding irrigation agriculture to their livelihood portfolios. In the study the nature of the external support as mediated by NGOs, the government and private sector organisations influenced people’s ability to combine the multiple activities needed to achieve sustainable livelihoods – in this case a dual crop production strategy where rain-fed crop production and irrigation-fed crop production were used during different seasons on the same piece of land.

The rehabilitation of water infrastructure resulted in multiple livelihood activities that were both agrarian and non-agrarian. It enabled the integration of livestock with crop production in difficult times. Livestock had easy access to drinking water from the source used for vegetable gardens and irrigation schemes. The same source was
used for moulding bricks for house construction and other domestic purposes. Thus different responses to the same vulnerability context emerged, and as various livelihood activities came out of this intervention, social interactions took place within networks and groups that were influenced by power relations between different social groups formed for easy access to the rehabilitated infrastructure as an asset. Conflict arose as different social networks were established and this became an endemic challenge to sustainable livelihoods and asset building for some.

The politically charged environment did not always result in negative livelihood outcomes because some people accessed assets from external interventions. The political tensions outlined during the study period determined the nature and extent of investment by external intervening organisations. In this regard the politically charged environment as an operating context determined the accessibility of the rehabilitated agricultural infrastructure and control of related assets, as well as the overall direction of livelihood diversification during the period under study. It constrained the sustainability of livelihood outcomes achieved during the studied period. As the economic meltdown and the political crisis among other climatic challenges prompted external interventions, particularly from NGOs, smallholder farmers who acquired assets during the period were also affected by the same political and economic challenges. As a result the study found that despite the constraints of the operating context, people still had opportunities to build assets important for livelihoods but sustainability was in turn affected by the same.

Although assets are important building blocks for sustainable livelihoods, acquiring them does not automatically lead to sustainability. The long period of political tension that contributed to the acquisition of some of the assets in turn limited their potential to build sustainable livelihoods. The cashless barter market limited livelihood activities that required cash transactions and as a result the great potential of this strategy in the re-agrarianisation process was not really realised. It did help to improve people's lives but not to the extent that it could have done under normal circumstances.

The infrastructure interventions also had some systemic challenges related to the diesel engine water pumps, as they had continual breakdowns. Delays in repairs
became a danger to the harvest and thus the irrigation project’s contribution to livelihood improvement became compromised. A linear approach to development, in other words working straight from formulation to implementation, fails to appreciate the fact that outcomes also result from factors initiated by the beneficiaries. Had local people been consulted during the formulation of this intervention, some challenges might have been addressed before implementation. The sustainability of irrigated crops is only guaranteed if diesel engines are replaced or mended, and in addition, fuel was both prohibitively expensive in the political and economic crisis and difficult to access due to poor roads and the areas’ remoteness. Although some of the related infrastructure such as dams, canals and night storage dams were more permanent, the use of diesel engines became the weakest point of this strategy and as a result, the sustainability of the project was not guaranteed beyond donor support.

Despite its potential, shortages of agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilisers coupled with poor road infrastructure affected the viability of the irrigation schemes. It can therefore be argued that some of the external interventions were not adequately conceived. Despite these limitations it should not be doubted that this intervention’s contribution to the re-agrarianisation strategy was worthwhile and aided livelihood diversification and asset accumulation, despite the politically charged environment. Generally, although poverty was not reduced in semi-arid communities through this strategy, the period of food deficit was reduced for beneficiary households.

6.2.2.1.5 Vegetable Gardens
The rehabilitation of water sources in all study areas revived vegetable gardening as a livelihood strategy that is connected to the accessibility of natural capital, specifically land and water. The study found that these externally fostered livelihood strategies resulted in multiple livelihood outcomes that increased opportunities for livelihood asset building. There is also evidence that as interventions were carried out, different social actors became involved in negotiations over access to and control of resources as they attempted to create room for manoeuvre in pursuing their livelihoods. As this strategy focused on dry season vegetable production, it provided a complementary source of food to what was produced during the rainy season. Its re-emergence shows a return of one of the traditional livelihood activities
that had succumbed to the vulnerability context of the early years of the period under study. This is one of the successes of the re-agrarianisation process as it was widely adopted by different households from the richest to the most vulnerable.

The vegetable gardens made a difference to food security but long-term sustainability and a holistic contribution to improved quality of life was constrained by the economic crisis, because generating cash income was impossible in a market that had almost completely reverted to a barter system. The viability of this intervention was also dependent on the abilities within each household and on a range of both formal and informal community level institutions that influenced access to the water and sharing of land near to the water sources. Wide adoption of the intervention by people of different classes resulted in a glut of vegetable products in the area. While this was a positive livelihood outcome it was incomplete without a market for the products. Most of the vegetables were dried to lengthen their shelf-life for home consumption, in other words the strategy was limited to mainly food security.

6.2.2.1.6 Small Livestock Interventions
Earlier this chapter argued that livestock is part of agricultural production. One intervention strategy gave people access to small livestock assets that determined the extent and direction of diversification during the period under study. Sender (2007) argues that although small livestock are of less value than large, they are more drought resistant. Small livestock became the starting point for building asset blocks towards sustainable livelihoods in a politically charged environment. For those households that had no assets at all the intervention gave a number of poor people the opportunity to become involved in a combination of livelihood activities. The intervening organisations understood and took into account the appropriate factors that influenced people’s ability to achieve sustainable livelihoods in the period under study. Small livestock became the starting point for acquiring large livestock in the long term.

One major challenge to the sustainability of this strategy was the persistence of what led to the decline of livestock in the first place. Livestock diseases remained uncontrolled due to critical shortages of dosing and dipping chemicals. Another
challenge was that party affiliations, real or not, were used as shields of impunity to destroy the asset holding base of smallholders, particularly during the 2008 harmonised elections. Thus the politically charged environment also limited the potential contribution of the small livestock support strategy to livelihood asset building.

Beneficiary households remained vulnerable as they either lost their livestock to disease or desperately sold it off at low prices to avoid doing so. It was unsustainable to restock the semi-arid areas with small livestock without addressing the challenges that decimated the asset before the intervention. As a result the strategy had limited impact and, despite evidence of diversification, it failed to guarantee the livelihood security of its target beneficiaries.

In addition, just like other medium-term support interventions in the study, this one was not coupled with immediate food aid. As a result some of the target beneficiaries slaughtered the small livestock to meet their immediate needs for survival, so only households that had other food at hand benefited from the intervention.

6.2.2.1.7 Agricultural Input Distribution
Distribution of inputs enabled smallholders to revive agricultural production as a quick response to severe shortages. However, the strategy succumbed to critical trends such as the economic crisis and shocks such as droughts. But although input distribution succumbed to challenges beyond the control of smallholders, the introduction of new agricultural technologies brought new practices that reduced some of their risks. The focus on small grain crops and associated cropping technologies increased agricultural production despite the political tension, even though it failed to replace maize production as a staple. The success of small grain production was attributed to free input support and advocacy by NGOs as the most appropriate replacement of the declining maize crop. It was also widely adopted because they are drought resistant and do well in hot and dry climatic conditions compared to maize. During cropping and planting small grains are also not labour intensive and as a result output was high, although consumption levels were low compared to maize.
Not all inputs distributed were used for their intended purpose – some households without food, for example, ate the grain that was meant for planting. Some households bartered fertilisers and other inputs for food. As a result these households succumbed to the vulnerability context that perpetuated food shortages and reduced their ability to diversify their livelihoods. The re-agrarianisation agenda was constrained by the severe shortages of food in some instances and this reduced its sustainability, although potential for livelihood improvement was reflected.

Generally, most re-agrarianisation strategies were long-term but their impact in terms of positive and sustainable livelihood outcomes was constrained by a politically charged environment that reversed many of the gains made. Although these strategies had some tangible livelihood outcomes related to increased crop output, poverty persisted in these semi-arid areas. The cash drain from the economy adversely affected the sustainability potential of most of the strategies as the barter economy distorted the value of assets exchanged, usually at the smallholders’ expense.

### 6.2.3 Externally Fostered Non-farm Activities

External interventions reflect a dual strategy which entailed a combination of agrarian and non-agrarian livelihood activities. This represents the diversity of asset combinations in semi-arid areas during the period under study. As presented in Chapter Five community based enterprises, commercialisation of non-timber forest products and vocational skills training helped to diversify rural livelihoods and produced both positive and negative livelihood outcomes. These strategies also faced challenges related to the politically charged operating context that limited their sustainability potential, but there is no doubt that these non-farm activities gave many households access to a wide range of assets and long-term livelihood outcomes.

#### 6.2.3.1 Food Aid Distribution

Food provision as an NGO strategy separated people who could diversify and benefit from diversification from those who could not. The strategy placed limits on the types of diversification open to rural people as some were restricted to food distribution. In this regard most people who received food aid became dependent on it with minimal building of livelihood assets for long-term sustainability. Although this
strategy benefited the largest number of people, it may have increased the gap between the poor and the better-off in all study areas.

