

An Analysis of Self -Help Agricultural Projects in Rothe Village, Lesotho

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ABSTRACT

The study analysed self-help agricultural projects in Rothe, Lesotho to ascertain whether they improve the quality lives of Rothe villagers. As much as government driven self-help projects in Lesotho contribute to growing the rural economy, there is limited research that looks the sustainability of these interventions. Much of the literature in Lesotho reveal that self-help agricultural projects have focused on people being provided with food-for-work, or cash-for-work, these offered little benefits and temporary relief for hunger for beneficiaries. This study seeks to understand how self-help agricultural projects can sustainable improve the lives of Rothe community in Lesotho. The study drew from Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to understand self-help agricultural projects in Rothe, Lesotho. The study employed a qualitative case study approach, supplemented by purposive and snowball sampling methods and semi-structured interviews to select and interview self-help project beneficiaries and Field Officers of RSDA in Rothe Village. The findings revealed that self-help agricultural projects are alternative development interventions for improving the quality lives of poor rural villagers. These development interventions enable people to access livelihoods resources, assets, and social capitals that are important to improve, and sustain livelihoods. Additionally, they improve capabilities of the poor, and contribute to their overall development. The thesis concludes that these development interventions have a role to play in alleviating rural poverty lives as a way to ensure equitable distribution of resources. The study recommends that the government, people on the ground and RSDA should work together to strengthen people's capabilities through self-help agricultural projects to promote welfare and well-being of rural people.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PPP	People's Participation Programme
RSDA	Rural Self-Help Development Association
RUESC	Rhodes University Ethics Standard Committee
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
UNDP	United National Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

This study analysed self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village, Lesotho. It looked explicitly on sustainable rural livelihoods, and rural development to ascertain whether self-help agricultural projects are effective alternative development interventions to improve the conditions, and livelihoods of Rothe households. This chapter introduces the contextual background for the study, research question, and the objectives of the study. Secondly, it provides motivation and justifications for this study. Lastly, it provides an outline of the remaining chapters of this thesis.

1.2. Contextual Background

Rural development globally has been a mainstream focus for the economic growth of people living in rural areas to improve their standard of living (Sawamuna, 2004:30). This approach to development gained momentum in Sub-Saharan countries as an approach to bring development facilities and services closer to rural communities to improve economic and social status through creating employment, reducing poverty and food security (Rants'o, 2014). The socio-economic problems of the rural poor were being addressed through different rural development strategies such as self-help projects initiated by the Lesotho government, funded by donors, and food aid from Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and developed countries (Rantso, 2014; Turner, 2001:53). Instead of giving out free assistance to develop rural areas, self-help projects' primary approach was to achieve economic growth in rural areas. People were expected to contribute something towards their own local development to assist government initiatives to promote economic growth (Turner, 2001). Therefore, self-help projects became a fundamental approach to assist and facilitate the improved livelihoods of many poor people living in rural areas. These development interventions were planned, implemented and controlled by the government agencies and officials as part of broader policy instruments for efficient economic development, and growth (Ralebese, 2011; Rants'o, 2015). In this context, self-help projects initiated and funded by government were central to maximise monopoly control over all the development activities in rural areas. Thus, livelihoods for many people living in rural areas depend entirely on government development interventions funded by external donors (Rants'o, 2015).

Similar to developing countries, including those in Sub-Saharan Africa post-independence, self-help projects in Lesotho have been in existence as a development approach, and reaction to counter socio-economic conditions in rural areas. These projects mainly focus on poverty to promote active people's participation and adequate supply of social services necessary for survival (Aerni-Flessner, 2017: 20). In Lesotho, these development interventions are meant to assist the population of about 76 percent living in rural areas across the country (World Bank, 2010). They were increasingly recognised as part of broader rural development practices to engage people in local development (World Bank, 2010). The main reason was high poverty rates and slow economic growth in Lesotho rural areas. The self-help projects in Lesotho existed along with agriculture farming as the main activities for rural Basotho (Turner, 2001). This means that agriculture was the livelihoods for much Basotho living in rural areas for survival. According to Nziane (2009:34), because most rural people create their livelihood from agriculture, and have limited access to modern technology. Agricultural activities gave people more access to a source of income and employment, and capacities to make sustainable livelihoods (Lesotho Review, 2019). Despite government efforts to uplift the economic conditions in rural areas, these interventions were ineffective to improve the quality of lives on the on-going basis for self-sustained development (Ralebese, 2011:53).

Traditionally, subsistence agriculture played a predominant role in the development of the economy and for sustainable development. According to Ramaili (2006: 53), the majority of rural people in Lesotho live on subsistence agriculture as the primary means of their livelihoods. In Lesotho, agricultural activities were supplemented by the growing South African mining industry through social remittances gained from the mining industries; thus, Lesotho was the leading supplier of labour to South Africa mining industry (Rocci & Del Seette, 2010: 11). Social remittance contributed not only to subsistence but also to commercial farming because crops were produced in high yields to the extent that surplus was exported to mines in South Africa (Moshoeshoe-Chidzangwa, 2007:4).

The full potential of mining industries was not realised due to mechanisation and downscaling of foreign workers in the South African mining industry. Local mineworkers were preferred over foreign mineworkers. Consequently, rural people were faced with high levels of poverty, declining levels of income-generating activities, and limited employment opportunities (Devereux & Mhlanga, 2008; Moshoeshoe-Chidzanga, 2007). This led to the retrenchment of more Basotho migrant labour, thus contributing to the occurrence of rural-urban migration in search of employment to improve their livelihoods (Ansell *et al.*, 2015:375). Nevertheless,

Lesotho urban areas offered few adequate and unstable means for livelihoods and opportunities. According to Yabi and Afari-Sera (2009:1120), "development agencies and government have constantly been fighting to contribute to the development of rural areas through self-help agricultural interventions to develop". That means, agriculture as a means for rural development was seen as an appropriate approach for human and economic development for rural areas. The World Bank (2010) claims that agriculture is the most effective way of stimulating economic development and reducing poverty. At present, self-help agricultural projects are the conventional approach to rural development. According to Yabi and Afari-Sera (2009:1120), this approach tends to strengthen the capacities of rural households through institutional support from the government. Self-help agricultural projects can enable people to respond to economic shocks and stresses by rallying on local resources and efforts, decision-making and local empowerment, thus, achieve sustainable development (Steward, 2019:136).

In the past, rural interventions were based mainly on the government agenda to promote economic development through self-help projects implemented to restore pangs of hunger, and food security (Ralebese, 2011). These self-help interventions failed to address living conditions and were not designed to improve the livelihoods of poor rural Basotho in the long-run (Ralebese, 2011; Rants'o, 2015). The observed example of these projects is the Thabana-Morena Integrated Project, and People's Participation Programme (PPP), as Monaheng (2005) notes. These projects strongly emphasised economic development by organising people into homogenous groups around the common interest of improving local infrastructure, and for promoting participation in local development (Monaheng, 2005:29). Ideally, these interventions were meant to improve economic distributions and to promote peoples' participation, most of them were quite heavily funded by international donors, and controlled by the government. The focus of these interventions did not pay attention to other means of sustaining and promoting human capacities to develop rural areas. In these self-help projects, people were provided with food-for-work, or cash-for-work, these offered little benefits and temporary relief for hunger for beneficiaries (Ralebese, 2011). It is from this background that this study sought to understand how self-help agricultural projects implemented can improve rural people's livelihoods on a sustainable basis.

Most rural communities in Lesotho include Rothe village which has persistent and increased levels of poverty and rural-urban migration. As a way of responding to these issues, there are development interventions in the form of self-help agricultural projects from Rural Self-Help

Development Association (RSDA). RSDA was established in 1984 in Lesotho as part of Germany development organisations to implement self-help approach to develop rural villages, and to promote sustainable development (RSDA, 2019).

This thesis draws from the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) to examine whether these development interventions from RSDA have improved the quality of lives of Rothe villagers. This thesis uses SLA as a conceptual lens to understand whether or not self-help agricultural projects are an alternative approach for human and sustainable development for poor rural Rothe villagers. The villagers depend on agriculture both as an activity and initiatives from the NGOs for their livelihoods; thus, its role is to give people quality lives (Steward, 2019). Because SLA sees agriculture as a means to accumulate capabilities and using local available capital or assets to construct sustainable livelihoods that allow people to improve their quality lives and to respond to economic shocks and stresses. This theoretical framework will assist in understanding how self-help agricultural projects can improve the quality of all human lives and capacities in Rothe village and other Lesotho rural areas (Scoones, 2015).

1.3. Justification for the Study

The sociological relevance of examining self-help agricultural projects is revealed by the fact that self-help projects are activities initiated to improve the lives of the rural population, and are undertaken by people themselves to improve their socio-economic conditions (Ibrahim, 2006). Their in-depth analysis is important to examine, and understand lived experiences and practices of households and people in Rothe village, especially how self-help agricultural projects can contribute to their livelihoods in the long- run. People should benefit since development interventions are directed to their sustained livelihoods. Analysing self-help agricultural projects can assist in understanding how these development interventions could reduce rural poverty as long-term development activities focusing on poor people to improve quality of lives on a sustainable basis.

In doing so, this study uses Rothe as a case study to understand the sustainability of self-help agricultural projects in terms of their improvements in the quality of lives. Because this study is concerned with self-help agricultural projects as means of livelihoods, the study employed a qualitative approach located within the interpretive research paradigm to collect and analyse data. The recent studies conducted in Lesotho mainly looked self-help as policy instruments for alleviating poverty, and other looked self-help projects in the form of hand-outs from government and international donors (Ralebese, 2011; Rants'o, 2015). Although these studies

contributed in their own right, they were more quantitative. This study contributes qualitatively to the existing literature on self-help projects by looking at ways in which these projects can contribute to sustainable livelihoods of Rothe villagers through self-help agricultural projects.

1.4. Research Question

Can self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village, Lesotho be sustainable development interventions to improve the lives of Rothe villagers?

1.5. Study Aim and Objectives

1.5.1. Study Aim:

The primary aim of the study is to explore whether self-help agricultural projects can be sustainable development interventions to improve the lives of Rothe villagers.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives:

- To understand self-help agricultural projects as alternative development strategies to alleviate poverty.
- To examine the role played by the different stakeholders, including the Rothe community members within existing self-help agricultural projects.
- To identify self-help strategies used by Rothe people to construct their livelihoods.
- To document lessons learnt from the self-help agricultural projects in Rothe rural communities

1.6. Thesis Chapter Outline

Chapter Two:

This chapter examines literature reviewed on self-help projects and sustainable livelihoods approach for self-help agricultural projects. The second part provides and locate self-help agricultural projects with global context to draw from other case studies. It also traces the self-help agricultural projects and livelihoods within Lesotho context and identify the gaps in the studies, thereby taking a study position on what ought to be the role of self-help in rural development. Lastly, it presents the theoretical framework in which self-help agricultural projects are located.

Chapter Three: Research Design, Methodology and Methods

Chapter three provides a detailed description of the methodological approaches used in carrying out this study. In this chapter, I carefully provided the rationale for selecting

participants, ethical considerations, more importantly, how data was collected and analysed to respond to study question, aim and objectives.

Chapter Four: Presentation and Interpretation of the Findings

Chapter four presents study findings, and their analysis to address the study question, aim and objectives.

Chapter Five: Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Last chapter (Chapter five) provides a logical summary of study findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF SELF-HELP AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH FOR SELF-HELP AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS

2.1. Introduction

Rural agricultural projects globally are necessary activities in rural areas for reducing food insecurity, poverty, and unemployment in rural communities, but they are alternative development interventions for human development. Mostly, small household's agricultural activities are indirect factors behind food security, since they are the means and economic activities for rural communities. Agricultural projects provide resources that enable rural inhabitants to reduce poverty, and most importantly, generate income so that people in communities could expand livelihood strategies, and meet households' basic needs.

This section conceptualizes development to provide the precise meaning of the term 'development' in this study context. Secondly, a definition of rural development will be provided as a subset of development, to give the objectives of the rural development within the broader development discourse. Thirdly, the definition of self-help will be about rural development practices for rural livelihoods. Also, it looks at self-help agricultural projects globally to understand how self-help agricultural projects have become development interventions for improving the quality of lives of the rural people. To understand the contributions of self-help projects in enhancing people's quality of life, three case studies will be examined mainly, India, Kenya, and Nigeria. These countries implemented self-help initiatives as a means to develop rural communities, and self-help activities have succeeded and became sustainable development strategies to improve the quality of their lives. Rural people and communities adapted these interventions to construct their livelihoods. Also, this section will look specifically to Lesotho, to examining the evolution of self-help interventions in rural development through self-help projects. The objectives is to ascertain whether this has long-term rural development effects on Lesotho villagers. Lastly, the contributions of self-help agricultural interventions to sustainable rural development will be highlighted. This section also presents the theoretical framework that informs this study to locate self-help agrarian projects in the lives of rural people.

2.2. Understanding the meaning of Development

The term "development" is defined in many different ways by different authors in the development literature. Development focuses on many aspects of the social, political, and economic lives of societies. Historically, development was associated with economic growth

(Coetzee, 1989: 27; Todaro, 2001: 13-14). The idea was based on the notion that economic growth would translate into social and human development. However, the conceptualization of commercial and industrial development as determining factors in transforming societies was later challenged (Cobbinah & Black, 2011:140; Coetzee, 1989:27; Dale 2004). Economic growth may bring material gains and benefits to people. However, development is about empowering people's lives, and institutions through democratic means and distribution of substantial gains to promote sustained growth (Cobbinah & Black, 2011:141). Thus, to achieve development, societies use the combination of the compelling interplay between the economic and non-economic factors to make development. Both economic and non-economic factors are mainly towards attaining growth. Growth is "both a physical reality and a state of mind whereby people and society secured the means for obtaining a better life" (Todaro & Smith, 2006: 22). That means through this process, society ensures growth in wealth acquisitions and mental enrichment and an improved quality living conditions for all.

Therefore, development was less concerned with human beings; people's well-beings were the ultimate end, the basis for which livelihoods security and sustainability to achieve development (de Beer & Swanepoel, 1998: 2; Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 34; Sen, 1999). In broader terms, Development is "about improving the society because it comprises more than people is made up of" (Clarks, 1990:22). In other words, development is about enabling people to achieve their aspirations. It is the process of change that allows people to take control of their development destinies and to realize their full potentials (Meyer, 2000: 18). It is about building people's confidence, skills as assets, and freedom necessary to achieve self-sustained livelihoods and peoples' quality of lives (Clark, 1990:22; Ralebese, 2011:37). Assets in this context are defined not only as "natural and biological, but social, community, families and social networks or ties" (Scoones, 2015:91), thus, it requires people's participation, and empowerment to create long-term human knowledge (Elasha *et al.*, 2005:24). Therefore, development is a desired and an on-going process or intended process of change. This process should bring about sustained societal change that creates some benefits for people or as a state to improve human well-being attained through development processes (Dale, 2004:1).

Development is not only about realizing the human potential, but also increasing the human potential as well as increasing the institutional capacity to control resources (UNDP, 2016:1). The focus is on improving various aspects affecting individuals' well-being and their relationships with society. This emphasizes the human beings as 'means,' and not an 'end' themselves to achieve development (Mashinini, 2000:19). As such, development is about

people to meet their basic needs, and to make choices about lives their value to improve their living conditions, so that they get a chance to lead and control their lives (Polanyi, 1944: xxxvii; UNDP, 2016:26). Mashinini (2000:20) argues that development as an "end" is defined in terms of multi-faced and often contradicts the objectives expected out of economic growth and equality. Development as a 'means' is the process of creating capabilities, and providing an environment whereby people fulfil their expectations to live long, and health and lives, and a decent standard of living. Thus, development is more than wealth creation but the process of improving quality human lives and capabilities to raise people's levels of livelihood, as well as increased self-esteem, and freedom to change (Todaro & Smith, 2012:7). Because human beings have "means" and an "end" in the process of development, these ensure the expansion of social well-being to meet their present needs, without declining their future basic needs (i.e. Sustainable development) (Cobbinah & Black, 2011:143). Sustainable development refers to the socio-economic systems that enable needs, but also long-term progress towards well-being and improved overall quality of life under environmental constraints (Klariv, 2018:76). In this context, sustainable development goes beyond environmental concerns, but social sustainability, that is, long-term acceptance and ownership of development changes by people and communities, organizations and associations, financial, and economic sustainability to strengthen people in local knowledge and experiences (Bellu, 2011:5).

According to Ralebese (2011:36), and Singh (2005), development is a process of change that goes beyond mere satisfaction of basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Development is about increasing living standards, better health, and well-being, and other forms for the common good, which are seen to benefit society at large (Power, 2003:2). It is a process that involves and enables people to take charge of their full potential towards improving their quality of lives and cope with problems (Meyer, 2000:28). Development interventions, therefore, are means aimed at building the capacities and experiments which should result in participation for people to promote self-reliance (Ralebese, 2011:18). Thus, this process must be directed, facilitated, and funded by external agencies to achieve quality lives of community and individuals' values (Meyer, 2000). This means all development interventions to improve the quality of lives of people should be driven by the interests of "human objects" (Meyer, 2000:19). Because rural communities are made of poor, and marginalized people, improving the rural community's means enabling people to achieve self-sustained well-being and aspirations, thus, led to sustainable rural development (Mukiibi, 2001:40). Significantly, development does not mean "clusters of benefits given to people to meet their basic needs,"

but it is a process by which people are capacitated to acquire mastery over their lives (Tamuno & Iron, 2012:59; Sen, 1999). If this is a case, self-help agricultural projects can be viewed as development interventions that build people's capabilities, an on-going process to change and to improve rural livelihoods (Meyer, 2000:18; Ralebese, 2011). This process depends highly on social, economic, and political contexts in which individuals' lives to expand their capabilities for their livelihoods (Meyer, 2000:19).

2.2.1. Types of Development

There are different types of development identified by different scholars in the development literature. These include economic, human, sustainable, intergraded rural approaches to development (UNDP, 2010). These approaches are the ultimate goals to enhance human capabilities and economic growth to give people the freedom to function and attain high income and employment levels (Sen, 1999). This study moves away from the conception of economic development and focuses on integrated rural development to change in promoting the growth of human beings as agents of development to achieve sustainable rural development (UNDP, 2010). Economic development quite often has very little influence on the quality of life of ordinary people (Ralebese, 2011:29). Rural development is defined by Anrique and Stamoulis (2007:2) as a set of activities and programs designed for the benefit of the rural population, and the aim is for sustained improvement standard of living and welfare of the population. In this context, rural development is the process that involves agricultural growth as a set of activities to improve the livelihoods of poor rural people to increase both capital and human development (Anrique & Stamouli, 2007:2).

2.3. The Relationship between Rural Development and Subsistence Agriculture

People living in rural areas depend entirely on agricultural activities as a means to build livelihoods. Rural development is more than developing agricultural and economic growth, but agricultural activities in rural communities are means to create a fair share of social and economic benefits amongst rural people and communities (Ogunlene-Adentona & Oladeinde, 2013: 2; Zwane, 2012: 18). Rural development is about enabling rural people to take control of their destiny to effectively deal with poverty through optimal use and management of natural resources (Zwane, 2012: 18). In the development literature, rural development is understood in different ways. As a process, it means an overall development of rural people to improve their quality of life. In this sense, rural development is a comprehensive process that contains the development of agricultural activities and linked to community-activities and practice, provision of community services and facilities, and socio-economic infrastructures, important

for human resources in rural areas. As a strategy, it is designed to improve the economic and social well-being of specific groups in rural areas (Chambers, 1987:20).

Rural development contributes to improvement in the levels of weak and small household's incomes, outputs, and productivity and using agriculture as the major components of the rural development projects (Ebong *et al.*, 2013: 67). According to Lele (1975:20), and Singh (2005: 7-8), rural development is about "improving living conditions of the mass of low-income generating population residing in rural areas, and making their process of development self-sustaining." This involves activities and projects that have a substantial impact on the lives of rural people and how they create their livelihoods (Lele, 1975:20). Thus, improving the living standard of subsistence population involves using, and accumulating resources to reach desired, a balance between welfare, and productive services available to the subsistence rural areas (Ebong *et al.*, 2013:67; Lele, 1975:21).