The challenge with food aid as a survival strategy is that it was not supplemented by long-term livelihood diversification strategies. There was limited coordination between long-term and short-term interventions, and as a result they failed to complement each other. As a result the strategy created a dependency relationship between rural people and development agencies. Thus not all external interventions were meant to directly diversify rural livelihoods; some were short-term and urgent, designed to ward off starvation.

Food provision as an NGO strategy is widely criticised for creating a dependency syndrome that dampens innovation and creativity, turning people from decision-making actors in their own lives to passive recipients. At the same time the food distributed was inadequate to cover household food requirements, and the hours spent in queues made it an expensive investment for rural people in terms of time. It can therefore be argued that long-term effects of food distribution are perpetual food deficits, continued vulnerability and a limited contribution towards sustainable livelihoods.

The actual administration of the distribution process was fraught with allegations of corruption and nepotism. This survival strategy demonstrates how political capital was used to manipulate vulnerable people for the benefit of those in power. Beneficiaries were selected along partisan lines, and those with political power determined who received benefits and who did not. Many deserving vulnerable people failed to benefit from a strategy important for their survival. Food distribution in a politically charged environment is not neutral and it turned out to be an effective political tool to control rural people. The abuse of political capital in this strategy threatened the same rural livelihoods it was intended to promote. This is one of the clearest examples of how the politically charged environment constrained the positive effects of external interventions.
6.2.3.2 Rural Enterprise Development
People require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes, and the study found two types of rural enterprises that increased the number of assets during the period studied. The first was vocational skills training and the second, the commercialisation of non-timber forest products. Although smallholder farmers were not willing to entirely move away from agriculture as indicated in previous sections, there is evidence for a shift into the combination of tangible and intangible assets that are needed for successful livelihood diversification. This also reflects the rural economic activity re-orientation argued for by Bryceson (1994).

Vocational Skills Based Enterprises
Manyani (2010) argues that branching out of agriculture and into non-agrarian activities was less to do with positive attraction than with a decline in agricultural returns that left smallholders with little option. The study found that despite the persistent vulnerability context, it is possible for local people to develop long-term strategies for sustainable livelihoods. It is also possible to establish a rural industry under difficult conditions that could be sustainable should the vulnerability context improve. This strategy contributed to the accumulation of non-tangible assets or human capital for sustainable livelihoods. This corroborates with Sen’s (1997) assertion that “human beings are the first rural livelihood asset of all assets”. Human capital determines the capability of each household to diversify its livelihood portfolio. Within the SLF, human capital development is a basic requirement for a sustainable livelihood – a prerequisite for permanent employment and access to financial capital. This strategy brings to the fore the role played by local people as actors. It strengthened human agency as beneficiaries became more cognisant of conditions in the social structure that could constrain their choices and livelihood strategies. As a result some responded adequately to the constraints, either by becoming migrant labourers in neighbouring countries or by establishing community-based enterprises for sustainable livelihoods.

Vocational skills training converted redundant vulnerable youths into capable human assets. They were empowered in line with Sen’s (1995) definition of empowerment as an expansion of assets and capabilities to increase wellbeing and livelihood security as well as self-confidence. In other words, their adaptive and strategic
behaviours in relation to the vulnerability context were improved. Carpentry, welding, dressmaking and fishing enterprises reflect the diversity of people’s new capabilities to negotiate fair deals for themselves at the community level. This shows that it is possible, even in a politically charged environment, for less powerful actors to be transformed and make their voices heard and thereby change the course of events through livelihood diversification. As most beneficiary households became involved in negotiations over resources and control of them, they gained the independence necessary to resist shocks and pursue their own livelihoods in semi-arid areas.

However, despite the positive outcome of improving people’s adaptive and strategic behaviours, the emerging rural industry was also constrained by the persistent socio-economic challenges and the politically charged environment. As with vegetable gardening, the sustainability of the new enterprise strategy was dependent on a viable market for the products, but the cashless economy in the rural areas meant entrepreneurs had to barter most of their products for assets and food. Although the emerging industry enabled the entrepreneurs to accumulate assets that are important for sustainable livelihoods, they also needed cash to plough back into their business, for example to replace industry consumables.

The quality of trained entrepreneurs and consequently the quality of their products was greatly affected by critical trends such as a brain drain of teachers and limited learning equipment due to the economic situation. There is no doubt that this also affected the extent of livelihood diversification and the sustainability of the community enterprise livelihood strategies. Training staff was only semi-qualified and participants were rural youths with no basic education or those who had failed ordinary level education. Thus the training standards were affected by the political situation, which in turn limited the extent of livelihood diversification.

The carpentry and dressmaking products did not raise cash but were used as currency in the local barter market. Unlike the other enterprises, the emerging rural fishing industry generated cash income but the sustainability of the industry was limited by the lack of cold storage facilities. Forced into quick disposal of fresh fish, the fishermen had to accept the low prices offered by middlemen. Although the fishing industry promoted cash transactions in semi-arid areas it failed to produce
significant livelihood outcomes for sustainable livelihoods. Although the study shows that the limited cash income generated enabled the entrepreneurs to support agricultural production back home, the capital required to finance the enterprise with equipment like boats and nets was limited and as a result the juggling of this asset combination was not balanced to ensure sustainability. As a result it only became a short-term survival strategy.

Non-Timber Forest Products based Enterprises
As presented in Chapter Five, the strategy was aimed at strengthening the financial capital of people through income generated from national, regional and international marketing of non-timber forest products such as marula, baobab and masau products. The strategy added to the wide range of assets required by people to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. It contributed to food availability, increased resilience to shocks and reduced risk as agro-based food deficits became severe. The strategy gave people a way of adding value to natural assets through technology that made the beneficiation sustainable. The study found that even under the politically charged operating conditions, it was possible to add value to natural assets and increase the utilisation of natural resources for rural livelihoods. Non-agrarian livelihood activities are determined by the natural resources the area is endowed with. To some extent the strategy also generated conflicting livelihood outcomes as over-harvesting and unsustainable harvesting methods threatened the sustainability of the natural resources themselves.

The non-agrarian strategy linked poor rural communities to modern international markets in Europe and Asia for cash income generation and provided an opportunity for local people to improve their livelihoods by building on what they had, their natural assets, despite the challenging socio-economic operating environment. However, despite its potential for strengthening financial capital, people treated this new rural business with suspicion. As this strategy was carried out in conjunction with agricultural production the study found that its adoption by local people was low. One reason for this was the complexity involved in developing and marketing some of the products. This limited its livelihood outcome potential for rural people as product development was done by experts and specialists from NGOs in cities and as a result rural people did not accept it. As product development was de-linked from
rural people, beneficiaries failed to make it an asset building block for sustainable livelihoods. However, the introduction of a strategy for using locally available natural assets shows a changing trend in livelihood activities from simple agriculture to complex non-agrarian enterprises using advanced technologies.

Although the strategy helped to broaden people’s livelihood asset base, its contribution to sustainable livelihood outcomes was minimal. Because wild fruit gathering is seasonal, it is vulnerable to exogenous shocks such as droughts. As such its sustainability is not dependent only on adoption but also on a guaranteed supply and this also limited its wide adoption by many rural households.

Another limitation of the strategy was the technology, which presented operational challenges for rural people and was not easy to replace immediately when it broke down. As a result there were bottlenecks in production that affected the sustainability of the new rural industry. Technology repairs were dependent on external support from NGOs and this limited human capital transfer to local beneficiaries. This shows that such complex interventions require investments in human capital to ensure sustainability. However, the high levels of migrant labour meant that training and human capital development had to target the elderly who were the sector primarily interested in the industry in all study areas. This made non-timber forest enterprises an expensive strategy for people in semi-arid areas and raises questions about the suitability of such enterprises in rural semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe. It could be argued that such technologically complex enterprises with high levels of investment in both product and technology development should be commercially run by private companies and not by poor rural people in such a vulnerable context. In sum, the livelihood outcomes from this strategy did not meet the immediate needs of rural people and may even have sustained the vulnerability of rural producers.

6.3 People’s Own Non-Farm Livelihood Initiatives and Strategies

As presented in the previous chapter, livelihood diversification is context-specific and influenced by opportunities such as infrastructure, natural resources available and markets. Under conditions of vulnerability, rural people as actors are concerned with how to develop strategies for dealing with risk. This study shows that under similar conditions of vulnerability, different people came up with different responses to make
a living. Contrary to the perception of rural people as either beneficiaries of aid programmes or passive victims of politico-economic events, the actor-oriented approach portrays them as social actors whose social processes produce and reproduce heterogeneity which is constantly manifested and modified, although they are also bounded by structural constraints such as government policies and regulations.