Broadly, rural development advances equity in the distribution of assets and resources. However, equity does not imply that people's income should be equal, but social equity is an essential aspect of development (Trollip, 1981:14-15). Rural development, therefore, should stimulate the use of enormous resources in the rural areas to lay the foundations for the security, economic, and socio-political development of rural people (Ebong *et al.*, 2013:68). In short, rural development involves a combination of development strategies to enable a weak group of people, both men, and women, to gain themselves more of what they want and need. As Olayemi and Nirmal (2016: 70) put it, "the majority of rural people lack the required skills to compete for limited job opportunities in urban areas." Self-help agricultural projects in rural areas complement existing traditional life-style of subsistence agriculture practices to promote sustainable development (du Toit, 2011:12; Olayemi & Nirmal, 2016).

While other scholars do not see rural development in terms of agriculture activities to develop the quality lives of rural people. Singh (1998: 37) further points out that agricultural activities are sources of income, livelihoods, and cheap food supply for the rural population because economic development is characterized by the substantial increase in the demand for food prices. Overall, rural development means improving the quality of the lives of rural people and communities using agricultural activities and projects (Baiphethi & Jacobs, 2009). Rural development encompasses the development of small or large scale entrepreneurship, and subsistence agriculture (Baiphethi & Jacobs, 2009: 7-8; Chambers, 1987; Singh, 2005:18).

There are two types of agriculture, namely, commercial and subsistence agriculture (Quan, 2009:30). Commercial agriculture involves the profitable agricultural production and marketing systems in which agricultural products are produced for the local, national, and international markets (Quan, 2009). Subsistence agriculture involves activities that are mainly for household consumptions, and the output surplus could be sold to generate household incomes to purchase basic needs. In other words, the former involves large-scale crop production and livestock for distribution of sale and to maximize profits. The latter's main objective is to increase household food security, accumulation of capital, and enhance the sustainability of livelihoods. Thus, cash income and accumulation of savings are secondary to subsistence agriculture (Olayemi & Nirmal, 2016:70). This study primarily focuses on subsistence agriculture.

2. 3.1. Subsistence Agriculture

Subsistence agriculture remains the heart of farming and activities for rural households because it offers people diverse opportunities to increase personal growth and stabilize the household's source of income and livelihoods (Baiphethi & Jacobs, 2009:7). For rural households, subsistence agriculture is essential because most households rely on agriculture for their livelihoods, but possess insufficient forms of generating incomes (Baiphethi & Jacobs, 2009). According to Olayemi and Nirmal (2016:70), rural livelihoods are not based solely on agriculture, but on a range of activities and enterprises brought by agriculture projects.

According to du Toit (2011:11), "subsistence agriculture in rural villages is more important, because it helps to redress household inequalities." Through subsistence agriculture, people are empowered to grow their food for consumption or income generation, provides nutrition, and capabilities for many people in the rural areas to engage in productive activities (du Toit, 2011). Subsistence agricultural is appropriate in rural areas because poor households have little chance of escaping the 'poverty trap,' and the role of subsistence agriculture is to create livelihoods that will result in sustainable development (du Toit, 2011:11). Subsistence agriculture not only contributes to households' food security and supply, but enable people and households to acquire long-term skills and knowledge for their livelihoods, and divert income to meet other requirements. (Olayemi & Nirmal 2016:71).

In the words of Trollip (1981: 2) rural agricultural activities improve the lives of rural people by creating employment, enhancing people's satisfaction of basic needs, distribution of resources and assets. Employment creation for rural areas is a means and an end because it

provides individuals with opportunities to participate in households, and societal development, and enhance a sense of worth, and a material increase in people's standard of living (Trollip, 1981:13). Therefore, agricultural interventions in rural areas are not merely charity projects, but efforts or interventions to inducement for rural people to improve their lives (Chambers, 1987; Meyer, 2000:42). Because basic human needs are resources and elements that are both material and non-material, they enable poor and lower-income groups to enjoy a minimum standard of living (Meyer, 2000).

2.3.2. The Concept: Self-Help in Rural Development

Self-help is defined as a 'new paradigm in the field of rural development,' whose aim is to increase human capabilities and well-being, and provides the infrastructure and facilities for communities and rural people (Tamuno & Iron, 2012:58). Self-help is both an object and a process. As an object, it involves making changes to achieve sustained rural development. As a process, it is an effort to assist individuals in acquiring attitudes, skills, ideas required to participate in the different choices of community developments, and possible means of significances to advance their competences (Abatena, 1997: 5; Benedict, 2010:91-92). In this process, rural people organize themselves and mobilize resources to meet distinct needs to enhance the respect they receive from technicians, officials, and politicians, and give them more bargaining power (Uphoff & Buck, 2006:32).

Self-help is a development practice in which communities improve their living conditions (Prinscilla, 2014: 24). Self-help initiatives are both participatory because every member of the community has the role to play (Prinscilla, 2014:24). Self-help development interventions are the "end" products of community development that bring self-sustained development to rural communities to use and take advantage of their resources, thereby making people suffer continually from ignorance, and poverty (Prinscilla, 2014:24). This means people rely upon and use their efforts and abilities to solve their problems rather than solely depending on external assistance (Saliu, 2014:98). Under the self-help approach to rural development, individual efforts or community efforts to determine their development outcomes (Arugu & Bassey, 2014:20). Thus, people are seen at the centre of development "who can and should collaborate" to solve community and individuals problems. One of the principles of self-help initiatives is a stronger sense of community and foundation for future collaborations (Arugu & Bassey, 2014:20). The sense of community is the means to improve community services and quality lives. As such, greater emphasis is placed on what community achieves and how it achieves it.

Self-help initiatives give people who share similar socio-economic experiences an opportunity to come together to solve their problems (Gidron & Chelser, 1994:3). These allow impoverished people to come and work together to see their problem collectively to legitimize understandings and adopt active empowerment roles to cope with an individual's life, and community dilemma (Gidron & Chelser, 1994:3-4). This provides poor rural people with a variety of opportunities not only to receive help from others but also extends it to other members of the communities (Sreeramulu, 2006:4; Gidron & Chelser, 1994:5). Self-help interventions are both a tool and development alternative predominantly used by poor rural people to achieve specific development objectives (Ralebese, 2011: 36). In this case study, self-help agricultural projects can be analysed to ascertain whether they have long-term improvements in the quality of lives of rural people on a sustained basis. Self-help agricultural projects are viewed as the pathways to sustainable livelihoods (i.e. a situation whereby people have well-established means of earning a living on an on-going basis to alleviate extreme rural poverty) (Ralebese, 2011:34-36).

2.4. SELF-HELP AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Self-help agricultural projects refer to development interventions that are undertaken by the poor and marginalized rural people to improve their living conditions for the better (Saliu, 2014:98). These are development interventions in which people define their development, goals, and formulate their needs and get external help from the government and development agencies to provide both technical and financial assistance. However, rural self- help agricultural projects are the result of individuals and communities identified needs to improve their livelihoods (Elliott, 2006:146; Saliu, 2014:98; Ralebese, 2011). Rural agricultural projects play different roles to secure household's livelihoods. They do this by providing rural people and households with the means to construct livelihoods and a range of opportunities to meet both primary and non-basic needs (Elliot, 2006:145). Globally, rural self-help agricultural projects are the most significant employment opportunities, source of rural household's incomes, as well as means of livelihoods for most rural inhabitants (Coetzee, 1989:27; Lele, 1975:20; Melkote & Steeves, 2001:37). About 40 percent of the rural labour force in developing countries are engaged in self-help agricultural activities (Elliot, 2006:140; Melkote & Steeves, 2001:15). In contrast to the industrialized world, the majority of households in developing countries engage in self-help agricultural activities for subsistence rather than commercial agricultural purposes (Elliott, 2006:140; FAO, 2005; Macia, 2008).

In countries such as India, Nigeria, and Kenya, subsistence agriculture is one of the growing supporters for the rural population, which led to people and community participation and fostered “local food ethos amongst the rural population” (FAO, 2005; Macia, 2008:108). It is quite evident that self-help agricultural interventions are essential alternatives to corporate agriculture as a way to promote rural people’s resilience, and participation. (Macia, 2009:108). Therefore, it is within this context that self-help agricultural projects is understood in order to show how they made any significant improvements in the quality of lives of rural people for sustained development.

2.4.1. Indian Self-help Agricultural Interventions

India is one of the countries which has adopted self-help strategies to develop rural populations using agricultural projects. Self-help agricultural projects have become an essential part of sustainable rural development, and means for livelihood (Siddique & Anil, 2013:12). In Indian rural areas, self- help agricultural projects have emerged as rural development interventions designed to bring development closer to rural people especially for women and poor people to reduce poverty, empower women, create awareness and ensure the sustainability of environment which results in sustainable development (Baghel & Shrivastara, 2015:3). Rural self-help agricultural projects have made a considerable improvement by reducing poverty (Siddique & Anil, 2013:16). This was achieved through building human capital at the grassroots level through contributing with an extensive set of skills and knowledge, and organizational capacity (Siddique & Anil, 2013).

According to Eade (1997:23-24), capacity building for rural people involves identifying constraints that people experience in realizing their fundamental rights and needs. Additionally, it also involves rural people finding appropriate means to strengthen their abilities to overcome the causes of social exclusion and human suffering. In Indian rural communities, capacity building focuses on creating sustainable rural livelihoods to enable poor people and households to manage resources themselves, and provide services sustainable to their local needs using self-help interventions (Eade, 1997:24). These self-help agricultural projects generated the scale of the process for building human capital (Siddique & Anil, 2013: 16). People got an opportunity to invest their time and resources energetically to increase knowledge to fulfil their own livelihoods objectives and goals (Siddique & Anil, 2013). In the interest of rural development, people were able to pursue different projects through self-help interventions in terms of their practices to achieve livelihood outcomes. Self-help agricultural activities played a significant role in the household's income and skills acquisition. This has, in turn, profoundly

links the capability of the household's access to social and economic capitals (Penarando-Moreno & Egelying, 2008:34).

The means for survival in rural India is through self-help interventions that government supports (Saliu, 2014). This type of self-help intervention refers to "facilitated self-help" (Ralebese, 2011:42), whereby the government brings together and sell people's ideas, and subsequently supports them through different self-help activities. The results of self-help agricultural activities in rural India are considered as essential development alternative to rural communities because they require low entry costs, thus, generate a high internal rate of return as a source of rural livelihoods of the households (Berk & Akdemir, 2006:1892; Sangtam & Yaden, 2017:28). The importance of self-help agriculture as development interventions in India have received considerable attention in rural areas. This, in turn, has made a positive impact and improvement to the livelihoods of people engaged in different self-help agricultural activities (Sangtam & Yaden, 2017).

Self-help agriculture projects over the years have grown steadily in India's rural sector. These interventions increased the human and financial capital available to poor people since people invested their financial assets, and physical efforts directly to self-help activities to sustain their livelihoods (Sundaram, 2012:23-24). Self-help activities are considered by up-and-coming of self-employment opportunities for poor rural people that would and give much attention to the promotion of inherent potential and productivity of power poor against privileged community members (Berk & Akdemir, 2006:1894). These development interventions helped many participants to improve their economic conditions and expand their self-help activities beyond individualism to broader community practice through the formation of self-help groups (Saravanan, 2016:24). Self-help groups were initiated by local community leaders to support and built productive social capital amongst poor people. Local leaders further coordinated collective efforts and enhance social cohesion amongst the poor villagers (Ibrahim, 2006:412).

For many years in Indian rural communities, self-help agricultural projects were necessary activities for livelihoods than development. People's decisions to engage in self-help agricultural activities were influenced and driven by debt, dependency, and hunger (Siddique & Anil, 2013:28). Thus, resulting in a reduction in distress for migration, and increased assets accumulation and diversification of livelihoods sources and strategies. This approach to rural development turned to have a positive impact on human development, increased food security, health care, and school attendance, poverty reduction, enhanced social security (Siddique &

Anil, 2013:30), which are the components and indicators of improved quality of lives for rural people and community.

The evidence shows that self-help activities increase "social, and economic empowerment in projects" areas increased irrespective of participation status (Siddique & Anil, 2013:30). According to Saravanan (2016:25), because "empowerment cannot be transformed or delivered," the reality is that empowerment was self-generated through participating in self-help activities, such that participation in self-help agricultural projects became a functional variable which enables people to take control of their lives (Saravanan, 2006). Self-help activities mainly affected consumption and broadening income sources, rather than utilization of new sources of livelihood from self-help interventions (Sundaram, 2012:23). Simultaneously, forms of social capital have increased substantially in self-help group projects such as social solidarity, and collective action for more dignified livelihoods. These projects have helped to create a greater awareness of entitlement and right, as well as assisted rural men and women with practical means of constructing livelihoods by engaging in various self-help agricultural groups (Siddique & Anil, 2013). These were ideal because self-help agricultural interventions or projects have generally empowered poor rural people and communities, and spread to households to collectively organize through self-help groups. Hence, improved quality of lives became a rural strategy to empower rural women and men altogether (Siddique & Anil, 2013:29).

Rural Indian self-help agricultural interventions received more considerable attention because of their potential to alleviate extreme poverty (Sangtam & Yaden, 2017: 28). Mostly women and poor people are engaged in different income generating activities through self-help groups (Saravanan, 2016:22). Most of the literature shows that in India, women do not generally have the same opportunities to migrate for wage employment as men due to their social obligations and taboos (Kaur & Bajwa, 2016:3). Empowering women through self-help agricultural interventions has benefited not only individual women but also their families and community as a whole (Kaur & Bajwa, 2016:3). In these interventions, women were able to form self-help groups based on traditional-agricultural know-how, and using available local resources to make a living out of them. Moreover, most of these self-help activities are associated with agrarian economies, such as piggery farming, ginger cultivation, grains and potatoes' cultivation, indigenous poultry, and handicraft and weaving, as well as animal husbandry (Sangtam & Yaden, 2017:28). Indeed, Self-help agricultural interventions are considered as development tools and means for meeting women and poor rural empowerment. About 50 percent of rural

women in India engage in different self-help projects (Kaur & Bajwa, 2016:1; Sundaram, 2012:19). The evidence shows that self-help groups have reduced women's social vulnerability, and have increased their self-reliance, thus improve their livelihoods, and promote sustainable rural development (Sundaram, 2012:21). Therefore, in Indian rural communities, self-help agricultural projects proved to be practical tools for poverty alleviation for rural communities.

2.4.2. Self-help Agricultural Projects in Nigeria

In Nigeria, self-help projects initiatives have proved to be essential development interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods and improve the quality of lives of poor rural people who are left behind from development (Adejunmobi, 1985:225). About 70 percent of people in Nigeria living in rural areas are considered to live below the poverty line; hopelessness, unemployed youths are roaming in the streets (Mbagwu *et al.*, 2016:241). The literature on the practice of self-help activities in Nigeria, dates as far back as “pre-colonial and colonial periods, and self-help projects were government approach and mechanisms to develop rural communities” (Benedict, 2010:97). These development interventions aimed at bringing community resources together to provide physical improvements, and functioning facilities to rural people to improve social, political, economic aspects (Benedict, 2010:97). In order to improve the quality of lives and their livelihoods, self-help agricultural projects became essential policy tools for improving rural livelihoods, and reduce poverty in the rural communities (Arugu & Bassey, 2014:24). The organization of a new approach to rural development through self-help agricultural projects in Nigeria was the mode of social organization that is slowly eroded by modernization (Arugu & Bassey, 2014:6).

Self-help gained momentum like cooperative movements in rural communities. Similar to India, self-help interventions in many parts of Nigeria rest on rich traditions of rural people, in which people work in partnership with government and development agencies (Benedict, 2010:108). Self-help agricultural initiatives in Nigeria received projected resources support from development agencies that implemented them in rural communities to foster inter-personal development. These agricultural projects facilitated the spread adopting innovation. They also promoted social change, which is essential to the success of rural livelihoods, human, and sustainable development (Anitem & Abiodem, 2016: 439; Edge & Iyombe, 2014:19). The study conducted by Mbagwu *et al.* (2016:284) on self-help agricultural activities in Nigeria shows that people engage in self-help agricultural activities such as land tilling, tree planting, handicrafts, and weaving, and poultry amongst other rural projects as their means of livelihoods. These activities result in the fight against poverty in the rural community, and the

populace has innovatively formed self-help groups, or they individually undertake self-help agricultural activities because they “realize that their destinies lie in their own hands” (Mbagwu *et al.*, 2016: 248). Most of these agricultural activities were not new as people have been practising them before through cooperatives movements at community levels. Self-help agricultural interventions were relevant for individual families because they are supplements to change and improvements in quality of lives, and households' livelihoods (Edge & Iyombe, 2014). Active engagement and participating in self-help activities empowered people with capacities and knowledge instead of waiting endlessly for government to provide welfare facilities to them, which sometimes is not visible under cooperatives movements given "prevalent economic crisis in the country" (Edge & Iyombe, 2014:20; Mbagwu *et al.*, 2016:249).

While self-help agricultural interventions aim to improve oneself without relying on someone else or external help for sustained development (Kingau *et al.*, 2016:144), this has offered people an opportunity to contribute their labour or financial resources. Nevertheless, they also take part to identify, design, plan, and implement projects that they are willing to engage as means for constructing their livelihoods (Abatena, 1995:6; Tomuno & Iroh, 2012:59). In rural Nigeria, participating in self-help agricultural activities is a survival instinct for societal felt-needs, which is informed by most people. Since community-based development approaches are considered as social movements in rural Nigeria, these development interventions were designed and implemented to promote better living conditions, for the entire community to encourage active participation (Benedict, 2010:97).

In Nigeria, people's participation in self-help agricultural interventions suggest that people work together in self-help agricultural activities to exert their efforts alongside others and improve socio-economic and cultural conditions (Anitem & Abiodem, 2016: 442). At the household level, participation has improved more sustainability for both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries; this has resulted in average 60 percent of above the target of 20 percent of alleviating poverty (Anitem & Abiodem, 2016). In some communities' in rural Nigeria, most people merely participate in self-help agricultural activities but do play a meaningful role to initiate and control development projects for their interests because their views are not considered (Benedict, 2010:99; Edge & Iyombe, 2014:20; Mbagwu *et al.*, 2016:248). Self-help agricultural projects in rural Nigeria have offered beneficiaries more opportunities to contribute cash or labour to the projects, and that gives them a sense of ownership (Anitem & Abiodem, 2016).

Much of the studies conducted on self-help agricultural projects in rural Nigeria, show that self-help agricultural projects are supplements to rural development, rather than replacing government efforts to develop rural communities (Anitem & Abiodem, 2016; Benedict, 2010:90). Self-help agricultural projects have succeeded in promoting the quality of lives of rural dwellers (Benedict, 2010; Oluwatobi, 2011:73). The evidence reveals that in Nigeria, 66.7 percent of people living in rural communities engage in self-help agricultural projects (Anitem & Abiodem, 2016; Benedict, 2010). They plan and implement projects that best suit their livelihoods, which resulted in poverty reduction by 40 percent (Oluwatobi, 2011). Indeed, self-help agricultural projects in Nigeria do not only complement government efforts for rural development but improve people's livelihoods.

2.4.3. Self-Help Agricultural Projects in Rural Kenya

Kenya is one of the leading countries in Southern Africa, which has used self-help development projects to develop rural communities (Ochanda, 2012:40). Historically, self-help projects in Kenya were prevalent in rural communities in which members come individually or collectively to initiate self-help activities to meet their felt-needs and to create their livelihoods. Self-help in Kenyan communities has become a central social movement and a traditional practice for rural development processes (Mwai, 1993:14). Since independence in 1963, '*Harambee*' is popularly known as a traditional principle and development practice that has existed in every community as part of development life for both urban and rural communities (Thomas, 1987:464; Mwai, 1993:15).

In Kenyan rural communities, self-help interventions were later incorporated within a national policy as development policy, and an alternative approach to rural development (Mwai, 1993). The late President Jomo Kenyatta implemented these as a slogan for communities to bring resources and efforts together to address their felt-needs (Mwai, 1993:15; Oroba & Spiecgie, 2002:3). In the 1970s to 1980s, for instance, the government approached rural issues through self-help formation or groups towards alleviating poverty by mobilization of local resources (Kilavika, n.d:11). According to Thomas (1987:478), self-help agricultural projects in rural Kenya were implemented to localize resources to achieve development in rural areas, to enhance productivity, and improve rural household's access to national resources. Therefore, self-help agricultural projects are a means to construct a sense of rural solidarity, self-reliance, and organizational capacity. For poor rural Kenyans, these are instrumental for raising their income and productivity and improving their families' material and social well-being as well (Kilavuka, n.d:12; Ndida *et al.*, 2018:25). According to Ndida *et al.* (2018: 25), to develop rural

communities, several prerequisites determine whether development took place. Within this context, self-help agricultural projects in rural Kenya are development interventions that aim to improve the lives of rural communities and alternative livelihood strategies to rural communities (Kilavuka, n.d:12; Nyatanga, 2016:23).