As presented in Chapter Five, the wide array of non-farm initiatives – ranging from poaching, panning, fruit harvesting and wood carving to property theft – indicates that people respond differently to similar conditions. This is in line with Long’s (2001) argument that actors in a particular situation internalise similar social conditions differently and develop diverse strategies to adapt and construct sustainable livelihoods.

The argument in this section is that despite the dominance of agricultural livelihood strategies among rural people they could not sufficiently reduce the vulnerability context of the economic crisis, climate shocks and the politically charged environment combined. As a result, people had to be more innovative and both increase the number of activities and carry them out in combination. People’s strengths changed as their livelihood strategies changed in response to external circumstances.

However; the nature of the local initiatives shows that as strategies go they were less calculated to respond adequately to the circumstances, than they were desperate measures for survival. As different social actors in semi-arid areas became involved in negotiations over control of resources, most strategies locally initiated became highly constrained by government policies and legislation related to the environment, wildlife management and mining and marketing of minerals. The groups that were the most vulnerable had the fewest opportunities to diversify and construct sustainable livelihoods during the period under study.

6.3.1 The Role of Migrant Workers’ Remittances

In Chapter Five, migration from rural areas was presented as one of the causes of de-agrarianisation due to loss of labour. This study shows a shift from internal
urbanisation to cross-border migration. Given the limited employment opportunities in Zimbabwe outside the declining agricultural sector, being a migrant labourer was one of the strongest options as a livelihood diversification strategy. This also reflects a shift of the rural economy towards increased dependence on migrant labour remittances due to the economic collapse. In this regard the study shows that one factor in livelihood diversification is the differences in ability of each person. Those who identified livelihood opportunities in neighbouring countries had the physical health and strength to engage in the opportunities.

Remittances of both cash and goods contributed to accumulation of assets. It also contributed towards agricultural revival as cash was channelled towards crop production. One of the advantages of cash remittances during the period under study was that transactions were outside the government regulations controlling foreign currency handling during the Zimbabwean dollar era. However, the impact and contribution of remittances to the construction of sustainable livelihoods back home was diverse across households. Not all households received remittances. Those that did were often the households that successfully diversified their livelihoods. Nonetheless, the persistence of the political tension during the period under study made the remittances vulnerable, and they were not enough to facilitate on their own the construction of sustainable livelihoods in semi-arid areas.

The study found the quality of migrant labour from semi-arid areas into neighbouring countries also influenced the extent of livelihood diversification and the type of livelihood outcomes back home. Most poor households exported unskilled labour and thus their migrant labourers were in low-income employment such as domestic or farm labour. This in turn limited the type and amount of cash and goods sent home, compared to those exporting skilled labour who received more significant remittances. In other words the capability to diversify and improve livelihoods was determined by the quality of exported human capital.

6.3.2 Poaching
Poaching is a typical example of the interface between the structure and human agency. The livelihood strategy is not only high-risk but also bounded and regulated
by the government wildlife policy that deems it illegal. Thus institutional factors influence outcomes in such livelihood strategies, and face-to-face encounters with the government can affect the actions and outcomes of local actors’ strategies.

However, although the qualities of human agency are exhibited in this high-risk livelihood strategy, its sustainability is not guaranteed. The government could not legalise hunting wildlife and as a result it was bound to apply force in controlling it. The study found that rural people felt the government had disengaged from its own people in relation to supporting their livelihoods, and this legitimacy crisis reflected in the way they disregarded the law in relation to rural resources, including wildlife.

6.3.3 Emerging Near-Surface Mineral Panning
People’s access to the natural resources around them was limited and livelihood diversification became a matter of desperation. However the role of mineral panning in people’s survival should not be downplayed. Gold and diamond panning intensified during the peak of the socio-economic and political crises, and made a cash contribution, however small, to a rural economy dominated by bartering. Like migrant labour, the contribution of this activity to livelihood diversification was determined by the capability of the actors who ventured into it. Maponga and Ngorima (2003) note that panning is one of the easiest non-farm livelihood activities to enter as there are few entry barriers, and in fact the only criterion is the ability to do manual labour. However, the strategy contributed minimally to the economy in the semi-arid areas studied because so little of the cash reached them, and the returns themselves were so small. Nonetheless, there were enough positive livelihood outcomes to make it worth doing despite constraints from government regulation.

The lack of a policy that legalises panning impedes the potential contribution of this strategy towards sustainable livelihoods, despite calls for such a policy by civil society. However, it only thrived as a livelihood activity during the period prior to the inauguration of the unity government, indicating that it is not sustainable but was undertaken as a survival strategy during the period under study. Like poaching, this non-farm activity is risky and several people have lost their lives due to the collapse of disused pits and small-scale mines where panning takes place. The strategy is also environmentally unsustainable as it fails to maintain and enhance the local
asset on which the livelihoods depend. Thus it has produced conflicting livelihood outcomes, both positive and negative.

6.3.4 Wood Carving and Environmental Degradation
Although wood carving as a livelihood strategy reflects high levels of creativity and innovation on the part of local actors, it has also produced conflicting livelihood outcomes, both positive and negative. Cash sales contribute to households whilst at the same time causing environmental degradation and unwarranted cutting down of trees. Environmental degradation in the long term contributes to climatic change that in turn adversely affects agricultural production. However, wood carving requires some training and expertise, and as a result few people engaged in it compared to those engaged in panning. In other words entry into this livelihood strategy was not easy and was largely determined by the capability and human skills of the actors.

The study found that faced with a series of severe livelihood shocks rural people increasingly turned to any available natural resources for survival. However, as a livelihood strategy wood carving was also constrained by laws prohibiting tree felling for personal gain, particularly endangered species. In addition, its aim of generating cash was often impeded by the barter economy.

To summarise the discussion on non-farm activities, the study found changing trends in livelihood diversification as people tried to adapt to the politically charged and economically challenged environment. One trend was a partial shift from agricultural production to non-farm activities, both externally fostered and locally initiated. However; none of these livelihood strategies were able to facilitate the construction of sustainable livelihoods. The locally initiated strategies such as panning, poaching, wood carving and harvesting wild fruit reflect some level of desperation and made a limited contribution to sustainability. Externally fostered non-farm livelihood activities such as community based enterprise development and skills training also had operational challenges that limited their contribution to sustainable livelihoods. Another trend was the continued focus on agricultural production due to intensified externally fostered agricultural support ranging from agricultural inputs provision, irrigation infrastructure rehabilitation, and distribution of livestock, shifts in specific crop production and introduction of new crop production technologies. Generally,
Despite these changes, the persistence and extremity of the vulnerability context during the period under study limited the overall contribution of these strategies to the construction of sustainable livelihoods despite the fact that some positive livelihood outcomes were realised.

6.4 The Extent of the Vulnerability Context

Hussein and Nelson (1998:144) contend that livelihood diversification is aimed at achieving sustainable livelihoods, and that people are the first human asset, followed by their capabilities and their means of living. Whatever types of livelihood people engage in, they have to be sustainable to cope with stress and shocks. This study shows that although there is evidence of livelihood diversification during the period under study, their sustainability was undermined by the extent of the vulnerability context characterised by economic collapse, climatic challenges, political tension, poor road infrastructure, the remoteness of semi-arid districts, the government regulation of foreign currency use in the country and undeveloped markets, among other factors as presented in Chapter two.

Rehabilitating water sources and irrigation schemes, establishing vegetable gardens, introducing crop production technologies, distributing agricultural inputs and setting up a contract farming system were all attempts to construct sustainable livelihoods, but they were affected by the poorly developed market for the products. Chambers (1994:177) notes that markets for both farm and non-farm products help smallholder farmers to generate income from a wide range of sources.

However, the study found that despite having products from a variety of sources, both farm and non-farm, generating income from them was constrained by the limitations of the market, the remoteness of the areas studied, poorly developed roads, distorted prices for goods and services, depleted soils, limited access to education, low wealth status and small household size. This was further worsened by the politically charged environment, stringent market regulations particularly for livestock and grain products, and global economic changes. Smallholder farmers who were closer to the rural centres were slightly more able to diversify their livelihoods than those further from town as the latter could not transport fresh produce to the market in time.
Crop livestock integration was also another diversification strategy adopted during the period under study that was affected by poorly developed markets that deteriorated even further due to the economic crisis. Thus the opportunities for livelihood diversification fostered by external organisations did not have the institutional and policy support needed to ensure sustainability of the livelihood outcomes. The major livelihood outcomes realised from agricultural production intensification were related to food provision and security, but they failed to build on other assets important for constructing sustainable livelihoods such as financial capital and human capital.