By using self-help interventions, individuals and communities were able to draw resources from more affluent people than poor groups using resources for the entire community. This provided poor people with opportunities to use their skills and contribute both cash and labour across the range of socio-economic groups (Kingau *et al.*, 2016; Thomas, 1987: 471). Closely related to this situation is the capacity building of people, and small-holder farmers are capable of selecting the projects that benefit the broader community. Self-help agricultural activities add value and encourage a long-term shift from basic needs, and social services to production-oriented and capability were generating projects (Kingau *et al.*, 2016:144). In rural Kenya, self-help agriculture projects are core drivers for sustained livelihoods outcomes such as the provision of employment, gender empowerment, social cohesion, and environmental protection (Ochada, 2012:56).

The *Harambee* self-help project provides clear evidence of how self-help projects have improved the lives of the rural communities in Kenya (Nyatanga 2016: 23-24). *Harambee* self-help projects were diverse development interventions that combine social and economic activities (Atieno, 2017). On economic activities, these self-help interventions allowed the rural community to work collectively with the government towards the common goal of improving their livelihoods. The emphasis was on the need to organize domestic resources for rural development. Collective efforts were the significant roles and efforts for building social capital and household assets in which Kenyan helped themselves through engaging in small-scale self-help agricultural activities. Thus, improved livelihoods contribution enhanced human development within local households whereby skill-building, economic empowerment became central, for enhancing people's quality of life (Ochanda, 2012).

For this reason, self-help agricultural projects in Kenya provide the rural population with an opportunity to share the wealth through practical adaption of common interests, needs, and objectives (Kingau *et al.*, 2016:146; Mwai, 1993; Thomas, 1987:477). Rural Kenyan self-help activities are primarily necessary means of communities and households engage in redistribution of goods and services, and opportunities to bring benefits to the local populations

(Kingau *et al.*, 2016:147). Kenyan rural communities were seen as in need of empowerment so that they do not become development recipients from their government (Ochada, 2012).

In rural Kenya, self-help projects are instruments for the survival of poor people, particularly youth and women, to participate in development processes that affect their lives (Atieno, 2017: 23-25). These development interventions were stifled by formal bureaucratic control, which hindered people's participation and limited full-blown community-oriented, and potential to sustain and human development (Ochanda, 2012:61). Self-help as activities translated into broader grass-roots activities that were embraced by the local people (Ngau, 1987; Ochanda, 2012). Moreover, most self-help groups are associated with agriculture in youths, and women group themselves to address their felt-needs. This has empowered people and build their skills because self-help projects tend to be informal and anti-bureaucratic (Kingau *et al.*, 2016). In Kenyan rural community, self-help agricultural projects are an ideology that holds rural together to achieve their livelihoods and promote social cohesion. In rural Kenya, 68.5 percent of youths can influence and take part in economic activities from self-help groups to change existing socio-economic conditions (Kingau *et al.*, 2016). Thus, 70 percent of women and 68.5 percent of youths improved their livelihoods by forming self-help groups (Ochanda, 2012; Kingau *et al.*, 2016). Thus, they reduced their dependency from government-funded projects, improved their standard of living, and lessen domestic disputes within households because they have acquired hands-on experience by engaging in good subsistence agriculture aimed at sustainable livelihoods (Ngau, 1987; Kingau, 2016). Accordingly, rural Kenyan self-help agricultural projects have also succeeded in increasing the social inclusion of rural people (Ngau, 1987; Ochanda, 2012; Kingau *et al.*, 2016).

2.5. SELF-HELP PROJECTS, LIVELIHOODS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LESOTHO

In the 1960s, self-help development projects in rural Lesotho were seen mainly for promoting rural economy (Aerni-Flessner, 2017; Mashinini, 2000; Rants'o, 2015). When Lesotho gained its independence in 1966, the journey to redistribute development concentrated on self-help agricultural projects to deal with skewed "distribution of the development benefits that were mainly concentrated in urban areas" (Pinder & Wood, 2003:99). Rural development through self-help agricultural projects became the core activities for improving the lives of rural people. Many poverty-reduction policies targeted the agricultural sector, neglecting cash income sources of the non-agricultural sector (Pinder & Wood, 2003:99-100). However, these poverty-reduction policy strategies were revised in the 1990s onward as income-generating strategies

not only for rural households, also for urban communities (Matsumoto, 2014:14). Self-help agricultural activities, and other grassroots programmes such as rural cooperatives with similar goals, and practices were the primary means through which people and individual households' livelihoods (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:13). It is estimated that 80 percent of the rural population engages in agriculture as livelihoods and for survival (Lesotho Review, 2019; Mashinini, 2000; Ralebese, 2011: 96; Turner, 2001:55). Self-help agricultural activities opened a space for the rural Basotho to work towards the vision of self-independence through development efforts that bring small-scale changes to individuals, households, and communities across the country (Aerni-Fleseer, 2017:14; World Bank, 2010:4).

The vast majority of development projects were as are a result of foreign aid to promote rural community participation (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:11). The majority of people who participate in these development initiatives were Basotho youth, community groups, and households that initiated development projects at the community level. They participated in a variety of small development projects. Rants'o (2014:14) argues that these projects "complement the government's efforts to promote development in rural areas." In these development projects, the Lesotho government used to provide food as the payment to people for their labour in helping to construct village supply projects, agricultural dams to conserve water, and trees were planted to conserve indigenous plants and soil erosion (Ralebese, 2011; Rants'o, 2015:2653). These were seen as the means for rural development strategies to promote people's participation and develop rural communities. However, they did not promote the quality of the lives of rural people, because they created temporary jobs through considerable food-for-work projects (Rants'o, 2014:14-15; Turner, 2001:55). These led to increased rural poverty as some failed to develop rural communities, while in other rural areas have thrived to sustain livelihoods of rural communities. There were many cases in which these were mainly distributed to non-deserving community members (Aerni-Flessner, 2017). These projects failed to capacitate people with skills to learn and expand for the sustainability of projects. Self-help development interventions through food-for-work offered temporary relief to rural livelihoods. In these interventions, individual benefits were prioritized in terms of people's participation (Ralebese, 2011:36; Turner, 2001:55-56).

Overall, sustainable rural development and rural livelihoods in Lesotho were fundamentally concerned with agricultural activities and projects to improve the quality of lives of rural people (Aerni-Flessner, 2017: 16; Ralebese, 2011: 36). The foundation of the agricultural sector were stressed as national goals and the fulfilment of basic needs that improve engaging in agriculture

activities (Aerni-flessner, 2017; Trollip, 1981:9). This was the direct policy response to alleviate poverty, promote the residents from economic instability, and redistribution of development benefits to rural communities through self-help agricultural activities (UNECA, 2018:20). However, subsistence agriculture was supported by social remittances, which declined and forced most rural people away from small-scale agricultural production. Self-help activities became more visible and evident because they were the backbone of rural development, which offers rural people opportunities to construct their livelihoods (UNECA, 2018; Matsumoto, 2014:1517). Self-help agricultural activities create long-term job-opportunities for rural communities as alternative means to make livelihoods improve their quality of life. Thus, they became leading development interventions for sustainable rural development since urban areas offer limited opportunities for people (UNECA, 2018). It is for these reasons that NGOs, through self-help agricultural projects, reinforce the importance of agricultural projects as alternative rural livelihoods opportunities for many rural Basotho (Turner, 2001: 49).

On the same note, the practice of self-help activities in rural Lesotho is noted by Aerni-Flessner (2017:13), as part of existing "communal traditions that played dual and practical symbolic roles in rural Basotho society." By their very nature, self-help practices are traditional activities to respond to the harsh economic crises and to reduce poverty in rural areas (Aerni-Flessner, 2017). Self-help agricultural interventions in rural Lesotho can be understood as both economic and political reforms to develop communities and to improve people's lives (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:13; Relebase, 2011:46). Economically, they are meant to assist people in using their local assets to respond to both social and economic shocks and stresses. Shocks are sudden events that undermine household's livelihoods such as retrenchment, migration, and the death of an economically active member of the household, and mismanagement of the environment. Stresses involve on-going pressure that households and individuals are faced with (Satge, 2002: xx). Shocks are concerned with ways to increase popular participation and decision making of rural people in development that affect their lives.

In reality, the evidence shows that self-help projects in Lesotho were initially implemented as political tools by the government to dismantled powers of the chieftaincy and initiated country-wide efforts that would solidify government control over the rural areas (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:17 Relebase, 2011). This is mainly due to the inherent weaknesses in the old self-help projects in rural communities that were top-down and centralized interventions mostly responsible for implementing projects (Aerni-Flessner, 2017; Parker, 1997:509). Therefore, self-help agriculture was considered as best to address economic and social conditions in rural

communities (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:24). Self-help agricultural projects blend well with agriculture as a livelihoods activities in rural communities that could promote people's capabilities to expand peoples' lives for sustained development, hence, reduce poverty in Lesotho (Stage, 2002).

It has been observed that broadly self-help agricultural projects in rural Lesotho were politicized by local leaders as well as government officials (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:24; Rants'o, 2015:2651). Poor people have recognized them as a means to engage in small-scale activities for their livelihoods through agriculture, and to improve their socio-economic conditions. The research done by Rants'o (2014:57) in Lesotho shows that self-help agricultural projects are significant not only to the development of the individual people but to the entire rural communities to alleviate extreme poverty. The idea of implementing self-help agricultural projects in rural areas was to improve the living conditions of rural people by reducing the extreme levels of poverty (Rants'o, 2015). Many rural people in Lesotho, especially women, youths, and retired mine workers, engaged in self-help agricultural activities because of decent employment without having to resort to migrating to urban areas (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:26; Rants'o, 2014:59). Self-help agricultural projects are essential to sustainable rural livelihoods in Lesotho because they strengthen communities' livelihoods. These help rural households to keep alive indigenous crafts such as poultry, grass works, decorations artworks, and animal husbandry, but primarily improves the focus of raising both social and living standards of the community as a whole. Furthermore, keep alive the interests for sustainable development and livelihoods (Rants'o, 2014:60). Supporting self-help agricultural projects in rural Lesotho means enabling a large proportion of the population to earn an income and reduce poverty (Ralebese, 2011:96).

While the old development interventions were mainly towards poverty alleviation in rural Lesotho, the evidence shows that despite their widespread in rural communities, "poverty increased in absolute and relative terms" (Ralebese, 2011: v). The Lesotho government-sponsored self-help projects offer little benefits to beneficiaries on a sustainable basis (Ralebese, 2011; Rants'o, 2014). As a result, they failed to reduce poverty in rural areas. Self-help agriculture projects are useful to promote the sustainability of rural livelihoods because they expand the community capabilities (Freeman *et al.*, 2018: 35). Rural Basotho are facing developmental and livelihoods challenges that even though self-help projects were employed but they were aimed at poverty reduction (Freeman *et al.*, 2018; Ralebese, 2011). The Lesotho

government implemented development interventions failed to capacitate rural citizens with skills that will assist them in sustaining their livelihoods.

2.5.1. Livelihoods of Households in Lesotho Rural Communities

According to Krantz (2001: 19), livelihoods are people's capacity to generate and maintain their means of living and enhance their well-being, and that of the future generation. Agriculture became a source of rural livelihoods, and the principal employer for most Basotho in rural community. The literature on rural communities and households in Lesotho shows that livelihood is based on subsistence agricultural production (Aerni-Flessner, 2017:24). Lesotho was and still basically, a traditional subsistence peasants society (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994:176; Lesotho Review, 2019). Historically, rural communities produced crops and rear livestock mainly for subsistence purposes, as a source of survival in households and livelihoods (Matsumoto, 2014: 14). This is done through farm fields, which can be divided into two types. The farmland where the staple crops are cultivated is called *tsimo*, vegetable gardens where vegetables are grown are called '*jarete*' home garden, and *jarete* are cultivated mostly for home consumption until the 1980s to 1990s onwards. People started to expand them to produce for "cash crop as well" (Matsumoto, 2014:20). While producing for subsistence purposes, more food was produced to the extent that subsistence farming in rural areas resulted in commercial farming (Moshoeshoe-Chadzingwa, 2007:217). Subsistence agriculture was regarded as a source of livelihood for the majority of rural communities and sustainable for household productivity (Moshoeshoe-Chidzangwa, 2007).

Because of the growing demand of labour in South African mines, mine labouring contributed significantly to rural livelihoods and remittance from mineworkers was used to supplement subsistence farming (Rocchi & Del Seette, 2010:110). Before engaging in self-help activities, there were no other sources of livelihoods other than subsistence agriculture as livelihood strategies for rural people (Nziane, 2009:34-35). In other words, rural Lesotho was both labour reserve and the primary supply of grain surplus to the South African mining industry (Ferguson & Lohmann, 1994: 177; Rocchi & Del Seette, 2010:12; Welling, 1986:217). This means the livelihoods of rural people were mainly subsistence agriculture and the only activity to alleviate poverty. Migrant remittance contributed significantly to the families' agricultural activities and poverty reduction even though on-going retrenchments have reduced migrant labour remittances in the South African mining industry (Liphoto, 2011: 27; Moshoeshoe-Chidzangwa, 2007: 4-5; Rocchi & Del Seette, 2010: 11). Migrant remittances were the sources of agricultural, and households' livelihoods, and economic development, and this may be

explained by their contributions to overall household survival and agricultural productivity since they provided the cash needed to buy the agricultural inputs (Rocchi & Del Seette, 2010:11-12).

Therefore, subsistence agriculture is an "irreplaceable" social activity and practice for rural Basotho communities. Most rural people get opportunities from subsistence agricultural activities and migrant remittance as their only source of livelihoods. Some of the family members are helped through sharecropping, commonly known as "*seahlolo*" from better-off families (Turner, 2001:12). Family members engage in agricultural activities that generated cash income and shared agricultural outputs between and amongst the families (Turner, 2001:13-14). It is estimated that about 80 percent of people living in rural areas in Lesotho are engaged in self-help agricultural projects.

Furthermore, in 2010, self-help agriculture reduced the poverty of the population living below the poverty line by 49.2 percent (UNECA, 2018:20). In general, these did not only provide people and families with employment opportunities, food security, income, and social solidarity, but it provided different farming techniques, and abilities to rural families to cope with changing climatic conditions (Turner, 2001:13). People started to engage in different agricultural activities to further expand their livelihoods, and socially improve agricultural techniques, and skills to improve their harvest (Turner, 2001:15). In rural Lesotho, government-sponsored self-help interventions have not made a significant contribution to the socio-economic lives of rural people and to promote sustainable development (Turner, 2001).

The government interventions were much restricted to households' consumptions, as food parcel contributed only to humanitarian objectives to restore food-security but not meeting the non-foods needs. This situation causes dependency syndrome and abject poverty in Rothe village (Turner, 2001; Ralebese, 2011:253). Today in Lesotho, self-help agricultural projects are considered significant interventions to eradicate rural poverty and improve the quality of lives and livelihoods for the rural Basotho (Nabaro & Wannon, 2014: 476). These, particularly sustainable human development for the sustainability of Development agencies are drivers of self-help agricultural projects to improve the quality of livelihoods through empowering, strengthening social partnerships for reducing poverty in rural Lesotho (Steward, 2019:136). This study seeks to ascertain whether these interventions from development agencies contribute to the sustainability of self-help agricultural projects or not since limited literature looks at this.

2.6. The Contributions of the Self-Help Development Interventions to Sustainable Rural Livelihoods

Self-help agricultural interventions need to involve; participation, partnership, and social learning, empowerment, as well as the sustainability of engaging in self-help projects to improve livelihoods and improve quality of life (Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000). These are all important because they do not only facilitate social change but add value to collective efforts to sustainable livelihoods (Satge, 2002:7-8; Van der Ploeg *et al.*, 2000). The following sections will look at whether self-help agricultural activities in Lesotho involve participation, partnership, and social learning, empowerment, and sustainability.

2.6.1. Participation in Lesotho Self -Help Agricultural Projects

Participation in development is a core foundation for human development. Participation is defined by Green (2000:70), “as a process in which projects stakeholders influence and take control, and decision-making in development intervention which affect them.” This is about giving people opportunities to decide and make use of local knowledge and resources to bring about incremental social change (Green, 2000). In the context of self-help agricultural projects, participation involves organized efforts to increase control over project resources. The aim is to enable rural people to present, share, and enlarge their knowledge as part of the processes. The outcome is to enhance people’s knowledge and competence and the ability to make demands and sustain actions (Parfitt, 2004:538; William, 2000: 556). Rural people's participation is a "reversal process to a top-down approach to development" (Davids & Theron, 2014:107).

Therefore, self-help agricultural interventions are a means to promote the active participation of the people in rural areas (Ogunlene-Adetona & Oladeinde, 2013:5). These interventions are useful development tools that allow people to take full control over their livelihoods. Participating in self-help agriculture allows people to decide and implement agricultural projects that individually meet their needs. Thus, the purpose is to enhance their well-being, sustain self-reliance, and personal growth using agriculture as an activity (Eade & Eode, 1997: 4; Ralebese, 2011:38; Parfitt, 2004:538).

Participation through self-help agricultural activities leads to accumulation of social capital gained by interacting with others. This enables access to resources because people share ideas, thereby work towards enhancing the quality of their lives (Simpson *et al.*, 2003:287; Ralebese, 2011:37). For example, it includes using self-help agricultural intervention to strengthen

people's participation and it offers them opportunities to acquire skills, and increase their competences, thus, building their confidence to manage their affairs rather than being passive recipients of development interventions. They take the lead in deciding for their lives and are provided with mutual and technical support (Tamuno & Iroh, 2012). Participation in self-help projects contribute to develop skills that would enable them to expand social processes (de Beer & Swanepoel, 1998:58-59). Thus, it give people control over their own lives and no longer have to be at the mercy of external forces (de Beer & Swanepoel, 1998; Tamuno & Iron, 2012:59; Hana *et al.*, 2008:179; Meyer, 2000). It offers people space to contribute their labour and financial assets to come up with the best activities to improve their quality of life (Davids & Theron, 2014:107; Haan *et al.*, 2008:179). In rural Lesotho, the self-help approach to rural development was successful in organizing poor people into small homogenous groups around everyday income-generating activities (Monaheng, 2005:28). Active people's participation was a significant hindrance to meaningful human development through learning by doing since people only contributed their labour (Davids & Theron, 2014:107; Monaheng, 2005). Hence, this study examines whether this happens in Rothe village or not.

2.6.2. Partnership and Social Learning in Lesotho Self-help Projects

According to Eade (2007:104), an effective partnership is essential for development. This integrates and expands, and mobilize resources beyond personal livelihoods and interests, but to bring together community needs to allow them to improve their quality of lives not as individuals but as the community (Berner & Phillips, 2005:21; Lekoko, 2002:129). Self-help agricultural interventions operate at both individual and community levels. At the individual level, they are directed to less privileged members of the community (Lekoko, 2002:129). In this regard, self-help agricultural interventions connect people together from diverse socio-economic backgrounds through working together, sharing knowledge, and available resources in the community (Lekoko, 2002). The process of engaging people in the self-help activities closes the gap between rich and poor people in the rural community. First, people create rapport through shared interests among the community members in developing local livelihoods and knowledge. Second, self-help interventions strengthen the degree of community solidarity because people's felt-needs create a necessity to extend support to other poor households (Abantena, 1995:6-8). Such activities are essential in the development of "self" because they stimulate cross-fertilization of diverse ideas amongst the member of the community. Thus these are potential sources of creativity and innovation (Abantena, 1995:8). Working in partnership with other community members means beneficiaries minimize control, and influence exerted

by more powerful partners. Self-help agricultural interventions respond holistically to livelihoods through "cross-sectoral synergies" by harmonizing social relations through single development intervention (Toner & Franks, 2006:83).

2.6.3. Human Empowerment in Lesotho Self-Help Projects

Human empowerment involves extensive use of local or indigenous, and practical knowledge, strong assistances, and different and flexible livelihood strategies (Allison & Horemans, 2006:758). In this regard, engaging in self-help agricultural activities provide poor people with the opportunities to think, and creatively solve their local conditions. Since rural communities are confronted with a lack of development opportunities compared to the urban areas, these opportunities give them to acquire practical and organizational skills (Allison & Horemans, 2006). Therefore, living conditions and overall development in the community may improve (Abatena, 1997:5). As a result, family members can utilize local resources innovatively to venture into other self-help activities that would be responsive to changing conditions and needs (Chambers, 1987:169).