The use of ‘open eye’ judgment for assessing the value of assets in the barter economy was a major limitation in all semi-arid areas as it distorted the actual value of exchanged assets and goods, usually at the expense of smallholders, as discussed earlier. Thus, although the re-emergence of the barter system played an important role in facilitating livelihood diversification and asset holding by the poor, it failed to facilitate the construction of sustainable livelihoods in the long term.

In the case of non-timber forest products, strict foreign currency regulations by central government constrained income from international markets. For marula and baobab products there was no ready local market but international markets, whilst for mopane worms and masau products they had a local market that was poorly developed and affected by the political and socio-economic crisis. Although international and regional markets helped build financial capital, the market and the community enterprises were detached and the logistical arrangements for shipping and paying became prohibitive. Although community based non-timber forest enterprises were an important cash income livelihood strategy with potential to generate even more cash income, they were negatively affected by the stringent government monetary policies that prohibited foreign currency transactions without authority from the Reserve bank of Zimbabwe. The study therefore found that the positive livelihood outcomes from the non-farm livelihood diversification strategy were constrained by government policies and regulations. It took a long time for community producers to access the cash payments from international markets and this adversely affected production as people needed quick returns for survival. The
following graph shows the total quantity ordered by the market and the total quantities supplied.

*Figure 29: Market Demand and Supply of Natural Products*

The bar graph shows that the emerging rural industry has viable markets but producers failed to meet the demand. This failure can be attributed to operational and production challenges, limited capacity by rural producers and technological challenges. The study found that limited production adversely affected the potential for income generation to build the asset base of the producers, thus making the enterprise less sustainable. Sustainability was further compromised by high costs involved in production and marketing. Although quantities ordered remained very high compared to quantities supplied, the following graph shows income generated from the little that was supplied was relatively high, indicating the strong livelihood potential in this rural industry if impediments were removed.

*Figure 33: Supply and Income from Natural Products*

(Adapted from Table 22 in Chapter Five)
Although the graph shows that there is high income from the sale of limited quantities from international markets, the operational costs, which are almost as high, are not reflected. Once production and shipment costs are deducted, the actual income generated is minimal. Since foreign currency transactions were highly regulated by the central bank, there are levies on foreign currency handling and this reduced income for the community producers even further. Direct payments to communities were also not possible because they have no access to bank accounts and these services are far away from the producing communities. As a result the construction of sustainable livelihoods from this strategy became constrained. However; challenges related to marketing logistics and late payments resulted in increased consumption of some of the products such as baobab oil and pulp, marula oil and cake, mopane worms and honey.

An analysis of the initiatives by local people as actors engaging in a wide array of activities to diversify livelihoods shows that they also fell short of constructing sustainable livelihoods. Chambers (1994:66) argues that to be environmentally sustainable, a livelihood has to maintain or enhance the local assets on which it depends, and to have net beneficial effects on other livelihoods. Woodcarving and gold and diamond panning contributed to environmental depletion in already degraded semi-arid areas, as discussed previously. Although remittances as immediate outcomes of migrant labour did not cause environmental degradation, the construction of sustainable livelihoods from both cash and material remittances did not take place. Cash remittances were directed towards agricultural production, and in the period studied crops also succumbed to external trends like the socio-economic challenges and shocks like droughts and floods. Despite having cash, people lost access to agricultural inputs and this meant most of the remittances were directed at meeting basic household needs without building assets. As a result the complex vulnerability context during the studied period constrained the sustainable construction of livelihoods in semi-arid areas.

6.5 Increased Social Differentiation of Rural People
The study found that the relationship between livelihood diversification and social differentiation took on a different dimension when influenced by the politically charged environment. Social differentiation in semi-arid rural communities strongly
influenced the capability of rural people to diversify their livelihoods. Peters (2003) examines social differentiation in terms of size of land holding, income, type of livelihood strategy, gender and age and uses terms such as peasants, labourers, and proletariat. However, this study found that new factors such as religion, ethnic and tribal identities, other social networks and particularly political affiliation also emerged as defining features of social differentiation in the politically charged environment.

As indicated in Chapter Five, intervening institutions such as NGOs, government departments and private companies contributed significantly to rural social differentiation, which in turn largely determined the extent to which people were able to diversify their livelihoods. The FTLRP determined access to land for specific beneficiary households with allegiance to ZANU-PF as a political party, while others from opposition parties were refused it. As a result those ZANU-PF beneficiaries with better quality land were more able to diversify than those who were left behind on degraded land in semi-arid districts.

The study found sharp variation in how, and how much smallholders in semi-arid areas accessed externally fostered livelihood strategies, both farm and non-farm. The selection of target beneficiaries by intervening institutions left out some and those who benefited were more able to diversify their livelihoods than those who were left out. Some beneficiaries only benefited from food aid that created dependency without sustainability. This process inevitably differentiated rural people based on both access to strategies and resources and how they diversified from external interventions such as agricultural support, rehabilitation of water sources and other infrastructure. Social differentiation is both enabling and inhibiting in relation to access to livelihood resources and this influenced the type of livelihood diversification and its sustainability.

6.5.1 Increasing Use of Political Capital as a Survival Strategy
This study describes an institutional context in which the role played by political capital is examined in relation to the destruction and rebuilding of livelihood assets in different households. Baumann (2003) argues that adding a political dimension to
the SLF makes it more holistic and this was adopted in this study. In recent years political capital has come to be seen as a key asset in building sustainable livelihoods, but it leads to conflicting livelihood outcomes. The understanding of political capital in this study shows how the mediating and transforming structures and processes are sometimes met by resistance to change.

The use of political capital in livelihood diversification in this study produced different livelihood outcomes. Those with political capital, or in other words those who were linked to ZANU-PF, had access to resources, particularly agricultural inputs and food from government departments such as the Ministry of Land, the Grain Marketing Board and the Ministry of Mines. They were thus better positioned to diversify than those with no links. As discussed in Chapter Three, the FTLP largely benefited people linked to the then ruling party, while those who were not party members remained in semi-arid areas.

Most importantly, political capital was used to destroy the livelihood assets of smallholder farmers who were not aligned to ZANU-PF. As presented in Chapter Five, property theft with impunity increased during election periods with those accused of supporting the opposition losing property through violence. Thus political capital became a tool for gaining property and other assets from those without. To some extent this generated conflict, particularly between the rural rich and the very poor as the rich lost their livelihood assets. Although political capital can be used positively to construct sustainable livelihoods, in the study area its application largely destroyed livelihood assets for smallholders. It also destroyed social bonds among rural people – social capital that was important for constructing sustainable livelihoods. The trend of political and economic violence also generated tribal conflict in one community. This shows how the politically charged environment influenced social, political and economic structures at community level.

6.5.2 Tribal and Ethnic Differentiation
In addition to its political dimension, social differentiation also took a tribal and ethnic dimension, and these were both directly and indirectly related to party politics. Nyambara, examining the politically stable decade preceding his (2003) study in Gokwe, found that modernisation and rural development in the area took a tribal
dimension based on two dominant groups, the Derukas and the Shangwe. However, in the politically charged environment of this study, other minority groups also claimed recognition and access to resources in their communities. As party politics in Zimbabwe increased social differentiation among rural people, it took on an ethnic dimension as people jostled for access to livelihood resources.

As the study acknowledges the role played by tribal and ethnic identities in determining the extent of livelihood diversification, it equally cannot ignore the role played by church affiliations and family networks. Church leaders and members influential with ZANU-PF were given access to resources at the expense of more needy people. Family ties and networks were also used as political capital to gain access to and control of resources. As a result certain social groups had their rural livelihoods fortified and their resilience strengthened at the expense of groups more poorly positioned on the prevailing socio-political ladder. These were the forms that social differentiation took in the politically charged environment and all forms could be in play at the same time.

6.5.3 Gendered Rural Livelihoods in Zimbabwe
As discussed in Chapter Five, among the trends that emerged in rural livelihoods in the decade studied was a shift in gender roles as women increasingly ventured into activities that were previously dominated by men? This invites a rethinking of the argument around the feminisation of rural poverty, as advanced by feminist scholars such as Maghadam (2005). Although the study shows that the gender composition of each household is among the factors determining its capabilities and the extent of livelihood diversification, there is evidence of an increase in the capabilities of female-headed households that benefited from re-agrarianisation strategies compared to male-headed households engaged in panning. It is therefore argued that despite feminisation of poverty in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe, some women and female-headed households successfully diversified livelihoods and acquired important assets as building blocks for sustainable livelihoods.

As presented in Chapter Five, the migration of male labour to neighbouring countries left many women heading households in all study areas and this contributed to the decline in agriculture. However, as argued by Berkvens (1997)
many rural women successfully diversified rural livelihoods due to remittances they received and to external support. Thus some positive livelihood outcomes were realised. Although the contribution of most strategies was undermined to differing extents by various aspects of the vulnerability context, the role played by women in livelihood diversification was significant. As men generated income in neighbouring countries, women kept up agricultural production and took on other farm and non-farm activities back home. However, it was also observed that female-headed households without men sending money home diversified poorly compared to those with them.