Self-help agricultural interventions increase people's self-esteem and boost their self-confidence. Consequently, these are motivating factors that bond initiatives of new projects (Ogunlege-Adetona & Oladeinde, 2013:7). In other words, successful self-help activities build people's capacity and resulting in peoples 'desire to succeed more (Abantena, 1997:13-14). Thus, unleash peoples' chain to react for further community projects, which result in progress in the community, and peoples' capacity (Abantena, 1997:14). "Human empowerment takes place through first-hand learning and participation" (Sesoke, 1995:18-19). That is, engaging in self-help agricultural activities to meet their basic needs. People are part of the learning process "exemplified by flexible, sustainable, and action-based capacity approach," though this may be seen in somewhat small for human development (Davids & Theron, 2014:107).

Self-help projects did not help in promoting the concept of "do-it-yourself" and community capital (Ralebese, 2011). Self-help projects in Lesotho were not community-led service provisions that are more sensitive to individual and community felt-needs (Aref & Aref, 2011: 351). Because rural development projects mainly focused on the economic well-being of improving the lives of poor rural people rather than human as a "means" and an "end" to development (Shepherd, 1998: 92). In short, empowerment is the means to achieving goals that people want, while at the same time enhancing the effectiveness of the projects or activities (Green, 2000:70).

Thus, empowerment is instrumental because it involves people taking greater control of livelihood assets in ways that are both predictable and non-threatening to others (Bartlett, 2008:526). As a way to fight poverty, improvements in the standard of living include; employment, nutrition, income, and a variety of social services that will eventually reduce rural-urban migrations (UNECA, 2018:24). Fundamentally, capacity building in rural development involves helping people to identify what they would like to see as change; hence, self-help agricultural interventions create long-term social change (Lephoto, 2011: 27-34). For example, engaging in self-help agricultural activities, people use their strengths while learning new skills and techniques to achieve what they believe is most famous for their livelihoods (Lephoto, 2011; Scoones, 2015). In rural Lesotho, self-help projects did not address the felt-needs of real poor people; thus, other people take advantage of the situation in the rural community to advance their livelihoods. These interventions did not bring about social change in the lives of rural people to enhance their personal growth using community actions (Aref & Aref, 2011:352; Bartlett, 2008:526; Lephoto, 2011:34).

2.6.4. Social Sustainability in Self-help Projects

According to Benedict (2010:97), successful development projects need to improve the sustainable livelihoods of poor rural people. According to Chambers and Conway (1992:13), sustainability results from people's capacities and assets being utilized to maintain and enhance their livelihoods. Chambers (1987:160) argues that "rural interventions in rural areas are means to enable poor people, men, and women to gain more than what they want and need." This process typically involves the notion of 'doing-it-yourself' that requires people commitment, and practical fruits of collective endeavour, and improvement of living conditions (Abatena, 1995:5; Chambers & Conway, 1992). Self-help agricultural projects as a process encourages more local initiatives and thus reduce "psychological inertia such as hopeless and apathy, which ultimately people and communities may receive a relatively higher level of self-accomplishment" (Abatena, 1995:7). In other words, people mobilize their local resources and appreciate their capacity, and external assistance comes as a supplement over already existing people and community practices. Therefore, through self-help agricultural activities, the family's livelihoods can be more sustainable in particular and changing conditions because, in situations where opportunities disappear, new ones appear (Chambers & Conway, 1992:13).

In Lesotho, self-help projects were initiated by government to provide temporary economic relief from hunger. However, they lacked popular support from the local level because they did not supplement the existing livelihood practices in rural Lesotho (Ralebese, 2011). Local

people did not need food hand-outs and cash-for-work, instead of agricultural inputs that could help them to make a living from (Ferguson & Lohman, 1994). This study sought to understand if current projects lead to sustainability.

2.7. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR SELF-HELP AGRICULTURAL INTERVENTIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

According to Abenda (2008: 177), to understand social facts, they must be subjected to a theoretical framework. Therefore, a theory is defined by Harrington (2005:2) as a way of explaining social interaction, and to create testable propositions about society. This study draws from SLA as a theoretical lens to understand, interpret, and explain social phenomena. Thus, SLA was used in this thesis to understand the opportunities from engaging in self-help agricultural projects from the actor's local context (Scoones, 2015). Because SLA puts people at the centre of development to examine poverty and its causes (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003:189). SLA will reflect on how capabilities are created through different self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village as a means to construct quality lives, and livelihoods.

2.7.1. Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)

Sustainable Livelihoods Approach origins can be traced back from the early 1980s after major development agencies like Oxfam, Care, and UNDP were dissatisfied with development ideas and lack of successful development interventions (Conway *et al.*, 2002; Krantz, 2001; Scoones, 2015; Small, 2002:28). The SLA rejects "pendulum-swing" from top-down and structural adjustment towards participatory and bottom-up development programming to promote sustainable development, and livelihoods (FAO, 2005: 22; Scoones, 2009, 2015; Small, 2008:28). This approach represents a shift in development practices from need-based and resource-centred solutions to people and their capacity to initiate and sustain positive change (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003: 185). Therefore, human capital is seen as a "building block" to utilise other forms of capital. That means development interventions improve human beings as important assets that play a significant part in enhancing and sustain their livelihoods (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003).

2.7.1.1. Defining Livelihoods

Livelihoods refer to "capacities and assets, both material and social resources, and activities for a means of living" (Scoones, 2015:6). According to UNDP (2017:2), livelihoods are means and activities and assets use by people survive and prosper. According to Chambers and Conway (1992-7), livelihoods are the outcomes of how and why people organise themselves

to transform socio-economic conditions to meet their felt-needs. It is argued that livelihoods are sustainable when they recover from stresses and shocks, maintain and enhance the capacities and assets while not undermining natural resources base, thus, has net beneficial effects on livelihoods (Chambers & Conway, 1992: 5; Scoones, 2015: 6; Serrat, 2008:15). Sustainable livelihoods should improve people's development, since people are seen as possessing assets important for their development. In constructing livelihoods, people's capacity matters and are important to create and maintain their means of living by engaging in activities, enhance their well-being, and of future generations (Satge, 2002: 4). In this study, rural livelihoods depend on subsistence agriculture as means to support human survival through indigenous technology and resources, labour-power, and social relations (Chamber & Conway, 1992; Krantz, 2001; Satge, 2002)

2.7.1.2. Constructing Livelihoods

Constructing livelihoods involves different activities and interactions that emphasise different ways in which people can survive (Scoones, 2015). Livelihoods involve using a combination of resources and activities people undertake to achieve sustainable lives. Thus, it goes beyond looking at rural development in terms of external assistance but it involves considering other activities such as agricultural, wage, employment, farm labour, and small-scale enterprises (Scoones, 2009:172). In self-help agricultural projects, constructing livelihoods involve a combination of agricultural activities and methods. Because individuals and households create a living from various sources, such as agricultural production (farming, local craftworks, small-scale industries, own labour), and transfer (remittances). Consequently, livelihood activities and skills are fundamental to improve livelihood opportunities, decrease poverty, and enhance employability, and promote sustainable livelihoods (UNDP, 2017; Scoones, 2009).

In constructing livelihoods, SLA considers capacities that are contingent upon availability and accessibility of options, which are ecological, economical, and political based. SLA also considers equity, ownership of resources, and participatory decision-making (Scoones, 2015). The framework responds to the post-development theories since it assumes that people usually construct economically viable livelihood strategies that are embedded in the places poor people live and on local assets (Losocka-Jaegermann, 2006:15). This approach links livelihoods to poverty reduction strategies, and rejects the fixed measures to poverty reduction and improve sustainable development (FAO, 2005:22-23; Small, 2008:28). Small (2008:28-19) argues that "the challenges of traditional small-scale agricultural offered by international development

focus on assets and strategies for livelihoods of rural poor people, but not necessarily in their engagement in agricultural production." It takes "sectoral-based" intervention towards a more holistic approach, and an emphasis on livelihoods rather than only on employment creation as livelihoods source (Conway *et al.*, 2002; Small, 2008:29). That means livelihoods are sustainable if they enhance people's capacities for the future.

The SLA holistic approach to development interventions captures different ways for understanding causes, and dimensions of poverty in rural areas rather than focusing on economic issues, and food security as only rural livelihoods (Majale, 2001:3; Scoones, 2009, 2015). This framework analyses people's livelihoods to ascertain how these have changed over time. People are strong actors that need to be supported to achieve their livelihoods, thus, enforce favourable conditions for their lives. In this way, development interventions are a means to support and assist the poor to realise quality livelihoods (Chambers & Conway, 1992:12). Because rural people draw from the variety of resources to sustain their livelihoods, and the purpose is to achieve social sustainability as a process, rather than economic outcomes (Small, 2007:29). SLA assists in explaining how men and women utilise their assets portfolios to meet daily livelihood needs and to improve the quality of lives in a sustained manner (Petersen & Pedersen, 2010). Furthermore, it focuses on livelihood activities, interventions that add value to the human-being for sustaining lives (Chambers & Conway, 1992:12; Petersen & Pedersen, 2010: 10).

2.7.1.3. Examining Livelihoods

SLA employs the "pedagogy" of assets, and these include human, social, natural, physical, and financial capitals (Conway *et al.*, 2002; FAO, 2005; Scoones, 2015; Serrat, 2008). These assets signify a combination of livelihood portfolios that fit in livelihoods sources in which poor people generate sustainable livelihoods and quality of lives (Petersen & Pedersen, 2010:8; Serrat, 2008:2).

The human capital entails abilities, experiences, work, skills, and physical state of good health, which, when combined, allow all the people and communities to engage with different strategies and fulfil their objectives for their livelihoods (UNDP, 2017:3). Human capital is an individual ability to learn from new knowledge and skills according to their future development needs. Engaging in self-help agricultural activities strengthens human efforts to accumulate knowledge, which will make them more productive, and better able they obtain the quality of

life. (UNDP, 2017:5; Macia, 2008:1090). Engaging in self-help agricultural projects and people are the "means' and an 'end" for transforming rural livelihoods.

Social capital involves social resources, which people and communities rely on to construct their livelihoods. Social capital refers explicitly to local social structures such as associations, local authorities, and broader populations receiving the projects (UNDP, 2017: 3). In the context of self-help agricultural activities, people are bound together by similar social and economic conditions. By calling them social capital, they represent socially constructed arrangements that bring poor people together through the same socio-economic conditions to achieve their sustainable livelihoods (Macia, 2008:1089). According to Macia (2008:1089), 'social capital is a feature of social life that engenders coordination and cooperation,' thus, ultimately benefits society as a whole. In other words, SLA recognises individual efforts, taking collective efforts as a means to improve their lives (Macia, 2008:1090). To obtain sustainable livelihoods, people engage in different activities as choices that people undertake for their livelihoods (Scoones, 2015:90-91). Livelihoods depend on relationships and norms that are conducive to cooperation and share opportunities, and security for economic, and other livelihoods well-being (Scoones, 2015:91).

SLA examines social relations on how poor people make a living. In the context of self-help interventions, poor rural people themselves define their strengths, potential, and goals to improve their quality of life (Petersen & Pedersen, 2010: 6). Therefore, using livelihood portfolios such as human and financial poor rural people engage in self-help agricultural activities to achieve their desired livelihood outcomes (Krantz, 2001:4). SLA takes into account local or indigenous knowledge that poor rural people possess as means of living to sustained their livelihoods (Tao & Wall, 2009:143). Also, particularly to inherent people's capacities and knowledge systems, it focuses on the community-level actions (Tao & Wall, 2009:143). In doing so, SLA is capable of providing a picture that shows how individuals and communities in self-help agriculture activities control, use resources, and to accumulate knowledge. Skills to complement their prevailing conditions to enhance their sustained livelihoods and improve quality of life (Tao & Wall, 2009). Overall, these are all essential means of subsistence for poor rural communities to improve their quality of life. Rural development requires capacities, assets, and activities for the ways of living (Tao & Wall, 2009:144).

Most development practitioners of sustainable livelihoods and development argue that livelihoods are only sustainable when rural poor rural people organise themselves, to create

more opportunities and agency rather than concentrating on improvement (Chambers & Conway, 1992:12; Leo & Haan, 2012:346). Thus, people's lives are essential for their daily needs and activities, rather than top-down intervention methods practised by conventional development theorists (Tao & Wall, 2012: 346). To achieve sustainable livelihoods, SLA puts people at the centre of development interventions and resources they use as means to support people's livelihoods for sustainable development (Morse *et al.*, 2009:7; Sarkar & Sinha, 2002:4). Therefore, the significance of using self-help agricultural projects to address rural socio-economic conditions is to improve the quality of lives of the rural people and communities' livelihoods using agriculture (Morse *et al.*, 2009). By their very nature, self-help projects seek to empower people with the capacity to earn income to meet their basic and social needs and to reduce poor people's exposure to external stresses and shocks (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003; Ramaphakela, 2015). SLA provides the scope for relevant strategies for progressive development because they are essential for both human development.

2.7.1.2. Critiques of Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

SLA, as a tool of analysis, is viewed as problematic to analysis livelihoods (Bhatarasa, 2018; Mdee, 2002; Scoones, 2015). One of the significant problems is operationalising sustainable livelihoods to measure and compare capital assets (Mdee, 2002:7). People are invisible, so it is unclear how human and social assets that people possess can be analysed and measured (Sarkar & Sinha, 2002:6). Livelihoods recognition of socio-economic, historical, and cultural factors that is insufficiently flexible.

The framework focuses more on poor people's productivity, and importance is attached to poverty reduction for human efforts (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018:3-5; Mdee, 2002:10). Because the focus is on the usefulness of poor people on constructing their livelihoods by using different livelihoods portfolios to improve their lives, hence results in specific biases (Small, 2008:31). As such, it does not take into account the actions and influences of wealthier "players" in the field of assets (Mdee, 2002:10). People select and diversify their productive activities and time they invest in productive assets to even and buffer resource availabilities. The same situation exists in self-help agricultural activities. Each household or people engage in diverse livelihood strategies to match expected resources availability with their demand (Scoones, 2015). Thus, people compete for resources, since households try to maximise their share of livelihoods to generate more value of wealth (Chambers & Conway, 1992:21). SLA is criticised of giving more privilege to people to select and diversify their production activities and time their

investment in productive assets to even out and buffer resources availabilities less privileged (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

Although livelihoods may be sustainable, but they have a potential to create conflict as people compete for few opportunities, and scarce resources, while their livelihoods improve, this diminishes success of household's livelihood to come at the expense other (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018:6; Chambers & Conway, 1992:31; Sakdapolrak, 2014:23). The means and ways in which people construct their livelihoods are shaped and influenced by power relations within societies. In other words, mode of domination exists between winners and losers, with more privileged groups gain at the expense of others and deepen their exposure to live to threaten socio-economic conditions (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018: 7; Mdee, 2002:8). In social relations, some influential people take advantage of less privileged members to advance their livelihoods. However, this continues to give fewer privileges to people to use their skills to expand their livelihoods (Scoones, 2015). As Krantz (2001:22) reiterates, "SLA puts greater emphasis on transforming structures and processes that can transform livelihoods in ways that provide better opportunities." That means, in constructing livelihoods, informal structures of social dominance and power within communities influence people's access to resources and livelihood opportunities (Kratzt, 2001). In the context of rural communities, self-help agricultural projects are invisible to outsiders because participatory exercise involves every community leader who forms part of the local elites. Notwithstanding the intention of development interventions into rural communities, the focus tends to be more on development organisation and its policies. The relations impinge upon self-help agricultural projects as livelihood opportunities because local elites are more natural to influence the plans through external support (Kratzt, 2001; Scoones, 2009, 2015).

Different scholars argue that SLA is not an integral theory of development. Sarkar and Sinha (2015:5) emphasise that the "framework by its design focuses on microeconomic aspects of social life." The framework does not show how the interventions add up to the macro-economic role of transforming the people's livelihoods (Sakdapolrak, 2014:14-15). Therefore, the frameworks are only a corrective tool to analyse interventions and livelihoods than a way of initiating any systemic transformation of rural social communities (Scoones, 2009:185).

The SLA "focuses on how people develop their livelihood strategies" (Scoones, 2009, 2015: 185). This means that self-help agriculture projects are means to enhance people's coping and adapting strategies to achieve livelihood outcomes as active decision-makers, not passive

recipients of development interventions in rural communities (Scoones, 2009:184; Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018:7-8). However, the approach disregards gender when examining livelihoods and security assessment at rural community levels (Sardapolrak, 2014: 22-23). As such, the need for development interventions is given to vulnerable groups, including women. In this sense, gender issues are not considered in the analysis of livelihoods (Brockleyby & Fisher, 2003:189; Scoones, 2015). Another aspect that is lacking in SLA is to make it possible for women to express their genuine perceptions, interests, and needs to livelihoods issues and in practices (Brockleyby & Fisher, 2003; Sakdapolrak, 2014). The term "vulnerability" and weak in SLA brings together women as a collective and as one ideology shaping an understanding of livelihoods in rural communities. It is argued that strategies of knowledge household's livelihoods in rural communities should include "relational, and local structures such as capitalism and patriarchy" (Serrat, 2008:1-3). These structures give rise to events and experiences that affect livelihoods (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018:7). Thus, it shapes the possibilities and constraints of women as a vulnerable group in which they use their agency to construct their livelihoods within the prevailing social structures (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018).

The SLA tends to take household as the unit of analysis (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018; Sakdapolrak, 2014: 21-23; Scoones, 2015). The direct attention of the household's livelihoods makes the family a sole decision- making unit because, at this level, various assets are brought into particular livelihoods means of constructing a living. Thus, produce intra-household inequalities in economic control, interests, opportunities, decisions, making power that often have gender as a basis are not given sufficient attention (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018; Scoones, 2009).

Sakdapolrak (2014: 24) argues that "there is an underlying assumption that livelihoods strategies respond to material challenges of well-being, and poverty is not necessarily a matter of income." Engaging in self-help agricultural projects is an effort to address both the social and economic goals of poor rural communities (Sakdapolrak, 2014). Under SLA, development interventions are means to address long-term needs of people. The focus is on increasing opportunities than constraints on beneficiaries' agency than structures. In light of the above criticisms, SLA is used in chapter four to examine and understand self-help projects in Rothe village, Lesotho.

2.8. Conclusion

In this section, arguably development in the context of self-help is about human development than economic growth. It makes and contributes to people as beneficiaries of development

projects. Through self-help, agricultural schemes create people's capabilities as the 'means' and an 'end' in themselves to achieve sustainable rural development. Rural development through self-help agricultural projects provides appropriate avenues to accumulate social and human capital to facilitate knowledge production in which individuals or collectively can influence development processes. That means, rural people are not recipients of either hand-outs or cash-for-work but are part of the overall development as beneficiaries to expand their livelihoods. The thematic relationship between rural development and subsistence farming reveals that self-help agricultural projects in rural development complement existing social practices of people for gaining long-term. It also enhances quality lives and uses the resource that is at their disposal to construct meaningful livelihoods.

In the case studies covered as lived experiences, self-help agricultural projects emerged means for constructing rural livelihoods to alleviate and improve the quality of lives of rural people. These enable both individuals to invest their personal and community efforts while addressing their felt-needs, and respond to socio-economic needs, and construct livelihoods from agricultural activities. These development interventions have been integrated into rural development policy of countries for rural development.

In particular, in rural Indian, self-help agricultural projects have gained momentum as the traditional practices in rural communities to promote social capital. Instead of resorting to livelihoods from urban areas, people pull resources together through self-help groups. These groups have an active social partnership that acts as a platform for capacity building of poor rural livelihoods. These interventions succeeded in developing the quality lives of rural communities for empowering women in India. Even though the Indian self-help interventions are targeting vulnerable groups such as women and youth in rural communities, they succeeded in enhancing their livelihoods.

Undoubtedly, through active people's participation in rural Nigeria, self-help agricultural projects proved to increase people's capabilities and to utilise their efforts by engaging in different projects at household levels. These efforts replace those sponsored by the government (Benedict, 2010). Thus, self-help agriculture projects have become the social norm because of the limited government efforts to improve the quality of lives of rural communities.

This situation was seen in Lesotho post-independence, where self-help projects were linked with economic development to reduce extreme rural poverty for Basotho through popular participation in development projects. In rural Lesotho, Basotho participation has been

strengthened. Still, people are the victims of the distribution of food aid to restore food security and food-for-work or cash-for-work initiatives. These interventions did not affect growth and particular human development because they are short-term interventions to reduce poverty. These initiatives have not only led to a lack of human development but also policy failure to respond to persistent and increased rural poverty. Therefore, self-help agricultural projects have been gaining momentum as new approaches for development in rural Basotho. By reviewing this literature, this study seeks to draw empirical pieces of evidence on self-help agricultural projects in promoting quality of lives and reduce poverty in rural Rothe villagers.

Looking at SLA, which is the theoretical framework used in this study. It is appropriate because it reflects on the self-help agricultural projects as activities. Hence, it gives peoples access to different assets to sustainable livelihoods and uses their agency to construct quality lives rather than becoming objects of development interventions. Despite its weakness, there is clear evidence that SLA in self-help agricultural projects has gained mainstream status among case studies discussed. Self-help agricultural projects could best be understood as the opportunities that poor rural communities construct livelihoods to sustain their livelihoods.

CHAPTER THREE

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapters were based on the study background. This chapter presents the research design and methodology employed in this study. According to Kothari (2004:7), the research design is a "plan, structure, and strategies of investigation considered to obtain answers to research questions or problems." In other words, a research design is a plan used by the researcher to attempt to answer research questions using methods and procedures to collect and analyse needed data (Kothari, 2005; Yin, 2003:75). It is also a system of methods and procedures followed to collect data relevant to the study (William, 2011:66). Methods and procedures should be coherent and complement one another and reflect the research questions and suit study purpose (William, 2011).

In this chapter, I present the qualitative research approach, procedures, and techniques employed to select, collect, and analyse data to answer the research question and to achieve the aim and specific objectives of this study. I then outline the philosophical tradition and methodological approaches employed in this study. I selected Rothe village in Lesotho as the case study to explore self-help agricultural projects based on participant's views and lived experiences. I will also explain the rationale for choosing it. I explain how participants were sampled and the rationale behind each method and technique. I will then give an account of how the data collected from key study participants were analysed to respond to the research question, study aim, and objectives. Finally, I will present the ethical considerations for selecting participants and collecting qualitative data.

3.2. Qualitative Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach to understand Rothe villagers lived experiences and the meanings attached for engaging in self-help agricultural projects to improve their lives (Kothari, 2004:5). Qualitative research is concerned primarily with how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and the structures around them (Babbie, 2005). The purpose of using a qualitative approach was to understand how people engaging in self-help agricultural projects explain the conditions of poverty themselves and to ascertain whether and how development interventions have improved their livelihoods. Also, qualitative research was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's experiences for them to provide an opportunity to express their views (Holstein & Gunrian, 2005:485). This approach was

appropriate because it allowed me to interact with the participants since the intentions were to understand participants' views within their natural setting (Kothari, 2004:5). Qualitative research seeks to establish the meanings of phenomena from the participant's interpretations (Creswell, 2009:16; De Vos, 2002: 360). Because I was studying the topic which has not been much studied in the context of Rothe village in Lesotho, this approach was best because this study explored the nature of self-help agricultural projects. The qualitative approach was a suitable methodology for this study because of the need to get access to personal perspectives and opinions, and lack of existing empirical research on self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village, Lesotho (William, 2007).

The qualitative research approach was adopted due to its potential to generate meanings from accounts given by research participants about their everyday experiences and perceptions (Dunn, 2010: 42). The intention of locating this study within this tradition was to get a deeper understanding of the participant's realities for engaging in self-help agricultural projects to produce knowledge that contributes to livelihoods (Durrheim, 1999:4). My intention was not only to consider the voice and perspectives of the participants but also their interaction with other participants engaged in self-help agricultural projects. Thus, the qualitative approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to collect data and have close interaction with the participants (Querios *et al.*, 2017:370). Therefore, this provided an in-depth understanding of how self-help agricultural projects as activities contribute to the long-term development of human lives (Querios *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, this helped to interpret the meaning of data explained by participants' themselves, and collect data within their local context (Kielmann *et al.*, 2012:6). This approach was also relevant because the basis of a qualitative research approach lies in interpreting to understand social reality and description of the lived experiences of human beings (Mohajan, 2018:2). Under the qualitative research, I adopted an interpretive research paradigm as a philosophical lens that informs the methodology and the methods.

3.3. Interpretive Research Paradigm

A research paradigm frames the researcher's philosophical orientation of research. It is a lens in which researchers choose methodology, methods, and to analyse data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study was philosophically guided by the interpretive research paradigm, which is a doctrine of idealism. Keat and Urry (1977:107) define idealism as a "philosophical approach that assumes that true reality is only worth knowing from people's views." According to Benton (2015:3), a philosophical tradition involves assumptions about how the world is viewed. These

assumptions support the research strategy and methods the researcher chooses as part of the strategy (Benton, 2015:3).

The interpretive research paradigm was used to understand the subjective experiences of the participant is through close interaction with people engaging in self-help agricultural projects to understand how they explain their situations (Keat & Urry, 1977). The main objective of adopting the interpretive research paradigm was more interactive since the purpose was to generate knowledge and to understand how individuals interpret self-help agricultural projects for their livelihoods (Kawulich, 2012: 9; Kivunja & Kujini, 2017). The fact that this study analyses livelihoods, an interpretive paradigm, was desirable for the researcher to collect data through participants' thinking processes informed by interacting with study participants.

According to Rehman and Alharthi (2006: 55), "social realities are constructed not discovered, and it is not possible to know reality because our sense always mediates it." Constructing reality provides an understanding of how participants perceive things differently, and the meanings they attached to situations. I, therefore, followed Reham and Alharth (2006) views by relying on participant's views on how they interpret self-help agricultural projects. In order to construct knowledge as it would only be possible to understand how these activities affect the quality of lives from participants' explanations. This allowed me to examine what participants had to say about opportunities derived from engaging in self-help agricultural projects (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). My goal was to understand and make sense of how people engaging in self-help agricultural projects experience their social relations from their explanations and explore their views and meanings attached to constructing sustainable livelihoods rather than focusing on a few ideas (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Using an interpretive approach was appropriate because it enabled me to build a close relationship with participants. Thus, participants were able to give their stories from their perspectives. Through the participants' stories, I was able to understand the participants' actions in self-help agricultural projects. Hence, a qualitative research approach adopted in order to collect and analyse data in the form of spoken words from the participants' points of view.

3.4. Qualitative Case Study Methodology

This study used a case study as a strategy of inquiry to provide an "in-depth investigation of the existing phenomenon within the real-life context" (Starman, 2013:31; Kawulich, 2012:9-10). A case study is defined by Yin (2011:13) as an "in-depth investigation of a program, event, an activity, process, and individuals." A case study is appropriate when the boundaries

between phenomenon and context are not evident (Creswell, 1994:65). In this study, the case studied was self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village to explore their uniqueness for improving the quality of lives, and long-term livelihoods (Creswell, 1994). The reasons for choosing Rothe village were to explore, look for explanations, and gain an understanding of the phenomena using different data collection methods (Flick, 2000: 147). William (2007: 4) agrees with Flick (2000), and extends the claim that "data collection for a case study is extensive, and draws from multiple sources such as participant's observation, interviews, archival records or documents, physical artifacts, and audio-visual materials." Rothe village, as a case study gave the researcher insights of how the components of the self-help projects work. Baxter and Jack (2008:548-549) show different types of case study; descriptive, exploratory, descriptive, multi-case, intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies. An exploratory case study was employed to examine those situations that are unknown about interventions, activities, and processes using a single set of outcomes (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 549). This was done in line with the qualitative interpretive research paradigm to understand the role played by project beneficiaries within self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village as a livelihood strategy.

The explorative case study was used to understand conditions, social relations, and benefits (Baxter & Jack, 2008) derived from engaging in self-help agricultural projects for self-help development. Because little was known about whether self-help agricultural projects have improved the quality of lives of Rothe villagers to sustain their livelihoods. The constraints to self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village were understood and examined with livelihoods context. Explorative case study provided an in-depth understanding of contemporary social phenomena. Therefore, it achieves validity through a triangulation of methods such as interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and archival records (Keat & Urry, 1977:109). The choice of the case study was informed by Yin (2011: 32) advices that case study research "should be used depending on the nature of the research questions set." Moreover, whether questions are descriptive and explanatory, then the case study method is appropriate to explain present situations. In the context of this study, I considered this because this study attempted to explore self-help agricultural projects in the rural livelihoods, and to understand how people engaged in self-help agricultural projects improve their lives. In selecting the case study, I made an effort to select Rothe village because the study deals with rural livelihoods, and how self-help agricultural projects could improve the quality of lives of rural people, and these projects are mostly prevalent in Rothe village.

3.5. Qualitative Sampling Methods and Process

The study participants were selected mainly through purposive, supplemented by snowball sampling techniques (Babbie, 2005: 189). Qualitative sampling involves selecting a few participants to provide clarity, insights about study phenomena (Babbie, 2005: 189). Strydom and De Vos (1998: 198) argue that the purposive sampling technique helps to select participants with specific characteristics to participate in the study. The study participants were chosen purposively because the aim was to get insights from project beneficiaries, and Field Officers from RSDA since they work directly with project beneficiaries. All the participants were selected based on their knowledge, and the purpose of the study to give out relevant information (Babbie, 2005: 207; Strydom & De Vos, 1998). The aim was to understand how people engage in self-help agricultural projects construct their livelihoods. This helped the researcher to gain in-depth information from only people engage in self-help agricultural projects, based on their knowledge, and the purpose of the study. Ten participants engage in self-help agricultural projects, and two Field Officers from RSDA were selected purposively to get insights depth of self-help agricultural projects in Rothe Village, Lesotho (Strydom & De Vos, 1998). The purpose of including officials was that they deal directly with people on development projects, while the rest are support staff. So, I chose them because they had better knowledge about the projects to enable the researcher to verify data about the benefits of self-help agricultural projects from those directly involved.

I used the snowball sampling technique process to locate and accumulate potential participants suggested by other project beneficiaries (Babbie, 2005:208). This was appropriate because it would not be easy for me to locate members of the specific population engage in self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village (Babbie, 2005). Snowball sampling was used to identify appropriate participants selected through a purposive sampling method, and they then referred me to other relevant participants to engage in self-help agricultural activities. A total of fifteen (15) project beneficiaries were selected through purposive and snowball sampling.

3.6. Data Collection Method and Process

The data was collected qualitatively through semi-structured interviews. These interviews took place in August 2019 in Ha-Makoe, in the Rothe village. A semi-structured interview is a conversational and informal interaction between researcher and participants through means of spoken words (Longhurst, 2010:105). Out of fifteen (15) purposively selected participants engaged in self-help agricultural projects, only ten (10) participants engaged in the village (indigenous) poultry, crop production, field cultivation, and piggery self-help agricultural

projects were available for interviews, and two RSDA Field Officers were interviewed. The interviews were conducted at the participant's place of choice. This was important because the participants freely expressed their views about self-help agricultural projects to construct their livelihoods. All the interviews were conducted in Sesotho to allow participants to express their views using their language freely. Hence, they were based on a pre-determined set of open-ended questions on the topic areas that the researcher wanted to cover (Mohajan, 2018:2; Gray, 2004: 215-216; see also Appendices, A & B). Semi-structured interviews offered flexibility because the researcher was able to probe and direct the interviews to elicit more information from participants (Lume *et al.*, 2010). This was helpful because I aimed to understand how individual participants experience and make sense of their own lives through participating in self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village (Longhurst, 2010:107). Hence, during the interview, I was able to probe for more information and clarification of unclear answers that participants provided. Moreover, asked additional questions, including those that were not anticipated at the start of the interviews, and follow how the participants make a living from self-help agriculture activities since those questions were important to the study (Gray, 2004). This method helped to create an environment of openness and allowed the discussion to flow like a conversation.

Time allocated for each interview was 50 to 60 minutes, though; this varied from the participants on how information each participant was willing to give out. All participants have shown willingness to give out information and knowledge about self-help agricultural projects. In most cases, the interviews extended far more than an hour because more participants emphasised content. The length of the interview was not essential, but the information they gave out was crucial. The semi-structured interviews provided useful and rich data because the sample size was relatively small and allowed to analyse qualitative data thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2013: 89). Hence, information collected in Sesotho was translated into English and transcribed while it was still fresh for the researcher to capture accurate views and meaning of data collected.

3.7. Qualitative Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed qualitatively using open coding and thematic methods. The qualitative data analysis involves processes and procedures from qualitative data collected to explain, understand, or interpret people's situations investigated (Dey, 1993:10-11). Open coding is a process of identifying aspects of data that relate to research questions and objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2013:206; Dey, 1993), while the thematic method involves identifying

patterns or themes within the qualitative data (Margurie & Delahunt, 2017:3352). In processing data, the researcher thoroughly read all the data to become familiar with it and to identify ideas and patterns within the data. This was done to assess the content of data and ideas drawn from the data (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:5). Similar ideas were grouped into codes that emerged from data (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:6). They helped to simplify and reduce data in terms of what is important in order to ease the process of analysing data. Patterns in the data that were important and interesting were identified thematically to address research objectives. According to Javadi & Zarea (2016:34), codes are the label of referred to unique parts of data that contribute to a theme. I noted down the main themes that emerged from transcripts. I generated themes from the ideas that seemed to repeat in the data and the meaning behind them. After that, similar codes were organised into thematic categories (Creswell, 2009:185). This method provides flexibility for the researcher to modify, integrate themes, and use verbatim responses to keep the feel of participant's response to analysis data (Creswell, 2009: 185; Nowell *et al.*, 2017). For this study, these methods were useful since data was interpreted from each coded theme to explore and understand the views of participants concerning self-help agricultural projects that have improved livelihoods in Rothe village (Creswell, 2009).

3.8. Ethical Considerations

According to Strydom (1998:25), ethics are requirements for any research exercise. The researcher should adhere to some ethical issues. Research ethics refers to established rules and guidelines that define the conduct of the researcher. They are essential to protect the dignity of the participants and publish well the information that is collected (Karanga & Makau, 2016:2). The researcher applied for ethical clearance from Rhodes University Ethics Standard Committee (RUESC). The application was reviewed and approved by RUESC (see Appendix D). In conducting the research, participants were presented with the consent form (see Appendix C) and approval letter from RUESC that set the terms and conditions of participating in the study. In the whole process of the data collection, I observed issues of ethics that are required when dealing with individual objects. According to Rakotsoane (2012:73), the researcher should try to obtain the informed consent of the participants before the study or the interviews begin.

In this study, the principle of informed consent was observed, the participants were informed of the nature and objectives of the study, and the researcher requested permission to give their consent (Rakotsoane, 2012). This was done to get participants to agree to take part in the study freely, and the researcher ensured that the participants have a complete understanding of the

purpose and methods to be used in the study. All the participants were assured before-hand that they could decline at any time if they do not want to participant. All the participants were asked to sign the consent form. Because the researcher was using a voice recorder to collect data, I requested participants' permission to record the interviews, and the purpose was to respect their wishes and protect them against any harm. In addition, the researcher explained to all participants to freely participate in the study, and that during the interview process they are at liberty to withdraw, thus, the voluntary participation was given to the participants. This created a right setting between researchers and participants to collect the required data. I acknowledged that because this studied people's livelihoods, the ethical obligation was to protect the participant's identities and responses by keeping them anonymously and confidentially. As a result, I made sure that the views presented in the data analysis section could not be linked to participants; hence, I used false names to hide participants' identities (Oglettren & Kawulish, 2019).

3. 9. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the study approach and philosophical tradition which the study is based on. It also explained how participants were sampled, and the chosen sampling techniques complemented each other to select appropriate study participants from the targeted study population. It provided methods of collecting and analysing data in order to provide an in-depth understating of the study problem. The next chapter presents and interprets the study findings to provide meaning that answers the research questions and addresses the study objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

4.1. Introduction

This study examined self-help agricultural projects to ascertain whether they have improved the lives of Rothe villagers. This chapter presents an analysis of the findings of data collected from Rothe villagers (engaged in self-help agricultural projects to improve their livelihoods) and Field Officers from RSDA. Data collected was qualitatively analysed inductively, as explained in chapter three. The themes that emerged from data processing provide the basis for unpacking how self-help is a means of reducing poverty, and contribute to sustainable improvements in the quality of human lives of Rothe villagers.

The research findings respond to the research question and are interpreted in line with the research aim and objectives. Overall, this study aimed to understand whether self-help agricultural projects can be development interventions improve the lives of Rothe villagers. The study objectives were to (a) understand self-help whether agricultural projects are as alternative development strategies to alleviate poverty in Rothe village; (b) examine the role of played by different stakeholders including members within the existing self-help agricultural projects; (c) identify strategies used to construct their livelihoods, and (d), to document lessons learnt from the self-help agricultural projects in Rothe rural communities. The reviewed literature and Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, discussed in chapter two, will inform the interpretations of the research findings. The findings point to the number of self-help agricultural activities undertaken by participants in Rothe village to improve their livelihoods. There are various reasons why people engage and consider self-help agricultural projects as a tool for poverty alleviation and how different stakeholders played their roles within the projects. Different strategies that participants utilized to enhance their activities have been identified.

Firstly, this chapter provides the background of Rothe village in order to locate the lives, and livelihoods of people living there, and livelihoods challenges they have experienced. Secondly, it looks at different self-help agricultural development activities undertaken in Rothe village to construct livelihoods. Thirdly, the chapter discusses the role of stakeholders in promoting sustainable activities. Fourthly, I will identify approaches utilized by participants in sustaining their livelihoods. Lastly, I will explore the contributions of self-help agricultural activities in attaining quality livelihoods as well as the challenges encountered in engaging self-help agricultural projects.

4.2. An Overview of Rothe Village

The Rothe village is one of the rural villages located 45 kilometres from the central capital city of Maseru district. Rothe village has an estimated population of 22 803, of which 11 440 are males, and 11 363 are females (Bureau of Statistics Lesotho, 2018). Most of the people living in this village are rural dwellers. About half of the population lives in abject poverty. In 2002/2003 household survey, poverty levels were estimated at approximately 57% (Bureau of Statistics Lesotho, 2010). Administratively, Rothe village is located in the North-West region of the capital city, Maseru. Rothe village's socio-cultural and economic life is unevenly distributed amongst the people, and households (Lesotho Red Cross, 2006). Similar to other rural villages in Lesotho, agriculture is the primary source of informal employment and means of livelihood at both household and community levels. Agriculture plays a supporting role in households' survival and meeting people's basic needs. People's livelihoods are sustained through agriculture and through other indigenous knowledge and local resources (Bureau of Statistic Lesotho, 2010; Lesotho Red Cross, 2012; Lesotho Review, 2019).

4.3. Self-help Agricultural Development Initiatives in Rothe village

These findings revealed that all the study participants are engaged in various self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village. The participants indicated they are engaged in more than one self-help agricultural project. These self-help agricultural projects come in different forms to address the current needs of Rothe villagers. These include crop production, indigenous or village poultry, animal husbandry, sheep and goats rearing maize and sorghum cultivation. The participants revealed that they engage in a variety of projects to increase their yield throughout the year. Engaging in different activities means that each project emerged as a linkage to increase and support one another's activities leading to crucial other self-help activities (Scoones, 2009). In Rothe village, the participants said they engage self-help agricultural projects is to supplement their household income, overcome dependency from government-failed projects, and to support household nutrition. Although participants' reasons differ marginally for engaging in self-help agricultural projects, they share similar views of improving their lives by doing it for themselves. Most Rothe villagers are familiar with the self-help agricultural activities as they had been practising them before. This is illustrated by Mbagwu *et al.* (2012) by arguing that most self-help agricultural activities are undertaken because people have been practising them before, and are relevant to reducing poverty. These findings relate well with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach because self-help agricultural projects complement already existing social practices in rural areas (Bratasara *et al.*, 2019).

The only difference is in how people decide to undertake self-help projects to meet the households' needs. Rothe villagers decided to undertake these projects through subsistence agriculture. However, there was an agreement amongst participants that self-help agricultural projects enable them to get food for their households, meet basic needs. One of the participants, Matsei, had this to say:

“Self-help agriculture is the only way to make a living because I am poor and do not have other means of living. Ever since I was born, the only way to make a living for like people living in poverty was agriculture. It makes me more committed, and I do not depend on other people for food but share the little we have to improve our lives because agriculture, I can meet all my family basic needs like school uniform and food”.