The study shows that some women benefited against the expectation that rural women were likely to be adversely affected by the politically charged environment and economic crisis. Externally fostered livelihood strategies improved the asset holding base of women who generated cash income and other assets from agricultural activities. However, this does not mean that they were no longer poorer than men, as they continued to bear the burden of feeding the household and taking care of it in other, unaccounted for ways.

6.6 Implications of Institutions and Policy Development on Rural Livelihoods Diversification and Improvement

The third objective of the study is to determine the extent to which rural policy and institutional changes in the past decade influenced and achieved rural livelihood diversification and improvement. In Chapter Five it was observed that diversification was impeded by a number of both policies and institutions. An institutional analysis in SLF terms allows for the location of policy spaces where interventions can be made, but this is dependent on the availability of resources, particularly financial ones. The government's position was that the economic crisis limited the funds available to implement sound policies and programmes. In other words, the state justified its shift in rural development policy with the limited financial resources available. As a result, what was expected of a government – such as fixing wells and boreholes and providing disease control measures for livestock – was not done. This policy shift away from long-term investment in smallholder farming in semi-arid areas and the accompanying institutional arrangements suffocated many of the externally fostered livelihood diversification strategies and undermined their sustainability.
The actor-oriented approach is critical of policy development and implementation that is restricted to the ‘top-down’ approach, as it holds that local groups should be actively involved in the formulation and implementation of policies that affect them in accordance with their own local development agendas. In Zimbabwe’s politically charged environment this was far from the case. Policy was re-oriented by the ruling party from rural economic development at local level to ensuring self-preservation. As a result, rural development aimed at facilitating livelihood diversification and sustainability became stagnant, as institutional arrangements at both local and national levels and the amendments to existing rural development policies discussed in Chapter Five confirm. As policy development and planning shifted from purely rural development towards self-preservation by those in power, this was done at the expense of livelihood diversification and sustainability.

6.6.1 Rural Institutional Arrangements and Implications for Rural Livelihood Development

The institutional focus of SLF enables the location of policy spaces where useful interventions can be made, and this institutional analysis further shows how people in semi-arid areas secured access to the resources they needed to construct sustainable livelihoods. The study found that various formal and informal institutional factors influenced the extent of livelihood diversification and sustainability of strategies adopted by people in a politically charged environment. At a local level, micro-institutions function on a day-to-day basis and mediate access to the combination of resources necessary to maintain livelihoods. At district level institutional structures both enabled and inhibited livelihood diversification and construction of sustainable livelihoods. They also determined who accessed rural resources and how people diversified their livelihoods.

The study found that in the politically charged environment local institutions and institutional arrangements became more centralised and politicised. The local institutions became a vehicle for patronage as well as a conduit for silencing dissenting voices against the then-ruling ZANU-PF, whose legitimacy had waned during the period under study. Its role of gatekeeper in all development work in the district constrained both the operations of existing NGO interventions and the number of organisations, as some NGOs were denied entry. As presented in the
previous chapter the ZANU-PF government feared that an increased number of NGOs would increase the dissemination of the ‘regime change’ agenda that would encourage people to vote for the opposition. To control NGOs the Rural District Council tightly monitored and regulated the operations of NGOs in each community. Government surveillance of people and NGOs increased during the period under study. The relationship between central government and local authorities also changed as central government went from playing a facilitation and administrative role to being more autocratic and controlling, for example by ring-fencing almost all funds.

As observed in Chapter Five, as institutional arrangements became more politically oriented, they also contributed to increased social differentiation based on political affiliation, ethnic identities, familial networks and religion connections. Local institutions determined who accessed land, inputs and other services and resources important for livelihood diversification and sustainable construction of livelihoods. Small minority tribal and ethnic identities such as the Tonga, the Tavara, the Shangwe, the Pfumbi and partly the Shangani were largely excluded from the FTLRP as they were labelled ‘politically incorrect’. Moyo and Yeros (2005) argue that through the operations of local authorities in semi-arid districts the FTLRP reconstructed ethno-regional identities in land holding and a new class formation was created, aimed at establishing black capitalist farmers from the favoured tribes and new peasant farmers through the re-peasantisation A1 resettlement scheme model. This meant that marginalised tribes largely remained in degraded semi-arid areas that were remote and climatically challenged, with poor infrastructure.

During the period under study government attention and support moved from semi-arid areas towards newly resettled areas for intensified agricultural production. The democratic ingredients enshrined in the institutional arrangements were degraded and reduced to political directives from the ZANU-PF central government. It became remote-controlled from above and unresponsive to local development needs and priorities for sustainable livelihoods.

The mutual suspicion between government and NGOs adversely impacted on the extent of diversification and sustainability of rural livelihoods. As a result potential
investment in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe was withdrawn. Had these various development agencies been freely allowed to support rural communities the livelihood outcomes and extent of livelihood diversification and improvement could have been different.

The politicisation of institutional structures is also reflected in the inclusion of security forces in all rural council meetings at the district level, and the extent to which decision-making at the district levels was militarised. This signalled efforts to silence rural people, who should have had a voice through electing officials to the rural council. The council chamber was an arena for all rural development decisions at district and community level and silencing rural people at this stage was tantamount to the destruction of the democratic space.

6.6.2 Implications of Policy Development on Rural Livelihood Diversification and Improvement

In the context of the politically charged environment of Zimbabwe of the past decade, public pronouncements by political leaders became policies for development. They were not written and approved as per the linear policy development procedure, and their implementation process was not well thought through. As a result, policy development constrained rather than facilitated improved rural livelihoods in semi-arid areas.

Policy development in the period under review favoured particular interest groups which did not include the rural poor. The tightening of the Minerals Act, Wildlife Management Act and the Natural Resources Management Act as presented in Chapter Five left rural people as actors with little room to depend on their own initiative. Thus structural and policy changes constrained and limited human independence, innovation and creativity as local people adopted different non-farm activities in partial shifts from agricultural production. To a great extent, policies created from announcements made during political rallies were pushed through for authorisation, without adequate analysis to understand how they would enable or inhibit rural development and impact on different social groups of people in a particular area. This study found that policy development in the politically charged
environment did not follow analysis and debate procedures but was hurried through at party level and implemented before being discussed and debated in the legislature. It was legalised and ratified by the legislature as a directive from the executive and the political party after implementation had already started. This adversely affected some of the livelihood strategies adopted by people in the period under review. For example, all diamond fields were declared national assets, and the army was deployed to control people who were realising positive livelihood outcomes there. As a result uncertainty affected rural people as they adopted various livelihood strategies to construct sustainable livelihoods.

Similarly the FTLRP policy was developed and approved after the actual land allocation was completed. Thus in the politically charged environment, the policy development process shifted from a normal process to a series of reactions to political actions. It shifted from being driven by the rural development agenda to being driven by the political agenda of the sitting government.

In the same vein the amendment of the Traditional Leaders Act during the period under review transformed the institution of traditional leadership into a political gatekeeper. Despite the fact that the act considered traditional leaders to be apolitical, the excessive powers of administering all government laws and rules at community level reflected a salient transformation from being apolitical actors to political ones. However, the change failed to facilitate negotiations over access to resources, and left households in semi-arid districts with little room to manoeuvre in their attempts to construct sustainable livelihoods.

As a result, people who needed and deserved help in difficult conditions failed to access important assets. In essence unplanned and abrupt policy changes are a product of political capital as some people benefited from these policy changes at the expense of others. To some extent abuse of political capital is more enabled by politically charged environments than politically stable ones. It thrives on the absence of rule of law, violence and political disturbances as those in power amass wealth at the expense of the poor. In this regard policy either ignores the poor or works against them.
Before coming to conclusions there is need to go back to the general research question of the study, which reads “To what extent have rural development interventions and policy and institutional changes in the past decade influenced, affected and achieved rural livelihood diversification and improvement?”. Generally the study shows that despite intensified development intervention efforts in politically charged and semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe during the period under review, rural livelihoods have not improved, and in fact poverty has increased among the rural poor. Livelihood diversification and improvement was influenced and constrained by the institutional arrangements in study areas. The formal and informal institutional arrangements were heavily politicised and militarised, to the extent that relations between the government and NGOs were constrained by mutual suspicion. Government interference and surveillance of individual people and of the operations of NGOs increased, as simultaneously its grip on local institutions was tightened. This limited the potential of rural development in all study areas. Policy development was transferred from the legislature to ZANU-PF as a political party and there was no separation between ZANU-PF as a political party and the government. This became a hindrance to livelihood diversification and rural development in all study areas. The politically charged environment distorted policy development and the functionality of institutional arrangements, thus impeding the construction of sustainable livelihoods.

However, it is important to note that some progress was recorded in livelihood diversification despite these and other constraints. NGOs contributed significantly to rural livelihood diversification, although the sustainability of the livelihoods was limited by the politically charged environment. Rural livelihood diversification and improvement was evident in specific external interventions and locally initiated strategies, although they failed to absolutely and sustainably improve rural livelihoods.
CHAPTER SEVEN

7.1 Conclusion and Issues for Further Research

7.1 Conclusions
This chapter draws conclusions with regard to the extent to which livelihood diversification attempts improved people’s lives in semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe in light of the country’s politically charged environment. Conclusions are made regarding the types of dominant livelihood activities in the three study areas. The chapter also reflects on the impact of changing trends in livelihood diversification and implications of policy development and institutional arrangements on rural development. Finally, key recommendations and issues for further research are presented.

This study has been guided by the sustainable livelihoods framework and the actor oriented approach as presented in Chapter Three. Based on the acknowledgement of these two analytical frameworks, the study concludes that the vulnerability of rural people was reduced and resilience increased as people were offered external support in structuring aspects of livelihood diversification. However, the reduction of the vulnerability levels in semi-arid areas was not sustained as efforts succumbed to exogenous adverse trends and shocks that reversed many of the gains made. The efforts were not adequately supported by policy development and institutional arrangements.

One aspect of the operating context that constrained the sustainability of most livelihood activities during the period under study was the persistent politically charged environment. To reduce the sense of vulnerability and powerlessness created by a politically charged environment implies realigning power relations and creating an environment that is not only enabling but also reassuring, but this was not achieved during the period. It was widely anticipated that this would happen after the GPA but it did not, as power relations were difficult to realign. The World Summit for Social Development report (1995:26) notes that the capacity to cope with stress and shocks in such unstable environments cannot succeed without access to supplementary resources from outside the local context. However; despite external support, most attempts to improve people’s lives were constrained by political
tensions. Although external development interventions are necessary they are not sufficient without change in, and institutional support from, the political environment.

7.1.1 Changes in Rural Livelihoods and Minimal Contribution to Livelihood Improvement
There is ample evidence of different types of livelihood diversification and a wide range of assets and livelihood activities in the semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe. Three major types of livelihoods were identified, namely traditional ones, emerging local initiatives and livelihoods fostered by external interventions. Livelihood diversification has happened across the three categories.

There is also evidence that livelihood diversification within the three types of livelihoods reduced stress and improved resilience to shocks to some degree. Different crops were produced, signifying the viability of crop diversification as a livelihood strategy. Despite the decline of agricultural production it remained the dominant livelihood activity in all study areas. In addition, out of desperation rural people engaged in non-farm activities that contributed to livelihood diversification in different ways.

As crop production declined, engagement in locally initiated non-farm activities increased. At the same time there was an increase in external support, both to revive agricultural production and to exploit locally available natural resources. Trends also changed within crop production for food security purposes, where major crops in semi-arid areas (cotton and maize) declined and small grains increased.

The study found an intricate relationship between farm and non-farm activities as proceeds generated from non-farm activities were usually channelled towards agricultural production.

Generally the livelihood outcomes from all three livelihood categories remained low. Despite increased production of small grains, this failed to improve food security, which was its prime objective. The consumption levels of small grains, particularly sorghum, are low and rural people remain food insecure. Promotion of new crops as traditional ones declined therefore did not improve rural livelihoods as people remain
vulnerable, although they were enabled to diversify and survive during the period. Vegetable garden products are mainly for home consumption but cannot sustainably support rural livelihoods because of poor markets and market access in rural areas.

7.1.2 Important but Limited Role of Rural Livelihood Development Interventions

External interventions fell into three main categories, namely agricultural support, non-agricultural interventions and food aid. The major contribution of agricultural interventions was the revival of agricultural production, focusing on both crop production and livestock rearing. This maintained the dominance and relevance of agriculture as the main livelihood activity in all semi-arid areas of Zimbabwe. External support in non-agricultural production played a role in diversifying livelihoods as agricultural production declined but non-farm activities failed to dominate. As rural people from the dominant tribes are accustomed to agricultural production it became apparent that for them, engagement in non-farm livelihood activities was both out of desperation and secondary to agricultural production despite the challenges of the vulnerability context.

Food aid, the third external support category, contributed to immediate survival strategies in the face of impending famine as food shortages became severe. Although the three types of external interventions played a complementary role to agricultural production as the traditional livelihood activity, their contributions should not be understated. Vulnerability was reduced in the short term and rural livelihoods were improved in the long term, even if the latter was limited in extent.

The overall conclusion is that development interventions contributed positively to rural livelihood diversification, but livelihood improvement was limited because the politically fraught environment reversed many of the gains of livelihood improvement in Zimbabwe. External support can play a role but sustainable improvements are limited if the policies and institutional arrangements do not support them. The major contribution of external interventions was to enable rural people to survive, although with minimal success in generating a surplus adequate for livelihood sustainability. However, much of what was achieved during the period under study could not have been achieved without this external support. This shows that external interventions
contributed to reduced levels of vulnerability among rural people in semi-arid districts.

Most development interventions in the semi-arid districts showed potential to improve rural livelihoods. However, despite an increased number of development interventions in the study areas in the past decade, poverty is still extreme and rural people remain vulnerable. Most rural people remain poor, with the rich and the better-off constituting a minority. It is worth considering that the number and quality of rural livelihood interventions was outweighed by a series of shocks and adverse trends during the period studied, including floods, droughts and a major national economic crisis. These, coupled with the politically fraught atmosphere, made for a decade of extremes.

External support for non-agricultural activities has the potential to be sustainable, but faces challenges of advanced technologies unfamiliar to rural people, poorly developed local markets and far-away regional and international markets. The non-farm component has great potential in the long term but during the period under study it failed to reduce rural poverty.

The sustainability of both traditional agricultural production and externally fostered activities depended on the existence of a viable market. Two modes of exchange (barter and cash) co-existed in rural communities, the barter a forced response to the drain of cash from the system. The limitations associated with barter and the lack of cash limited the potential and sustainability of most livelihood activities. The re-emergence of the barter system complemented the money market and enabled people to exchange goods and services, but it impacted severely on the sustainability of livelihoods. It slowly declined after the introduction of the multi-currency system in 2009 but even then cash was limited in semi-arid areas so bartering continued to some extent.

The study concludes that social differentiation is both a product of livelihood diversification and a factor contributing to it. Fieldwork showed that resource allocation was linked to ethnic identities and political affiliation. During the ten years studied, political affiliation, ethnic and tribal identities, familial networks and religious
connections as forms of social differentiation determined which social groups were
given or refused access to specific resources and other forms of support.

Paradoxically, as women became vulnerable to the politically charged environment,
there was a shift in some of their roles as new opportunities opened up in activities
that used to be dominated by men. As women increasingly ventured into traditionally
male-dominated livelihood activities they began accessing resources and acquired
livelihood assets, but as a trend this was not strong enough to reduce the
feminisation of poverty in semi-arid areas.

7.1.3 Local Initiatives are a Sign of Desperation
According to Fukuyama (1995:79) “local initiatives by rural people in developing rural
livelihoods stand the best chance of becoming empowering experiences if they
generate lasting social capital”. Had some of the non-farm strategies of local people
been supported by progressive development policies and institutional arrangements
they could have empowered people. However, in the politically charged environment
the initiatives and strategies were perceived with suspicion and constrained by
government regulations. The assertion by Fukuyama alludes to a picture of social
networks becoming a hub for building rural livelihoods. Political tensions made it
difficult to build social capital in rural areas where access to resources was socially
differentiated, causing existing group identities to become more significant and
accentuated.

Although people as actors were creative and innovative in finding non-farm livelihood
activities, their actions were constrained by policy and structural barriers. Despite the
risks to their safety, people continued to illegally hunt wildlife and fish and to pan for
minerals. However, government regulations became a huge constraint to local
human agency and mostly the local initiatives failed to sustainably improve
livelihoods, although there is no doubt that people had the requisite technical
knowhow.

The emergence of the local initiatives and their nature reflects three things. First it
reflects the level of desperation as the activities were illegal, dangerous and
sometimes resulted in seemingly irreparable environmental damage that could in
turn threaten agricultural livelihoods in the longer term. Secondly, they reflect the limited opportunities for non-farm livelihood activities in semi-arid districts during times of crisis and agricultural decline. Efforts to diversify outside of agriculture failed to produce long-term outcomes. This explains why external interventions focused largely on the revitalisation of agricultural production.

Thirdly they reflect over-dependence on a single livelihood activity, agricultural production, which reduces sustainability opportunities, despite Bryceson’s (1993) argument that over the past decades rural economies in southern Africa are witnessing a re-orientation away from agriculture.