Other participants, Lisema and Mankutsuoa, indicated that self-help agricultural projects are vital to them because they live in conditions of hunger and lack employment opportunities. Thus, self-help agricultural projects are appropriate development interventions for their socio-economic circumstances. Since they are not working, they earn little income that contributes to their household consumption as they sell the surplus to complement their little income. These views relate well with Baiphethi and Jacobs's (2009:7) argument that subsistence agriculture is the heart of activities for many rural households as it offers people different opportunities to increase their personal growth and stabilize household's sources of income. The importance of subsistence agriculture underlines the fact of giving people more control over their projects (Meyer, 2000:41). As one of the participants, Lisema points out that, *“unlike other development interventions we had before, self-help agricultural projects allow me to decide on what I want.”* That means people who willingly engage in self-help agricultural projects supplement their little income and become independent.

According to participants such as Matlakala and Mankutsuoa, these self-help agricultural initiatives provide them with an opportunity to save money on their income to meet their basic needs and spend money on other things. Other participants underline the importance of the people "doing something" for a living. Kamohelo disclosed that *“this kind of project makes me stand up to improve my life.”* Similarly, the evidence of this is highlighted in the response of some participants who pointed out that most government projects have failed to address their current needs. Thabiso elaborated that *“.....although asking help from the government was important, it did not help much. Instead, I had to stand for and engage in self-help projects to meet my family needs because the government somehow has failed us.”* Therefore, engaging in

self-help agricultural can be explained in two ways: first, it helps to address the immediate and long-term needs of participants, and to improve the quality of the people engaged in self-help agricultural projects. Second, the failure of government projects demonstrates that they do not address the needs of people. The study conducted by Edge and Iyombe (2014) in Nigeria confirms that self-help agricultural projects are alternative development interventions that help people with welfare rather than waiting endlessly for the government. Hence, all study participants felt that self-help agricultural projects provided them with the means overcome dependency syndrome from government-initiated projects that offer little opportunities to improve their livelihoods. These views are further testified by Olayemi and Nirmal (2017:71) that subsistence agriculture does not only contribute to household food security and supply, but enables participants and households to acquire long-term skills and knowledge for their livelihoods to divert income to meet other requirements, hence reduce people's dependency from the government. All participants interviewed indicated that before engaging in self-help agricultural projects, they had no access to the means of improving their lives, such as skills and agricultural resources that could help them to achieve meaningful lives. What is illustrated by the participants' responses was that there is a lack of available materials and access to resources that would help them improve pursue their quality livelihoods.

The participants interviewed indicated that they are engaged in self-help projects to supplement their little incomes. This is in line with Sustainable Livelihoods Approach because self-help agriculture exposes participant's hidden potentials which motivate powers for change (Scoones, 2015). The participants indicate that their self-help projects are the cheapest and secure means of sustaining their lives because they only require low entry cost. Nonetheless, they generate high internal returns as sources of household income, such as for paying their children education and reinvest to expand their projects (Berk & Akdemir, 2006:1896). According to participants such as Makhokolotso, Kamohelo, and Lebohang, these projects have created meaningful opportunities for them to work together in improving their livelihoods. They provided participants with alternative means to alleviate extreme poverty. Similarly, Sustainable Livelihoods Approach indicates that livelihoods could be sustainable only when people are involved in different activities to emphasize different ways people make a living (Scoones, 2015).

All the participants interviewed felt that they are engaging in agriculture as part of their living. This is supported by one participants-Mankutsuoa, who pointed out that "*she was socialized into agriculture by her forefathers and that her family lives were better as she had provided*

her children with adequate food." It was also evident that from the discussion with participants that self-help agricultural projects are alternative development strategies for improving the quality of lives of the Rothe villagers because people are willing to improve their economic conditions. As a result, all the participants felt they need personal growth because they lacked access to material to support their livelihoods since self-help agricultural activities were appropriate development interventions that relate well with their ways of living. These findings respond to the study objective (a) in that through these projects, participants were given access to resources to generate more income and reduce their dependency from the government. Similarly, Rants'o (2015:26) observed that many rural people in Lesotho, especially women, youth, and retired mine workers, engage in self-help agriculture activities because they are driven by the desire to improve their living conditions without resorting to urban migration.

4.4. The Role of Stakeholders in Promoting Sustainable Activities

4.4.1. Participation of Project Beneficiaries

The success and failure of development interventions depend on how project beneficiaries are involved. It was revealed by some participants such as Makhokolotso, Matsie, and Thabiso that they voluntarily engage in self-help agricultural projects that address their needs. In Rothe village, self-help agricultural projects are organized and funded by the RSDA to implement their project activities. Project beneficiaries get proper and timely resources and technical support in the form of seeds, seedlings and, village poultry, and continuous training. All participants and Field Officers pointed out that RSDA does not give out cash, but that it purchases on behalf of participants to ensure that the inputs are used for their intended purposes. According to Karabo, Field Officer, before projects are implemented in the village, each member of the village has direct control and decide on what they want to engage. From Motlatsi, another Field Officer, the purpose is to ensure that participants take control of the planning process that would lead to the successful implementation of projects. Participants and Field Officers work together throughout the implementation process, and Field Officers do regular visits to participants to promote high-quality products produced. The participants are given resources in the form of seeds, seedling, training, and extension service, such as workshops offered by RSDA. Agricultural resources and support are provided with a way to overcome participants' barriers to implement projects and create awareness and enhance the sustainability of projects (William, 2000). The Field Officers indicated that their role is to guide participants and provide the platform for people to decide on the best agricultural projects to undertake. As Matlakala restated:

“With the help I got from RSDA; they help you to truly reflect on what you want to improve in your life. In this project, I am my boss because I have full control of it, it is like my child too, it gives me reasons that I have been engaging in it to improve my family’s quality of life. All the decisions that I make I do not consult anyone here”. So, the success and failure of these projects is my responsibility”.

That is involving participants in development interventions allows them to influence and make a decision that reflects what they want to bring about incremental change (Parfitt, 2004:538). Considerable importance of self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village has been placed in the hands of people to decide for their household projects to improve the quality of their lives. The quality of their lives resonates with Davids and Theron (2014: 107) argument that participants get project activities done based on the internally prescribed livelihoods goals. Green (2000:70) argues that when people decide what they want for their households, this allows them to have control of self-help development interventions. This allows participants to self-develop, be aware, and be satisfied and to promote self-help among people and removes dependence on food aid, by producing their food using available assets such as land, seed, village, and livestock to meet their sustainable livelihoods, and build substantial social capital. These sentiments are brought forth by the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in that development interventions should allow people's voices, and active participation to control development activities (Petersen & Pedersen, 2010).

The fact that participants take control of all their project activities means they have clear goals to achieve for their livelihoods. Both Makhotsa and Matlakala, study participants, pointed out that they only contribute their time and labour to ensure the success of activities. It has been argued that development interventions should allow people to control the process to achieve sustainable lives (Ogunlen-Adeton & Olandeinde 2013:6; Ralebese, 2012). The works of William (2000: 556) suggest that allowing participants to decide on what they want to engage in can open more opportunities to share, explore and enlarge their knowledge as part of the human development process. As such, the outcome is to enhance knowledge and competence and the ability to make demands and sustain actions. One of the participants, Lebohang, indicated that the *"benefits of participating in self-help agricultural activities made me aware and learn that resources such as rose-hip could be so important for generating income."* That means with active control over development interventions, participants can think out of the box by using their available resources to maintain their livelihoods.

Participants often shape their priorities to align with the objectives of RSDA. The objectives of RSDA is to steer capacity building through self-help groups to improve rural livelihoods using agricultural production (RSDA, 2019). Therefore, the fact that participants described that they have full control of what they want is an indication that self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village show that they can be a form of sustainable development interventions that have a longer life span. As a result, some participants said: "they discover new ideas," as (Green, 2000) says. This is attributed to the views of Matlakala, who said that *"being in control of agricultural activities made me acquired new and advanced methods of agriculture."* Participants expound the issue of contributing labour-power as a way of increasing their commitment and success of activities undertaken. The fact that participants feel like they have control over development interventions is similar to Sustainable Livelihoods Approach as it states that participants must take control of self-help agricultural projects to build their strengths (UNDP, 2017; Macia, 2008). This is supported by Sundaram (2012) that participants' control is a practical tool in which they can use their own time and labour-power within their different activities. This strengthens their commitment and personal growth because they learn by doing. As such, to commit to activities is an indication to achieve their felt needs for sustainable livelihoods. In Rothe self-help agricultural projects, people contribute through investing time and resources to increase knowledge and fulfil their own set of livelihood objectives and goals. This, in turn, fosters personal and special satisfaction from the activities that are planned and executed by the participants themselves. Project participants do not see themselves as the recipients but rather as initiators of projects to meet their basic needs (Ochada, 2012). These findings respond to the second objective of this study in that participants can take control over projects to achieve their sustainable livelihoods.

4.5. Self-Help Agricultural Approaches Utilized in Rothe Self-Help Projects

Social capital is one of the approaches used in Rothe self-help projects. Social capital is important for livelihoods because it is the means for creating a safety net and buffer against economic shocks and stresses (UNDP, 2017:3). Social capital involves social relations, networks, family kinship, and social groupings people use to enhance their quality of life (Scoones, 2009). The third objective of this study was to identify strategies used by the Rothe villages to improve their livelihoods. In Rothe village, people engaging in self-help agriculture have adopted and practices different self-help strategies for improving their livelihoods means. These strategies include the formation of a self-help group, loaning of assets, and sharecropping. These indigenous ways of enhancing the household productivity benefits to

individual and village as a whole. The importance of social capital in self-help agricultural activities is to promote active participation in group activities and help participants to accumulate more social capital, which helps them to mobilize resources, bring about supportive behaviour, and ease coordination of the village or family problems (UNDP, 2017). Krantz (2001) argues that these are a combination of livelihoods for survival but differ because of different household situations. Using Sustainable Livelihood Approach perspective as a lens to assess these projects in Rothe village, these strategies used by participants are aimed at enhancing their productivity to maintain and sustain human ability to continue functioning over a long-term and contribute to continuous improvement of livelihoods (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Leo & Haan *et al.*, 2003).

4.5.1. Formation of Self-Help Group in Rothe Village

The study revealed that participants engaging in self-help projects in Rothe use groups as a platform to discuss their activities. These groups are composed of people engaged in self-help projects in the village. All the participants indicated that group membership is voluntary and open to everyone. Self-help groups composed of formally unemployed women, men, and youth. All the participants said they form groups to enable work with one another, to share knowledge, and to increase their ability to influence government for help, which is important for rural survival because groups allow members to share similar problems that enable them to sustain their activities as Ochanda (2012:40) notes. However, all the participants undertake their self-help activities independently from each other. Therefore, forming a group in Rothe village is in line with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in that group's partnership improves access to poor participants so that they can benefit from others (FAO, 2005:40; Scoones, 2015). According to the participants such as Matsie, Lisema, and Makhokolotso, these groups are platforms and means for improving their lives. They further indicate that their desire is not to produce for consumption but to create a business out of activities. This is what Thabiso had to say on the issue of desire to create a business:

"....., being part of this group helps me with many things which I was not aware of. So, I aim to see myself not producing for consumption only but create a business out of these projects where I can supply big companies in Maseru such as Fruit and Vegetable Shop with vegetables because of the high demand of vegetable in this country" (Thabiso, Rothe Villager)

All the study participants see these groups as the link between members and with RSDA. The role of RSDA in these groups is to support participants in strengthening group existence to build strong and sustainable groups. Mbawu *et al.* (2016) argue that working in groups during self-help projects allow for shared responsibility for their success. Karabo, a Field Officer, adds that “..... *Self-help groups act as link between people and RSDA in Rothe village, and to enable them influence government decisions and negotiate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security about improving small-holders agricultural farming*”. Therefore, the role of the group could be important for sustainable development because self-help agricultural activities might require support from various stakeholders (Todaro & Smith, 2012:7). This also goes beyond external support by having access to social networks, and to strengthen their knowledge and ability to run their activities because they share similar problems. They also come up with solutions amongst themselves. Most study participants felt that working in groups is what kept them together to overcome problems. This is what Matlakala had to say:

"....after starting my projects, it was very challenging for me to cope on my own, because I was a teacher and I only know how to handle poultry, I find it very challenging to cope with my piggery projects as it was too demanding for me to produce pigs and piglets of high quality that could be demanded for our local market. So with the advice I got from people who came in these projects before me, it was amazing as they give me tips on how to take care of pigs. I have about twenty pigs now through their help. You would think something is easy but still, need to work with other people to get skills and knowledge to keep you projects going".

The importance of forming groups during self-help projects relates to the study conducted by Penarando-Moreno and Egelying (2008), which looked at the participant's capability to access to social and economic capital. In this study, forming self-help groups allowed participants to work together because they shared similar social and economic conditions. As such, their groups helped them to overcome their social responsibilities and problems such as increased productivity to provide their children with food and better education. The participants said working in groups has improved participants' sense of belonging in the village because there are more opportunities presented for them to improve their lives. This is important as it explicitly relates to Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in that creating sustainable livelihoods where group members do not only secure activities for the future, but also benefits that can be experienced in the long-term (Pass, 2017:45). However, both Lisema and Matsie, study participants, noted that they faced challenges within the self-help groups, which included members prioritizing personal gains, lack of trust and initiatives, and domination by group

leaders. They indicated that they were able to overcome some of the challenges using knowledge acquired from workshops conducted by RSDA to help members know how to deal with group dynamics. This is in line with Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, which argues that livelihood strategies are a choice that people undertake for their livelihoods (UNDP, 2015; Krantz, 2001). Kingau *et al.* (2016:146) argue that most members of the groups are likeminded, and this could lead to fighting and groups being dissolved.

To overcome domination and to promote good working relations within a group, leadership rotates amongst group members after twelve (12) months. Similarly, in a study done by Kaur and Bajwa (2016: 3) in India, groups have helped members to develop leadership skills which are useful not only within groups but in their interaction and participation in other institution. Thus gives participants an opportunity to lead a group. Since they decided to work in groups in Rothe village, membership is growing. Makhokolotso, a study participant, proudly said that *"skills and knowledge would stay with them indefinitely."* This is because other women in the village were learning from them and can form another group in which they produce fruit trees. They are involved in fruit bottling and turn them into *mangangajane* (dried peaches) to preserve fruit for the winter season. Working in groups during self-help projects enables participants to use different ideas, creatively and innovatively (Abantena, 1995).

Based on the participants' views, it is clear that self-help groups in Rothe village are essential means for creating bargaining forces for people engaging in self-help agricultural projects to share ideas amongst themselves. They help each in terms of needs to strengthen village solidarity. Macia (2008: 1089) argues that "social groups are part of social life" in rural areas that stimulate coordination and cooperation, thus, ultimately benefit society as a whole. Participants indicate that forming a self-help group in Rothe village as participants highlighted is a way to influence government decisions about agricultural activities to improve their quality of life. Therefore, forming self-help groups can be viewed as one of working together to alleviate poverty in Rothe village. This stimulates links between the group members and RSDA, which provides training and agricultural resources from other government agencies. Although, participants indicated that they do not get enough support from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security to strengthen their self-help groups. The Nigerian experience offers an example that shows that government support can enhance self-help groups to improve rural livelihoods, as Benedict (2010) argues. Self-help groups receive projected resources support from both development agencies and the government to foster inter-personal development (Benedict, 2010). Hence, the Lesotho government needs to assist self-help groups

in improving group activities. These self-help groups in Rothe village support human development as they facilitate and spread innovation amongst villagers. They do this to promote social change, an important aspect of rural livelihoods. These groups are based on the local capacity for self-management directed at promoting individual and collective well-being.

The findings from this study show that teamwork through social groups in Rothe village has enhanced community solidarity and oneness to stand together to respond to the several blockages that might hinder their development interventions. These improved the existing social capital among participants for the effectiveness of groups to improve their livelihoods (Scoones, 2015: 90). Participants learnt to do things themselves, and they have realized that organizing themselves into groups to share their problems rest on long-term ability to simplify their current situations to reduce poverty, and shocks to strengthen their livelihoods (Kingau *et al.*, 2016). While still working in groups, there is still sufficient space for participants to exercise their choice and decisions for their projects, because they are always part of the processes of a group (Tamuno & Iron, 2012). Rotational leadership, which was implemented in Rothe village during these projects, is also part of empowering one another to learn how to lead and strengthen group solidarity and respect. Their socio-economic conditions have forced them to mobilize their resources into groups in order to find solutions to their problems. These views fit well within Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in that group members enhance their abilities to make their living in an economically and socially sustainable manner (Krantz, 2001). These findings also respond to objective (a) of this study, which was to understand self-help agricultural projects as alternative development strategies to alleviate poverty. All the study participants indicated that they had acquired skills from one another on how to manage their projects and to have control over development interventions designed to sustain their projects.

4.5.2. Loaning of Livestock and Share-Cropping

Another notable important strategy utilized in self-help agricultural project in the Rothe village is loaning assets and share-cropping. Most participants indicated that they engage in self-help agricultural projects as part of communal activities. These activities are undertaken to overcome dependency from the Lesotho government and to supplement villagers' income. Participants indicated that they loan other people assets such as village chickens, sheep, and goats. According to Thabiso, this is done through the *mafisa* system. Matsumoto (2014:20) explains *Mafisa* as a "patronage system of socio-economic relations in which rich cattle owners loan one or more head of cattle to poor man without cattle." This strategy gives other households' access to resources so that they can improve their lives. This allows those with

limited resources a chance to keep the cattle and have an opportunity to get their assets and nutrition. Mankutsuoa explained:

“...I was brewing traditional beer as means to meet daily household needs, my sister and neighbour lend two chickens she got from RSDA, for me to start rearing indigenous or village chickens. Because they do not require much in terms of money. They are easy to take care of because they get grass and maize but multiply quickly. Though I forgot how much we shared, I would tell I have about twenty chickens that give me eggs and quality meat because they are not like the ones from Chinese shops”.

These sentiments speak volumes about how participants in Rothe village regard attachment to assets for their living. Serrat (2008: 2) argues that livelihood assets are trade-off and choices to improve livelihoods. As such, loaning livestock is not only for planting and ownership. It is also used to strengthen participants' social relations in the village because of every member's shares from their produce. On the contrary, livestock loaning might be very exploitative for others. According to Scoones (2015), "livelihoods strategies may restrict other people from constructing their livelihoods because there are winners and losers because more privileged groups gaining at the expense of the poor." Some participants said that *"they dedicate much of their time and energies to ensure that animals are taken care of but share products unequally."* These views are in agreement with Sustainable Livelihoods Approach as it states that divisions and powerlessness can exist when products are shared unequally between the keeper and loaner. Therefore, this may deepen the condition of helplessness amongst the participants engaging in self-help in Rothe village, and it could lead to long-term livelihoods to others (Scoones, 2015).

All the participants consider share-cropping as a strategy to increase their household productivity. One of the participants, Kamohelo, said that through sharecropping, they could use their families labour together. This collaborative work involves families and friends, in which field labour (harvesting, weeding, and planting) are joined activities with friends and relatives when need arises. He also indicated that using share-cropping allows one to yield more produce from the fields cultivated. Given the problem of the high cost of agricultural tractors to plant many fields, some households are not in the position to afford as they still depend on assistance from RSDA. Kamohelo said that assistance from RSDA helps the poorest amongst participants to seek livelihood benefits of village development. Each household

contributes towards the weeding of the fields and uses their own families labour, and they are able to share yield. As Matlakala highlighted that:

"The fact that they used the seeds and contributed little money towards planting large fields which sometimes we are not able to do on our own even if I get resources from RSDA, working with other people motivates me more because we produce food that we share, and in most cases, it sustains us throughout these seasons. At the same time, I have my other projects like village chickens and piggery that give meat".

The use of labour within the family (in the form of children) goes beyond improving their productivity but also provides household members with the skills to enable them to take part in household activities. Makhokolotso provided interesting comments on share-cropping, she said that: *"one thing I like about seahlolo (share-cropping) is that even if you have land which for most of us here is not a problem to plant your field. We share food equally at the end of the day to make sure that every house puts food on the table, and more often, this has been how our children are socialised into family activities so that they become men and women in the future"*. Sustainable Livelihoods Approach argues that participants drawing on multiple livelihoods strategies tend to be more resilient and are better equipped to cope with threats than participants who are dependent on one source of income (Scoones, 2015). Overall, the lesson learnt from participants is that share-cropping is a means to reduce participants' exposure to economic shocks and stresses because they adapt to changing circumstances to increase their productivity. This links with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in that; livelihoods are sustainable when people organise them to create more opportunities instead of concentrating on improvement. Sharecropping gives other vulnerable members of the village access to means of livelihoods (Chambers & Conway, 1992:12; Leo & Haan 2012:346).