7.1.5 Influence of policy and institutional changes on rural livelihoods
The study concludes that political and institutional constraints limited the potential of interventions to bring about sustainable improvement in rural livelihoods, and consequently poverty levels remained high.

This corroborates with the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development Report (2002), which concludes that sustainable rural livelihoods are achievable in a political context where rules and institutional arrangements are made for the benefit of rural people. This view is shared by the UNDP (1997:2-3), which argues that sustainable rural livelihoods become possible when the capacity of legitimate governments to design, formulate and implement relevant policies and discharge functions improves. The various policies and institutions developed and re-arranged in Zimbabwe during the period under study did not enable sustainable rural livelihood development because the government lacked legitimacy both locally and internationally, and its policies were divorced from fostering rural development.

As various policies and institutional arrangements were developed, changed and amended, some were not implemented, while others were wrongly implemented with increased levels of corruption. Neglect of various policies due to limited financial resources inhibited rural livelihood improvement. In addition various policies were abused by the political leadership in Zimbabwe. Potentially beneficial policies on agricultural input support and land reform became tools to control rural people and coerce them into voting ZANU-PF. Various government and local institutional
arrangements were politicised and militarised and this limited their role in facilitating rural development.

In a politically charged environment, the government may not be accountable to its people. This in turn reinforces the sense of vulnerability and powerlessness among rural people, because the prevailing environment is not enabling and reassuring. Politics prevailed over economic development in all three study areas, and development itself became a victim of politics.

7.1.4 Contribution to Political Economy and Rural Development

This study contributes to the literature on development and rural political economy through the presentation of a nuanced case study of semi-arid districts of Zimbabwe. The case study illustrates that a politically charged environment can pose constraints on the development of rural economies. It adds to our understanding of livelihood diversification and rural stratification, and it offers a sophistication of the sustainable livelihood framework as a means to understand changes in rural livelihoods. As indicated by the actor oriented approach, ordinary people may adapt and make choices, but these are constrained by government policy, institutional arrangements or the politically charged environment. The study is contributing to the understanding of the complexity of development strategies that should be employed in politically charged environments including crop production technologies, commercialisation technologies and community level exploration of livelihood diversification.

The study has contributed methodologically to proving the efficacy of participatory rural appraisal as a method of collecting reliable data 'from the bottom up', and has refined the use of these methods through triangulation with 'top down' methods of data collection. The actor-oriented approach emphasises the agency of ordinary people in finding strategies to diversify their livelihoods and survive extreme stresses and shocks, but at the same time the study concludes that the institutional constraints of the politically-charged environment impose limitations on the choices of ordinary people. The study validates the analytical strength of the actor oriented approach as referred to in Chapter three, that analysis of livelihood strategies and development interventions should not be restricted to the top-down approach, both in terms of who is the subject of research and in terms of the methods used. Such
analysis should include local people who have the capacity to actively formulate and pursue their own development agendas which may be in conflict with the interests of intervening authorities or agencies. The combination of participatory research methods and institutional analysis thus makes a significant contribution to the methodology of development studies.

In Zimbabwe, rural development interventions contributed to livelihood diversification but failed to make deep or major improvements to rural livelihoods that were sustainable, in the absence of institutional support. Although the overall policy and institutional arrangements seemed appropriate to enable rural livelihood diversification and improvement, the militarisation, politicisation and manipulation of institutional arrangements and the changing and non-implementation of various policies inhibited their potential to reduce poverty in semi-arid rural Zimbabwe.

The study thus contributes the understanding that development interventions can positively influence rural livelihood diversification and improvement, even in a politically charged environment, but that the sustainability of such interventions depends on enabling development policies and institutional arrangements.

7.2 Study Recommendations

Further research is necessary to explore which models of rural development will result in improved and sustainable livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

This study looked at various attempts to diversify rural livelihood portfolios and whether they actually improved people’s lives. It found that most attempts were constrained by the politically charged environment. It is therefore critical to conduct further research to find out what would work if these constraints were removed. It is recommended that further research looks at which of these interventions or development experiments should be taken forward should the politically charged environment improve.

The contribution potential of non-timber forest rural enterprises is not fully researched and the maximal contribution of non-timber forest products in a politically stable environment has yet to be established.
The study saw a return to a barter system of exchange in the rural communities under study. Further research is also recommended to understand whether, and if so how, a barter system could sustain a rural economy.

The study shows that human capital development through vocational skills training contributed to rural livelihood development. It is recommended that a model for community-based enterprise development in dry districts be researched for implementation.

Remittances contributed to livelihood development and improvement for recipient households. It made the cash market relevant through cash remittances in remote areas. It is recommended that research is done into the development of supporting mechanisms for remitting employees to invest money in more sustainable rural development programmes in line with their areas of expertise.

In the face of persistent droughts in marginal rainfall areas, development agencies have responded by providing rural farmers with agricultural inputs for improved agricultural production. However because of lack of appropriate agricultural land and crop management interventions, farmers fail to translate external support into sustained gains in productivity and incomes. It is therefore recommended that the promotion of conservation farming and research into more appealing and suitable small grains be intensified to improve the viability of crop production to respond to the climate change that is likely to result in long term droughts.

The project commercialising non-timber forest products is one of the best models for non-farm livelihoods. It is recommended that this model be further researched with a view to improved appropriate technology that can be used by all rural people as this has great potential to generate cash income. As reflected in the study the demand is very much higher than the supply and if this is improved – for example if people were paid a living wage to harvest forest products – this strategy could be an answer to rural livelihood development.
Research into policy development is also recommended to facilitate the legalisation of locally initiated livelihood activities like panning, hunting and fishing, particularly into ways that will not damage the environment, to support sustainable diversification into non-farm activities.

Overall it is recommended that external interventions such as agricultural production technologies (conservation farming), vegetable gardens, rehabilitation of infrastructure and support to irrigation schemes as well as skills training and commercialisation of non-timber forest products in semi-arid areas should continue in the belief that the politically charged environment will normalise enough for the potential reflected by these interventions in supporting livelihoods to be realised.


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Appendix I: Research Tools

A: Interview Schedule, Second Phase of Field Work
(This schedule for government officials is adapted slightly for the other groups of respondents: Development Agency organizations; traditional and community leaders; other community members)

Dear Respondent

Please respond to the interview questions by the interviewer. The aim is to understand the evidence of rural livelihood diversification in the selected rural dry districts of Zimbabwe between 2000 and 2010. Your responses will be treated as confidential.

The interview guide was developed by Julius Musevenzi, a DPhil candidate at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. For further information you are free to contact the researcher on: Mobile (Zim) +263-912 421 301, +263-912 277 687, (SA) +27782529037. Email: acrobat@sociologist.com,

Background Information
Name……………………………… Position……………………
Government Department…………………………
Name of the District……………………………………
Sex……………………………………………… Length of Service………………

General Questions
1. How long have you been working in this district
2. How much do you know about the history of this district (probe for development history)
3. What are your perceptions on the levels of poverty in the district (probe on poverty indicators)
4. Who are the inhabitants of this district (probe on issues of migration for resources)
5. What is the approximate population for this district
6. What type of climatic conditions are in this district (probe for changes)
7. What is the distribution of wealth among the population of the district? (probe for wealth ranking)

Livelihoods Information
1. What are the major livelihood activities found in this district (list them in order of priority and probe on the specifics, e.g. crop production, remittances or wage labour)
2. In your own opinion what is the contribution of each of the livelihood activities you mentioned to the livelihoods of the rural people
3. In terms of gender which livelihood activities you think are dominated by men or women and give reasons.
4. Have these livelihood activities changed over time (if yes probe on the reasons)
5. For the past ten years which livelihood activities would you consider important for the rural people (probe on the reasons)
6. Since 1999-2008 which livelihood activities you would consider to have changed for the better or for the worse
7. If they changed what are the likely factors for the change (probe for politics, climate and economic challenges)
8. What do you think is the impact of this livelihood change during this period
9. If the impact was negative what were the survival strategies employed by the people to mitigate the impact
10. In your own judgment what were the contributions of these strategies to the improvement of rural livelihood for the people.

Natural Resources Information
1. What natural resources are found in this district (probe for agric land, minerals, forests, water, etc?)
2. How are these natural resources being utilized by the rural people for their livelihoods (probe for access and control)
3. Are the natural resources contributing to the livelihoods of rural people
4. If yes how are they contributing to rural livelihoods
5. Have these natural resources changed over the past decade, if yes how and what are the reasons
6. Are there mechanisms, policies and institutions that control access and use of these natural resources in the district (probe on specific policies and rules particularly those developed during the period under review)
7. If they are there who developed/s these mechanisms and institutions
8. How are these policies and institutions implemented (probe on who is responsible)
9. In your view how appropriate are these policies in enabling and supporting the rural poor in accessing livelihood capitals (natural resources, social resources, human resources, financial resources and physical resources)
10. In your own opinion how inhibiting are these policies and institutions to rural livelihood development particularly during the past decade
11. What are the role of national, provincial, district and local authorities in managing, controlling and regulating these resources at the district level, community level and at village level?
12. Has this role changed over the past decade, if yes what exactly changed.
13. How has this role by government at different levels affected rural livelihood development in various communities?