Sharecropping is the major strategy used by the participants in Rothe village to improve their livelihoods. This self-help strategy provides participants with shared responsibilities as participants indicated they work with their extended family that constitute support, which builds a strong sense of unity amongst participants. It facilitates an opportunity for family members to work together and engage in family affairs. Sustainable Livelihood Approach argues that other participants gain at the expense of others to construct their livelihood because self-help agricultural projects are in favour of more privileged participants than those in real needs; hence livelihoods can never be sustainable (Sarkar & Sinha, 2015). This seems not to be the case for participants engaging in self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village because

they are able to meet basic needs. The works of Scoones (2015) support this view that assets loaning and share-cropping in Rothe village constitute networks of social relations and ways for managing scarce resources to influence sustainable gains. This does not stop participants from organizing and gained domestic assets in the form of chickens and sheep. More importantly, this argument makes sense because all participants said they gain skills they would not achieve if they were operating individually, thus, share problems which could have been difficult if they work alone to improve their lives (Mazibuko, 2017). This could be viewed as a form of social capital that participants considered to bring people together to achieve their livelihoods (UNDP, 2017: 45; Pasa, 2017). Both sharecropping and livestock loaning enable participants to put together their resources, labour, and alongside their little income, they get to create bigger self-help activities from which they produce or yield more products. As such, the basic idea is that self-help group in Rothe village does not take over their existing projects but rather are alternative strategies used participants to improve their livelihoods and alleviate poverty.

4.6. Contributions of Self-help Agricultural Activities in the Attainment of Quality Livelihoods

As shown that this study aimed to examine whether self-help agricultural projects as development interventions improve the lives of the Rothe villagers. The objectives of this study were to understand self-help agricultural projects as alternative development strategies to alleviate poverty and to document lessons from engaging in self-help agricultural projects in Rothe rural communities. In this context, participants provided insights on how they have benefited from self-help agricultural projects as part of sustainable livelihood. Most participants felt that self-help agricultural projects had improved their lives economically and socially. They had little or no prior work experience and faced challenges of self-employment the absence or lack of knowledge. In exploring the kind of activities that participants undertake, it was important to understand how self-help agricultural projects have contributed to their quality of life, which is an important outcome for human development. The benefits include increased skills and knowledge acquisition, empowerment, access, and linkage to the local institution such as markets and assets ownership and accumulation. As described by Chambers and Conway (1992), and Serrat (2008: 15), development interventions are only sustainable when people are able to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses to improve the quality of lives of beneficiaries. Therefore, putting people at the centre of development means people are the ones who control all other resources.

4.6.1. Improved Skills and Knowledge of Projects Beneficiaries

Capacity building is an important element for any development intervention to make a positive impact to people undertaking development activities. This promotes long-term development for people to take control development even if the assistance they get stops (Lele, 1975; Sigh, 2005). Participants indicated that before engaging in self-help agricultural projects, they had low levels of skills. Most of them highlighted that they were produced solely for subsistence and nothing else. Both Matsie and Lisema-study participants pointed out that they only took advantage of assistance from RDSA without realizing that they would gain more for their activities. Thabiso, Matlakala, and Lebohang-study participants, also felt that the interventions from RSDA were a helping hand for them to get access to the agricultural resources. However, they indicated that with the training they got from RDSA, their skills have improved. According to Motlatsi, a Field Officer, workshops are *“platforms in which small-holders farmers and people engaging in self-help agricultural projects are given hands-on training about their projects, the competitive edge is that participants learn through experience.”* Without skills, participants could not have enhanced their earning and capacity. Karabelo, another Field Officer, said that *“the purpose of training participants is to bridge the gap between the knowledge participants have and give them advance skills that could make them think because subsistence households usually lack formal education.”* This is similar to the study conducted by Kingau *et al.* (2016) in Kenya, where its findings show that self-help agricultural projects build people’s capabilities to select the projects that benefit not individual but also the broader community. All the participants acknowledged that with the skills they have acquired, they used them to diversify or venture into other projects and improve their lives. This resonates well with the Sustainable Livelihood Approach in those participants engaged in self-help agricultural projects, gained skills and knowledge to meet their social needs to reduce exposure to external shocks (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003).

During the interviews, all participants revealed that they engage in more than one project. Almost all participants are engaged in more than three projects funded by RSDA. When asked about how they ended up having more than one project, participants indicated that they saw the opportunity that these activities are related to each other. For example, Mankutsuoa highlighted that *“She used pig manure to increase soil fertility which has increase crop quality because she does not have to buy fertilizer for her plots even now”*. As some participants highlighted that *“RSDA training gives her the ability to think out the box because she is now aware of harvesting rose-hip and generating more income for her children.”* Tamuno and Iron (2015:

58) assert that self-help agricultural projects equip people with skills that increase their competence and build confidence to manage local affairs and use resources. This, according to Sustainable Livelihoods Approach promotes the long-term development because skills and knowledge acquired enable participants to explore other new opportunities in situations where existing ones disappear to expand livelihoods (Chamber & Conway, 1992). This means with skills acquired from self-help agricultural projects, participants additionally utilize their skills to grab opportunities about local resources.

The above findings point to the given reality of poverty in Rothe village, and participants were able to gain skills and knowledge that give them more opportunities to use the resources that they were not aware that would be important in their lives. The fact that they do things themselves they become familiar with their activities. This is supported by Prinscilla (2014: 24) in that the “end product of development interventions is to allow people to take advantage of the resources which could be lying dormant, thus, making people suffer from ignorance and poverty.” This is related to Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in that local and indigenous knowledge that poor rural people possess and accumulate supplement to their prevailing conditions as means of a living to sustain their livelihoods, and enhance the quality of lives (Tao & Wall, 2009). It is clear that even though some participants initially felt that self-help agricultural projects are a helping hand from RSDA, their skills and knowledge have been enhanced through self-help agricultural interventions. They are likely to secure more stable food consumption and also generate income to prepare for future households' food security. Participants were able to acquire skills and knowledge that allowed them to sustain their household survival even when RSDA assistance ceases. By engaging participants' in self-help agricultural activities has strengthened their efforts to accumulate knowledge for the beneficiary to improving their lives (UNDP, 2017: 5).

4.6.2. Human Empowerment

The literature reviewed in chapter two shows that human empowerment takes place through learning, participation, and presenting people with opportunities to creatively solve their conditions because participants are part of the learning process (Davids & Theron 2014:107). The study participants indicated that through self-help agricultural projects, they now have skills and knowledge that enable them to expand their activities. All the participants highlighted that self-help agricultural projects are their means of self-employment. Before engaging in self-help projects, they had low levels of income. Previously, participants were not able to provide adequate food and pay school fees for their children. This led their children to go to school on

an empty stomach. Children were unable to complete primary school. This situation led to high children drop-out at school because the parents were not able to afford to pay educational necessities for their children. Karabo had this to say: *"...life was tough before joining self-help projects I was not able to provide enough food for the family. Sometimes my children had to go to school without food. Matlakala further adds that "because I have never been employed in any formal work in my life, every time my grand-children had to drop out of school because of educational necessities like school uniform, and fees even if they were attending free primary education. Teachers would always want some money, which I do not even know. Now that I have projects, I can sell cabbage to people and make money for their education needs".*

This study revealed that after engaging in self-help agricultural projects, participants can provide for the children better education now. Participants can produce more foods that would last for more seasons, and they can sell the surplus to generate more income to supplement their little income. According to Sustainable Livelihood Approach, it is important to empower poor people so that they can have the capacity to affect their immediate environment and promote social change (Scoones, 2009; Small, 2008). This demonstrate an improved quality of life because some participants did not have skills that could allow them to improve their livelihoods. The participant's well-being has improved, and they provide their children with education and adequate food supply.

All the participants value the efforts of RSDA and engaging in self-help agricultural projects has improved their social status. Other participants such as Lisema, Mokholotso, and Thabiso said that they are motivated by their desire to produce more and to sell for the district market. As a result, money earned is used mainly to pay school fees and buy children's uniforms. Similar findings of the study done by Siddique and Anil (2013) in India show that self-help projects had positively impacted the children's attendance and improved health care. Regarding Rothe village, skills and knowledge have strengthened participants' confidence to take development activities that they have. This creates sustainable livelihoods not only for participants to provide for their households with minimum efforts and stimulates an enhanced family standard of living, as Meyer (2000) notes. Participants such as Lebohang and Matlakala indicated that skills and knowledge they have acquire has made perform their activities better. The process of taking full control of projects is generally viewed as a way that exposes them to the knowledge that allows them to make decisions that best reflect their activities, while at the same time, they learn more about other opportunities to increase their activities. Lebohang had this to say:

“...these projects keep me busy and productive throughout the year. Since my husband died, I was able to provide for my children’s education, and sometimes they get nutritious food. Though some of the projects I do, such as crop production, come once, with the skills I have acquired, I know which projects are most appropriate for summer and winter seasons given changes in climate we are experiencing now. I can produce regardless of the bad weather and life goes on”.

The above views show that participants have been living in conditions of poverty dominated by a lack of skills and knowledge to improve their households’ conditions. Their low levels of income have not only affected their food consumption, but also the education of their children. The advantage of empowering people has been put forward by Sustainable Livelihoods Approach as it states that self-help agricultural projects are holistic development interventions that address not only individual poverty, also contributes towards sustainability, which positively affect other members of household livelihoods (Chambers & Conway, 1992). As a result, Abantane (1997) argues that empowerment is building people the capacity to aspire to succeed. For example, in Rothe village with new skills and techniques participants gained, they can realise the future of their children, which is essential not only for the individual household but to the entire village (Lephoto, 2011). Also, this increases women's self-image and dignity, particularly for women, because they see themselves as equal partners who can provide for their children (Olayemi & Nirmal, 2016). Currently engaging in self-help projects give participants the ability to be involved in multiple self-help agricultural projects. Various self-help agricultural projects have the potential to reduce hunger and uplift other members of the village out of poverty. The assistance they get from RSDA in the form of training allows them to gain their dignity so that they voluntarily contribute in their activities to reach their destiny, and maintain livelihoods. Generally, RSDA training is organized to improve their skills and exiting knowledge to achieve developmental goals. This is because Field Officers train them about vocational skills to uplifting socio-economic status. The training helps participants to develop skills for self-employment and acts as an instrument for empowerment to the best of self-help projects because they were able to expand from one project to a variety of project activities.

4.6.3. Exposure to Domestic Market

In a society where subsistence agriculture has been the source of livelihoods for decades, productivity is always important for the villagers' survival. Subsistence agricultural cannot be divorced from the local market, as it exposes people to the local economy. According to

Olayemi and Nirmal (2016: 71), subsistence agriculture strengthens the satisfaction of basic needs because the provision of income provides the means to satisfy people's basic needs, while individual satisfaction increases productivity. Participants in the Rothe village are not an exception.

The participants interviewed indicated that one of the significant contributions of engaging in self-help is to organize themselves, and participate in agricultural exhibitions and fairs at the constituency level. The RSDA Field Officers explained that their role is to explore the market for people engaging in self-help agriculture projects where people could display their products for potential buyers. Self-help exhibitions and fairs aim to create awareness and increase the knowledge of people about various products they produce and expose them to local markets. Participants said that exhibitions are important to them. This poverty reduction strategy used by RSDA within Rothe village works in line with what Lekoko (2002) argues as collective rural development interventions to promote social capital. This means their livelihoods could only be sustainable when participants utilize their social networks to respond to what they need for their development. This also ties in with the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in that social capital gives people opportunities to draw their livelihoods ability and trust to work together and expand their access to more great local institutions (Macia, 2008). Most of the participants said they get to interact with other people from communities engaging in similar activities, and they get new knowledge from one another. Although participants complain about walking distances to get to the exhibition places, most exhibitions are held in *Morija* Exhibition Centre. This requires participants to hire transport that, in most cases, is very expensive. However, they felt they are presented with an opportunity because if they do not go, they might miss out on the bigger market for their produce as it a bigger exposure for their products. They all argue that exhibitions give them a platform to display and sell products such as beans, cabbage, and spinach. In order to address poverty, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach argues that participants use the indigenous knowledge they possess, which is a backbone for their values to integrate into their livelihoods (Scoones, 2009). As a result, they are exposed to outsiders who have different attributes. This is important for human development because the market stimulates cross-fertilization of diverse ideas amongst the member of the community. Thus, these are potential sources of creativity and innovation amongst participants.

The fact that participants attend these exhibitions to display their work motivates them because they compete with other people and learn how to improve and sustain projects, and at the same time, people buy their products. Chambers and Conway (1992) argues that competing for

resources allows the sellers to maximize their share of livelihoods to generate more value of wealth. This gives participants the privilege to select and diversify their activities (Scoones, 2015).

However, livelihoods may not be sustainable for other participants because exhibitions and fairs have a potential to create conflicts when competing for few opportunities, and scarce resources, but their livelihoods have improved and that the success of participants' livelihoods to come at the expense other (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018:6; Chambers & Conway, 1992:31). Some participants in Rothe village, specifically Lebohang and Matlakala, see self-help exhibitions and fairs as significant aspects for social interaction for them to produce maximum yield because they get diffused with ideas that are important for their development. These also pave ways for them to sell their products and generate income for their households. These self-help exhibitions and fair have increased their capacity in their weakest areas and optimally utilized them as opportunities to improve their self-help activities. According to participants such as Lisema, Mankutsuoa, and Thabiso, exhibitions, and fairs help them combine and use their strengths to enable them to work on ways of improving their activities. These exhibitions are platform to raise awareness and increases the status of participants, thus, opportunities to increase the sustainability of participants' projects.

4.6.4. Assets Accumulation and Ownership

The link between possessing household assets and means of living in rural areas is important for sustainable livelihoods and quality of life. Other participants, such as Mankutsuoa, Matlakala, and Lisema, said that engaging in self-help agricultural projects helped them to accumulate more assets in the form of livestock. The most common assets are livestock such as goats or sheep, cattles, and pigs, though they differ from participants to participants. These assets add value to their self-help agricultural activities and enhance the quality of life. Assets are catalytic in helping households to enhance human capital by providing access to the food, and good health, labour for self-help agricultural activities, and support the household in improving productivity (FAO, 2005). Conway *et al.* (2002), and Meyer (2000: 42) note, "...livelihoods depend on one's assets and capabilities that allow people to use coping strategies to protect social reproduction and enable recovery". Participants indicated that for them, livestock is an integral part of their lives and subsistence farming. They acknowledged that their lives have changed because they have more sheeps, goats, pigs, and village chickens, that they use as a source of generating income for their activities and to support their basic family needs. Members of self-help groups in Rothe village receive hands-on training monthly from

RSDA on rearing livestock. With this knowledge, they can take care of the sheep and goats, pigs, and village poultry because they multiply quickly. They underwent this hands-on-training because they wanted to accumulate more livestock to increase wealth and increase their well-being. Though, livestock allows them to bring food for their children, and they make their lives easy and more sustainable. The livestock owned is considered as informal cash-in-hand and the means of food security for the household in times of low crop production. This view is in line with Sustainable Livelihood Approach as it states that assets accumulation helps to subsidise the cost of livelihood activities participants are capable of using their assets to improve the quality of their lives (Macia, 2008; Krantz, 2001).

According to FAO (2005), participants' livelihoods are built through owning livestock. In general, all the participants articulate that the more livestock they have, the high and more long-lasting their level of food security and improved livelihoods. This is because participants felt they are able to convert their livestock into cash whenever families are in need. Accumulating assets such as pigs, goats, and pigs provide extra cash income that serves to diversify their income and make their lives sustainable. Chambers and Conway (1992) further suggest that assets are not resources that participants use in building livelihoods, but they give participants the capability to and act on improving their livelihoods. If crop production fails, they have a basis and secure income to provide their basic household needs. In terms of Sustainable Livelihood Approach, accumulating assets is necessary to reduce poverty because participants could support their activities that may alternatively develop their capacity to produce, hence, reducing participants' exposure to risky practices (Conway *et al.*, 2002; Krantz, 2001:4). Based on these findings, all the participants said that owning livestock prepares them for any time to satisfy planned expenditures such as children's school fees, bridewealth "*lobola*" or unplanned expenses such as illness and death of family members. These views support UNDP (2017:2) views that livelihoods are sustainable only people can recover from shocks and stresses to maintain and enhance household capacities. Self-help agricultural projects have increased participants' abilities to accumulate assets that some household has never had before. Therefore, engaging in self-help agricultural projects may not only be for developing their lives, but it gives them opportunities through wider self-empowerment to accumulate physical assets to enhance their livelihoods.

4.7. Challenges Encountered in Self-help Agricultural Projects in Rothe Village

There are notable challenges faced by the participants engaging in self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village. The challenges act as a barrier for the participants to achieve long-

term livelihoods and the quality of their lives. Most of the participants indicated that despite the efforts of RSDA in providing the helping hand to improve their lives, their journey had been the difficult one. Participants try hard to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty, but they tend to encounter challenges such as that they restrict them to remain in subsistence agriculture.

4.7.1. Lack of Government Support

Lack of government support is one of the major challenges encountered by almost all participants. The Lesotho government does not seem interested in helping, and trying to take economic advantage of self-help agricultural projects as a way to assist participants in improving their livelihood through RSDA “free help” to develop human beings (Aerni Flessner, 2017; Ralebese, 2011; Rants’o, 2015). The study participants - Mankutsuoa, Matlakala, Lisema, Thabiso, and Lebohang said that it is hard to cultivate large fields, those who have large plots of land and practice share-cropping to earn better yields more than those who did not because they plant on small plots. Hence, participants produce small quantities and poor quality. This prohibits them from producing more surplus that could be sold in the commercial market to generate more income to invest. Serrat (2008) argues livelihood strategies are not only influenced by access to assets, but the institutional structure and processes impact them. The literature reviewed on chapter two shows that in rural India, self-help agricultural projects receive government support, and have grown steadily in improving financial capital available to people (Sangtam & Yandem. 2017). Government support is important for participants engaging in self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village because it can contribute to the sustainability of their projects that already add value to the participants' lives. It can also allow participants to invest financial assets and physical efforts directly to self-help agricultural activities to sustain their livelihoods (Scoones, 2015). This means that without the resource, it becomes difficult for the participants to stand on their own once the assistance from RSDA is withdrawn, as Benedict (2010) asserts. These development interventions supplement people-driven rural development rather than replacing government efforts to develop rural communities. The findings from Motlatsi and Karabo, Field Officers that, “*RSDA provides limited support as it depends on the international donors.*” For example, Mankutsuoa was able to expand her activities into poultry farming as a way to take advantage of the demand for eggs from local schools. The other participants said that they are unable to buy quality seeds and that they often have to use the old seeds due to lack of capital. This problem is caused by the fact that most agricultural projects from RSDA are revolving around villages. This significantly

affects their quantity and quality yield. Kamohelo stated that. *"I have to use the same seed from RSDA more than five times, and that affects the quality of the harvest."* As Petersen and Pedersen (2010:8) observed, livelihood resources require not only an initial investment but also an ever-lasting commitment of financial and human resources to meet operations and maintain the cost of project activities. Therefore, the quality of seeds is important in order to help participants increase output and maximize income. Lack of government support means a decrease in their possibility to obtain long-term livelihoods (Petersen & Pedersen, 2010; Scoones, 2009).

Relying on solely from RSDA is unsustainable because it also receives funding from donors. The importance of government support in this regard is to subsidize participants to impact upon their sustainable livelihoods because participants may not be able to do without the support of the Lesotho government as its primary duty to improve rural livelihoods (Constitution of Lesotho, 1993:42). The findings of the study conducted by Mwai (1993) in Kenya show that self-help was incorporated as part of the developing rural villages to meet their felt needs and to construct people's livelihoods. Self-help agricultural projects were supported by the Kenyan government to capacitate rural people with skills to use their local resources. Government support is required to help participants to enhance existing assets and capabilities in the face of shocks and stresses, thus, and enable them to be self-reliant.

The participants indicate that they produce agricultural commodities to generate income and consumption, and sell the surplus to generate income or even exchange among different households. All this cash is reinvested back in self-help activities as resources required for their projects. However, participants do not have the opportunity to save money because cash earned is not sufficient for what is required for high output cultivation. This is in agreement with Conway *et al.* (2002:23), as often household financial flow is overlooked by development interventions that are important for household survival. On the other hand, this conflict with Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, which notes that external support must recognize the dynamic nature of people's situations and develop long-term commitment (Scoones, 2015). Hence, poor people engaged in self-help agricultural projects need support for a long-term period. For example, some participants said they depended on the income from their products; they need external support from the government because benefits are often accrued seasonally (Scoones, 2009). Additionally, regardless of the skills and knowledge participants have, they cannot venture into other commercial agriculture as a business because they do not have enough support that could take them to venture into other activities to boost their projects

(Conway *et al.*, 2002). Participants explained that the money they generate from selling their surplus is little that it does not allow them to expand from subsistence into commercial agriculture as a way to break further poverty. Therefore, they are stuck in the activities of minimal return to invest in subsistence agriculture that could give them more opportunities to venture into commercial agriculture. This is similar to Sandaram's (2012:13) findings in the study done in rural India, which revealed that most self-help agricultural activities in rural India are mainly affected consumption and broaden income sources rather than utilization of the new sources of the livelihoods for the self-help intervention.

4.7.2. Male Dominance in Self-Help Agricultural Activities

Participants indicated that self-help interventions give them opportunities to expand their livelihoods than others. As Matlakala said that *"though she benefitted from these projects, she still believes projects are unfair in that most women cannot cultivate fields. Because she is restricted by her physical power, men have more advantages than women because men undertake even small projects that they can do"*. Women indicated that they are unable to engage in self-help agricultural projects that require them more physical power, such as cultivating fields that are located in remote areas. Makhokolotso explained that *"she cannot cultivate big field because it requires more money from her, so she considers plating crops at her backyard and rear pigs and chickens."* Women participants indicated that they prefer projects such as piggery, village poultry, and cultivating small plots in their backyards. According to them, these projects are dominated by men because they can engage in small projects that could be done by women. This response highlights the complexity of the unequal distribution of development benefits among the participants who engage in self-help agricultural activities between men and women. The fact that they are all engaged in self-help agricultural projects does not equal work for all of them. The study conducted by Kaur and Bajwa (2016:22) in India the findings indicated that, because women have social obligations of taking care of households, they cannot migrate for wage employment, so they engage in self-help agricultural activities such as piggery, rear village poultry, and handcraft to support their household survival. Although women in Rothe village engage in self-help activities, if they are unable to undertake projects such as maize and beans cultivating because they require much physical power, this means there is an unequal distribution of the development benefits which favour men than women; hence women felt marginalized. Thus, this produces intra-household inequalities in economic control, interests, and opportunities, that often have gender as a basis that is not given sufficient attention as (Bhatasara *et al.*, 2018; Scoones, 2009) note. Small

(2008:31) argues that "more privilege people are given more opportunities to diversify their products, and which acts as a buffer to fewer privileges."

In order to improve equity and development for all, self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village could be appropriate for women to give them more capacities to ensure a more equitable redistribution of social power and resources. Sustainable Livelihoods Approach argues that livelihoods are sustainable when all people have equal access to the development resources to maintain, empower, and achieve long-lasting improvements. Equitable access to resources is needed to sustain women projects by reserving opportunities for women only self-help agricultural projects, and this will empower both men and women participants in Rothe village in the economic activity.

4.8. Conclusion

The chapter presented and discussed key findings gained from interviews held with participants and gave interpretations of data collected in line with the aim and objectives of the study, SLA, and reviewed literature. Based on these research findings, this study concludes that the self-help agricultural projects are alternative development interventions that could develop people to get out of poverty in all forms. These development interventions complement already existing rural practices for people to become more independent in the long run. Secondly, they are the means that give poor people access to a variety of resources to improve their lives and livelihoods. Thus, they have the potential to empower and sustain poor people living conditions in Rothe village. At the same time, the benefit is not only to make them approve the development interventions to maximize potential of interventions and to instil a sense of ownership and commitment to take control of their activities to sustain their livelihoods working in partnership with RDSA.

These development interventions provided participants with opportunities to use their locally available resources, and avenues without necessary dismantling their activities to strengthen and expose the participants to a variety of skills and knowledge, and livelihoods assets to expand their existing activities. RSDA seeks to maximize participants' livelihoods. Even though, there are still challenges that participants faced, which are beyond RSDA but are caused by the social relations, people interact in particular women, in engaging in self-help activities because participants seek to maximize their livelihoods. Self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village have exposed participants to different formations of social capitals that provided a range of coping strategies that people could not have been part of, and some of

these livelihood strategies have developed and worked for them, so, that they do not undermine their existing solutions. Participants are exposed to the local markets that were important for them to interact and to enable them to be to integrate into their local development. This presents valuable insight into this study regarding self-help agricultural projects in the rural Rothe village as different livelihood strategies emerged to heightened not only their subsistence agricultural ability also offer them to utilize local opportunities to generate income to improve their lives.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

The increasing levels of poverty in rural areas in Lesotho force people to migrate from rural to urban areas in search of alternative means of livelihoods. Amongst others, the Rothe community is faced with high levels of poverty, food insecurity, limited job opportunities, malnutrition, and increased HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (Molomo, 2010:2; Welling, 1986: 222). Both the Lesotho government and development agencies have adopted self-help agricultural projects as an alternative development strategy to improve the livelihoods of rural communities (Molomo, 2010: 2; Welling, 1986). The overall aim of this study was to understand whether self-help agricultural projects can be sustainable development interventions to improve the quality lives of the Rothe Villagers. This study was contextualized within a broader theoretical framework of Sustainable Livelihoods Approach as the lens to gain a clear understanding of how self-help agriculture projects can improve the quality of the lives and sustainable livelihoods in the area. This study utilized Rothe village a case study to explore how self-help agricultural projects could improve the lives of rural areas because this study feeds into implicit and explicit views of dominant rural livelihoods (Baxter & Jack, 2008: 549; Creswell, 2009; Flick, 2000). Sustainable Livelihoods Approach was a more flexible analytical tool which facilitates the analysis of the livelihoods to both household and individual levels. In conceptualizing development, I discussed different types of development and the study position concerning how self-help agricultural projects fit well within broader approaches for developing rural areas. The literature reviewed highlight findings on the effect of self-help agricultural projects in rural areas. In discussing self-help agricultural projects, I used three case studies, such as India, Kenya, and Nigeria. The primary purpose was to draw empirical evidence from these case studies because they have successfully improved the quality of lives of poor rural areas through self-help agricultural projects. I then traced, and discussed how self-help projects in Lesotho have been viewed and implemented, and how they have failed to address the poverty in rural Lesotho. The empirical study was designed qualitatively. The study was philosophical guided by the interpretive research paradigm. I employed an explorative case study strategy supplemented by purposive and snowball sampling methods to select and collect data on Rothe villagers engaged in self-help agricultural projects. Two Field Officers RSDA were purposively selected and interviewed following the semi-structured interview technique.

5.1.2. Key Summary of Findings

After exploring personal views of participants, this study observed that among Rothe villagers, many participants initially lacked access to resources, skills, and knowledge to construct their lives. These were seen as the main impediments that hinder their progress from achieving their sustainable livelihoods. In the absence of livelihood resources, they were unable to construct meaningful livelihoods. The study revealed that most self-help agricultural projects were a result of lack of adequate government-funded projects to meet participants' basic needs. As a result, people are motivated by their aspiration to overcome dependency from the government and to supplement households' income. The study revealed that most of the participants are engaged in a variety of self-help agricultural projects. These projects included indigenous (village) poultry, piggery, vegetable gardens, and maize, beans and sorghum cultivation, and rearing animals such as sheep and goats. These projects provide a constant supply of food security and income-generation for improved well-being. Regarding household and participants, sources of self-employment people were able to diversity for single projects by multiplying their projects to complement key self-help activities. Instead of waiting endlessly for government assistance, participants have access to livelihood resources that allow them to produce food for consumption and improve their livelihoods.

As much as participants produce for consumption more food throughout the year, the surplus is sold to generate income to meet other household needs as well as re-invest income to expand project activities to sustain livelihoods. Therefore, self-help agricultural projects are effective interventions to support quality rural livelihoods and to increase access to the resources of poor rural people and households, which ultimately minimize risks of relying on a single source of livelihood activity. While this may be the case, these activities engaged in self-help agricultural projects are reported to respond to the local needs. They are cheap as they require only people to use their labour power to improve their lives with maximum return on peoples' livelihoods. It is without a doubt that self-help agricultural projects can be alternative development interventions to reduce poverty in Rothe village on a sustainable basis. Self-help agriculture offers people a variety of opportunities by using agricultural activities to improve and promote long-term livelihood strategies that are important for human development. In these projects, people are organized to solve their common problems through mutual help regardless of the challenges imposed on them by the political economy, and they can achieve sustainable development.

For Rothe village, when looking at the role of stakeholders projects, beneficiaries have been working together with the RSDA official to strengthen their working partnership with RSDA. They get more support because they have full control over development interventions in which participants get to choose the kind of self-help projects activities they want to engage. These projects are accepted as increasing their sense of ownership, commitment, and personal growth have eventually led to the sustainability of project activities. Because participants themselves take the lead in project activities working in partnership with RSDA to plan and implement projects activities that best reflect and address their basic needs. This also gives participants self-satisfaction to expand their project activities as a way to strengthen their sources of livelihoods. They are part of the development interventions to initiate than passive recipients of the development interventions from RSDA. It has been illustrated by participants in Rothe village that being part of the project's activities participants have been exposed to new ideas that gave them opportunities to explore locally available resources at disposal that they are not aware could be beneficial for their substantial livelihoods. This points to the fact that they gained more skills and knowledge from doing-things for themselves for them to likely to secure sustainable livelihoods.

Looking at self-help agricultural strategies participants used to construct livelihoods, the emergence of self-help agricultural projects has been essential to capacitate Rothe villagers to expand their livelihood strategies. Project beneficiaries were able to form self-help groups to improve their livelihoods. The importance of groups allows people to share common ideas, while participants undertake these projects independently. The groups bring together participants because they share similar socio-economic conditions to increase productivity. Sustainable Livelihood Approach argues that livelihood is only viable when social capital is formed to improve livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 2009). What has been established is that creating self-help groups has enhanced village solidarity and oneness to stand together to respond to the several livelihoods blockages that might hinder their long-term development. By working in groups, there is still sufficient space for participants to exercise their choice and decisions for their projects activities, because they are part of the processes of groups that give them access to social structures that enable systematic social change. The self-help groups resulted in other villagers forming their self-help agricultural groups, which are essential to human development and collaborative efforts.

From this study, it has been illustrated that there are other self-help agricultural strategies that people used in Rothe village further to maximize their livelihoods than self-help groups. These

include assets loaning and sharecropping to supplement their self-help projects activities. Although these self-help agricultural strategies are considered exploitative by other participants, they offer substantial social capital to other participants who lack access to livelihood resources and increase their collective productivity. More importantly, participants gained skills and knowledge that they could not achieve if they operate individually. In this regard, self-help agricultural projects have offered participants a variety of livelihood strategies to pool resources together for their individual and household benefits. These strategies do not take over the existing social arrangements but add value to current practices to Rothe villagers. Participants can access livelihood assets such as goats, chickens, and sheep that are important for their livelihoods through the *mafisa* system. It has been revealed in this study that assets are an integral part of people living in rural Rothe since they could be converted into cash to meet basic household needs and unplanned expenditures to respond to both economic shocks and stresses that the households could face with. It has been noted from this study findings that many participants were able to improve children's education and the ability to provide their children with an adequate supply of food. This means for other self-help agricultural projects contributed not only to an individual's participation also adds value to children's better education as it is crucial to achieving sustainable livelihoods.

Exposure to local markets was deemed necessary to construct the sustainable livelihoods for many participants engaged in self-help agricultural projects as it offered them diverse ideas that are important for the human development because it stimulated cross-fertilization of diverse ideas among participants. The exposure to the domestic market was seen as strengthening the social capital of livelihoods amongst the participants and provides an opportunity for creativity and innovation needed for long-term livelihoods.

Participants found it hard to expand their projects into entrepreneurial activities. Despite the skills, knowledge, and assets they have, they are still stuck in the activities of minimal returns (i.e., produce mainly for consumption) to invest in subsistence agriculture that could give them more opportunities to venture into commercial agriculture. Without resources and financial support, villagers cannot survive independently.

The findings also show that men dominate most self-help agricultural projects. Therefore, these projects provide unequal distribution of development benefits that favour men than women because men can engage in projects such as piggery, rearing village chickens, and field

cultivation. Also, for women, field cultivation requires more physical power, hence the unequal distribution of development benefits between men and women.

This study concludes that self-help agricultural projects complement indigenous activities that contribute and improve the quality of lives, and allow people to use available resources and assets to meet their sustainable livelihoods, and build substantial social capital. Though they still need support from the government because poor rural Rothe villagers have revealed that they cannot create sustainable livelihoods without collaborative support from both RDSA and government.

5.2. Recommendations

- Self-help agricultural projects in Rothe villagers have the potential to improve the quality of the lives of people. To improve the sustainability of their livelihoods, the government should invest many resources to help to strengthen people's ability and capacity because these projects have proved that they have the potential to provide people with various opportunities such as self-employment and the means to generate income. This requires both RSDA and government commitment to support self-help agricultural interventions in rural areas to strengthen human development as this could be the critical step to heightened people's commitments and increase personal growth to reduce extreme poverty levels.
- Also, the Lesotho government has a role in developing strategies that self-help agricultural projects spread throughout rural areas to capacity other areas with the means to improve their livelihoods.
- As a policy recommendation, there is a need for the Lesotho government to incorporate self-help agricultural projects into national strategic plans. These projects do not only address food security and capacitate people with long-term mechanisms to alleviate poverty. However, they also complement macro-economic conditions by reducing rural unemployment and increased household incomes.
- I would recommend the area for future research that looks into the relevance of self-help agricultural projects that seek to empower women to promote the equitable development of the Rothe community. It is crucial to consider self-help agricultural projects beyond both economic and human development but also how they significantly affect marginalized segments of people in rural areas.

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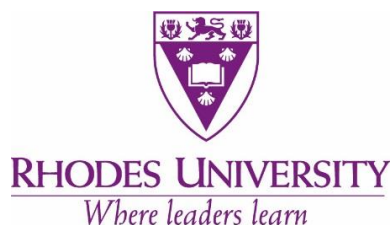
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Schedule



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

My name is Bokang Phiri-**18P9360**, I am student pursuing Master's Degree in Development Studies at Rhodes University in the Department of Sociology. I am conducting a research study entitled "*An Analysis of the Impact of Self-Help Agricultural Projects in Rothe, Village Lesotho*". The purpose of this study is to understand how self-help agricultural projects have improved the lives of the poor rural communities in Lesotho to ascertain whether agricultural projects are alternative development interventions to improve conditions, and livelihoods of Rothe villagers.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

Understanding of Rural Development

1. According to your knowledge, what is your understanding of the word "development"?
2. Why do you think development is important for rural communities?

Understanding of Self-Help Projects

3. According to you, what is your understanding of self-help interventions?
4. What are the main activities undertaken through self-help interventions?

Purpose and motivation for engaging in Self-Help Agricultural Projects

5. Why did you decide to engage in Self-Help Agricultural Project?
6. What kind of self-help agricultural activity are you engaging in?
7. What motivated you to be part of this project?
8. Were you working before you got involved in this self-help agricultural activity? If yes what kind of employment?

Sustainability, Partnership and Social Learning

9. How long have you been engaging in this project?
10. Do you belong to any self-help group? If yes, are there benefits derived from such groups?
11. What kind of people do you work with in self-help groups? Why?
12. Do you prefer working alone in groups or alone? Please explain why?
13. What have learnt from those self-help groups?

Participating in Self-Help Agriculture and Livelihoods

14. What is your understanding of the participating in self-help projects?
15. How are you involved in the day-to-day running of the project?
16. Do you get any benefits for participating in this self-help project? If yes what kind of benefits or if no why?
17. Do you know about RSDA?
18. What is your understanding of RSDA and what they are currently doing?
19. What has been the role of RSDA coordination and funding the self-help agricultural projects in Rothe village in attaining sustainable development?

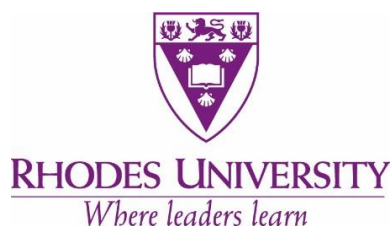
Contributions of Self-Help Interventions and Quality of Lives

20. Do you think self-help agricultural projects improve the lives of other community members? If no why, or yes how?
21. What are other best practices other community members have learnt from?
22. How is your relations with other people engage in self-help agricultural projects?
23. How do you contribute in the self-help project?

Improvements of Self-Help Agricultural Projects and Sustainable Livelihoods

24. According to you, what are means of living in rural communities? Why?
25. What lessons as an individual have you learnt from engaging in self-help agricultural activities?
26. Are there any challenges you face in engaging in self-help projects?
27. How do you solve challenges faced as beneficiaries of these projects?
28. In your opinion, how can this projects be improved to achieve sustained development?
29. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Appendix B: Interview Schedule



INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

My name is Bokang Phiri -18P9360, I am student pursuing Master's Degree in Development Studies at Rhodes University in the Department of Sociology. I am conducting a research study entitled "*An Analysis of the Impact of Self-Help Agricultural Projects in Rothe Village, Lesotho*". The purpose of this study is to understand how self-help agricultural projects have improved the lives of the poor rural communities in Lesotho to ascertain whether agricultural projects are alternative development interventions to improve conditions, and livelihoods of Rothe villagers.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FIELD OFFICERS OF THE RURAL SELF-HELP DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (RSDA)

History and purpose of Self-Help Agriculture Projects

1. Could you please briefly provide the background of the RSDA projects in Lesotho
2. What was main reason for establishing Self-Help Projects in Rothe rural areas?
3. Could you please explain different self-help agricultural projects offered by RSDA to assist rural people and communities?

Implementations of Self-Help Agricultural Projects

4. Who initiated different self- help agricultural projects in Rothe rural areas?
5. Could you please explain how the Rothe households are involved in the self-help agricultural projects?
6. What are the kind of resources does RSDA use to support self-help agricultural projects in Rothe community?

Self- Help Agricultural Projects and quality livelihoods

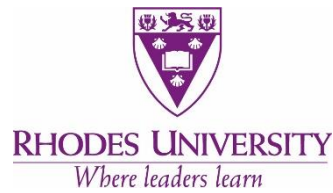
7. Has the self- help agricultural activities undertaken made any changes to the lives of the beneficiaries? If yes, what kind of the changes have projects brought to the villager in Rothe?

Contributions and benefits of Self-Help Agricultural Projects and Rural Development

8. What were the objectives of these projects?
9. Has the projects achieved its objectives so far? If yes how, or if no why?
10. What are best practice that other individuals, and communities have learnt from this projects?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix C: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Name of the Researcher: Bokang Phiri

Research Title: An Analysis of Self-Help Agricultural Projects in Rothe, Lesotho

1. I confirm that the purpose of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me verbally, and in writing.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that, I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reasons – however, I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
3. I understand that data collected, will be used by the researcher, and that my personal details gathered during this research, especially my name or identity, will be kept private.
4. I agree to be interviewed, and allowed audio or video recordings, and transcripts to be made from the interview.
5. I gave permission for the tape recordings to be retained after the study, and be use for future academic purposes only.

6. I have been informed by the researcher that the tape recordings will be kept in secure save place for future references, and no one will have access to without my permission.
7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

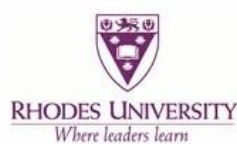
Date

Signature

Rhodes University Ethics Coordinator- Siyanda Manqele

s.mangele@ru.ac.za

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance Certificate



Human Ethics subcommittee
Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee
PO Box 94, Grahamstown, 6140, South Africa
t: +27 (0) 46 603 8055
f: +27 (0) 46 603 8822
e: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za
www.ru.ac.za/research/research/ethics
NHREC Registration no. REC-241114-045

27 August 2019

Bokang Phiri

Review Reference: 2019-0681-733

Email: g18p9360@campus.ru.ac.za

Dear Bokang Phiri

Re: An Analysis of Self-Help Agricultural Projects in Rothe Village, Lesotho

Principal Investigator: Mr. Lungile Penxa

Collaborators: Mr. Bokang Phiri

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC) – Human Ethics (HE) sub-committee. Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this

research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Dames', enclosed within a thin black rectangular border.

Prof Joanna Dames

Chair: Human Ethics sub-committee, RUEHC- HE