Rural Development Interventions 1999-2008
1. Are there any rural livelihood interventions that have taken place in the district for the past ten years (probe on the type of intervention)
2. Which organizations carried out such interventions
3. Which villages or communities do you think benefited most from the interventions in the district
4. How long have such interventions been conducted in the district
5. What are the major reasons for carrying out such interventions (probe on challenges)
6. What were the objectives for the interventions in the district
7. At the start of the interventions what were the rural people’s response in the community
8. Were these interventions completed as intended at the start
9. If no what were the reasons for non-completion (probe on NGO bans, suspensions, political interference, corruption and violence)
10. In your own opinion were these interventions appropriate and relevant to improve the livelihoods of rural people (probe on who thought of the specific interventions, were the local people consulted before the intervention)
11. Do you think the interventions achieved the intended objectives (if not what are the likely reasons)
12. In your opinion how many people do you think benefited from the interventions
13. Where there challenges that affected the implementation of these interventions (probe for political violence, stricter regulating rules and laws etc.)
14. In your own judgment what is the impact of these interventions in improving the rural livelihoods for rural people
15. What has been the role of government in these interventions (probe on policy development)

Policies and Institutions information
1. What policies and institutions have been put in place by different government departments at different levels (probe for specific policies and institutions)
2. What do you think were the main reasons behind these policies and institutions
3. How have each of the policies mentioned enabled rural livelihood development in the district and at the community level during the past ten years
4. How have each of the policies and institutions mentioned hindered rural livelihood development during the past ten years
5. In relation to development interventions, how have these policies and institutions enabled or inhibited their effectiveness
6. In your opinion what has been the role of traditional leadership in policy and institutional development
7. In your own opinion what political, economic, social and cultural challenges have been encountered in the district for the past ten years?
8. What was the government response to these challenges?
9. In your opinion how and to what extent has the overall political, economic and social situation in the country affected the development interventions and ultimately rural livelihood development for the poor people?
10. How do you judge the past decade in terms of rural livelihoods development in the district (probe for rating out of 10)
11. What do you recommend to be done to improve, diversify and sustain rural livelihoods for the poor if the same challenges continue
12. Do you have any other issues to raise in relation to the interview?
B: Participatory Rural Appraisal, Third Phase of Fieldwork

Check list and Guide

According to Chambers R. (1992) PRAs are intended to enable local communities together with outside researchers to conduct analysis and to plan and take action towards improving situation

- Participatory means that people are involved in the process- a “bottom up approach” that requires good communication skills and attitude for the researcher.
- Appraisal means finding out information about challenges, problems, needs, interventions, achievements or results.
- Rural means the techniques can be used in any situation, urban or rural, with both literate and illiterate people

Guidelines in planning and conducting PRA

- Learning with villagers-where they live face to face. Learning physical, social and technical knowledge.
- Learning rapidly and progressively-explore, be flexible, look for opportunities, and improvise
- Be aware of biases- be relaxed. Do not rush. Ask questions and listen. Be humble and respectful. Look for opportunities for representations from the poorest, women and powerless
- Get enough information but not too much which is unnecessary
- Crosscheck by using different methods (triangulation)
- Facilitation is the outsider’s role – help villagers to do the investigation, analysis, presentation, and learning, themselves. As an outsider, start the process and then stand back, and letting the villagers get on with it. Do not quickly interrupt
- Sharing of information and ideas between villagers themselves, villagers and facilitators, and amongst facilitators or researchers.

1. Livelihoods Profiling

This method will provide basic information about livelihood activities. It provides information on sources of food, income, supporting services, opportunities available, how people allocate time for labour and property ownership.

- Highlight the objectives of livelihood profiling to the participants
- In plenary participants will be asked to list all the various and different sources of livelihood in their community particularly for the past ten years. A long list of
livelihood activities will be produced as a basis for further discussion

2. Livelihood Challenges Profiling
As in livelihoods profiling, highlight objectives of the exercise.

- In plenary the Participants will list livelihood challenges they faced during the past ten years and a long list of challenges will be produced for further analysis and discussion

3. Pair wise Ranking
The method will help the researcher and community members to set priorities on the list of livelihood activities and livelihood challenges listed above. It helps to determine the community members’ preferences.

- Highlight the objectives of pair wise ranking exercise to the participants
- Draw a pair wise ranking table and list the livelihood activities in an order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop production</th>
<th>Livestock production</th>
<th>Wage labour</th>
<th>Cash remittances</th>
<th>Food hand outs</th>
<th>Selling imported goods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livestock produc</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wage labour</td>
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<td>tion</td>
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<td>Wage labour</td>
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<td>Cash remittances</td>
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<td>Food hand outs</td>
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<td>Selling imported goods</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Compare the activities by matching the vertical and horizontal activities by listing the preferred activity in the middle box e.g. Livestock and Wage labour, Wage labour is preferred
- The activity that scores high number of appearances will be the most preferred going down in that order.
- Ranking will be done separately for both livelihood activities and livelihood challenges
- Analysis will be done by linking and discussing the livelihood activities and livelihood challenges to find out how they affected each other and how that impacted on the
lives of the rural people in the study areas.

4. Timeline Analysis
This method determines patterns and trends throughout the ten year period and each year. The decade will be grouped into four categories from 1999 of three year each and the last year under review on its own. Each category e.g. 1999-2001, 2002-2004, 2005-2005 and then 2008 will be analysed in terms of patterns and trend of livelihood activities and livelihood challenges. Reasons for the changing patterns will be given in the following diagram to be used. The same will be used for the seasonal analysis of the last three years looking at each month or each quarter of the year. The following is an example of a table analysis of the trend.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crop production</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>Floods, and shortage of inputs</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash Remittances</td>
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<td>Livestock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selling goods</td>
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</table>

5. Wealth ranking
Will be used to determine the economic attributes of households in the village or community. Shows the information on the relative wealth and well-being of households, social and economic status by identify the poor, better off and rich households. This assists in understanding how different categories of households responded, and reacted to rural development initiatives, policies and institutions during the period under review. Participants will list down in a group the categories of households in the village according to wealth status. They will in a group go on to show the category wealth indicators that are reflective of each category’s status. This will later be discussed in plenary to validate the group’s findings in a larger group. In analysis each wealth category in the village will be linked to the various
livelihood activities that would have been identified earlier on and using trend analysis to understand how over the years have also been affected.

6. Gender Analysis
This method will be done in a group where participants will use the livelihood activities identified to indicate the roles for men and women and their differences. The group will indicate the laws that guide access to resources by both women and men and how they are differently affected. Analysis will focus on how women and men differently access resources, how they are differently affected by local institutions and various policies and how such differences have ultimately affected or influenced rural livelihoods development during the period under review.

7. Venn Diagramming
This method will show the key institutions, organizations, or groups as well as influential individuals in a village and their relations and contribution and importance to the community or village. This will be done on a big Flip chart by a group of participants. The participants will draw a circle at the centre representing the community or village, and then draw other circles around the centre community. Colours can be used to represent each organization and the distance of each circle from the centre community indicates its importance to the community in relation to development. After the drawing services being provided by each organization will be listed and reasons of importance will also be analysed.

8. Natural Resource Mapping
The method will show the availability and distribution of all natural resources in the community of study, such as agricultural land, forests, rivers and water sources, vegetable gardens among other resources such as minerals, grazing land and natural fruit trees. Resource mapping by a group of participants will be done on a flip chart by drawing the whole community map and showing all the natural and physical features of the community including infrastructural development.

Analysis of data generated by this method will focus on accessibility of the various indicated resources, which access linking it to results from gender analysis, and wealth ranking exercises, which institutions are in place both traditional and modern as well as policies that regulate and govern access, control and utilization of the resources available in the community.
9. Institutional and Policy Analysis
This method generates data and information on institutional and policy development at the community, ward, district and provincial as well as national level. Institutional arrangements in the community will be documented and policies listed down, focusing on the year of development, reasons for development, how it is implemented, how people responded and reacted, how they have influenced rural livelihood development during the period under study. During the group works, the composition of this group will be purposively selected focusing on government officials, local leadership, traditional leadership and key influentials.

10. Plenary Discussions
This is an all-inclusive method that will be conducted by bringing together all different groups to include everyone to discuss specific group findings and presentations. Different groups will present their group findings and people will discuss on the findings whilst the researcher will be asking specific questions on emerging issues during the discussions.