UMANYANO NGAMANDLA!

A PARTICIPATORY STUDY OF THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN GENDER, SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND FOOD SECURITY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIP

By

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Declaration

I, Monica Canca declare that this thesis is my own work and has been not submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other university, and that all the resources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references. It is submitted for the Master of Arts Degree in Education (Environmental Education) under the Education Faculty at Rhodes University, Makhanda.

Signature:

Date: 8 January 2025

Acknowledgements

"If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward" – Martin Luther King Jr.

It began as a seemingly passing question of "Monica, why don't you go for a master's"? You should have seen me laugh and dismiss that notion as building castles in the air, especially for someone who had been out of formal schooling for more than two decades … but alas, a seed was planted, and here I am. I am thankful to the person who influenced the trajectory of my life in a very unexpected and meaningful manner; she got me started on a journey that has both excited and scared me. I hope she reads this and recognises herself.

My most heartfelt gratitude goes to two women who shaped my worldview in the most significant ways, my late grandmother, Mrs Nomnyaka Canca (u-Mandlovana) and my late mother, Ms Sindiswa Canca. My grandmother instilled in me a lasting love of people, knowledge and education. It is because of her that I always lead with deliberations around value and contribution when it comes to how I relate with the broader society. My mother passed away as I was putting the final touches on this thesis. She was my biggest cheerleader and fiercest advocate for education that defied the bounds of age and time. I am comforted by the fact that she saw me almost to the finish line and I got to witness her pleasure and satisfaction as she watched me proceed with this study. This would not have been possible without the support of my children – Zesipho, Abonga and Aku. They were very accommodating of my absences and my pensive moods when the work got too heavy. A special mention to the last born, who took this as an opportunity for shared study sessions; this is the finish line boy, just as you are about to write your last Matric paper.

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To my only surviving uncle, I thank you Tat’omncinci, Lazongoma Canca. You have been consistent in advocating education as the key that unlocks all doors. You remain the king of possibilities in my life!

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, whose untimely passing robbed me of the opportunity to celebrate the completion of this work with her. Her unwavering belief in the transformative power of learning inspired me to persevere. She embodied the resilience and struggles faced by the community at the heart of this research, making this dedication not only a tribute to her but also to all those who strive for empowerment against all odds.

Abstract

This participatory study investigates the interplay between gender, social dynamics, and food security in an informal settlement in Makhanda, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The study seeks to surface and investigate these connected factors, looking at how they influence each other, with a particular focus on gender roles and the social context within which these interactions unfold. The research highlights the disproportionate vulnerability of African women in food-insecure contexts due to traditional caregiving roles, exacerbated by socioeconomic and political challenges.

The study examines how gender roles and community dynamics influence responses to food insecurity, with a focus on collaborative learning opportunities for sustainable solutions. The study investigates the impacts of food insecurity at different levels within the community, focusing on community-level experiences and household experiences. Situated in a country like South Africa, with its history of apartheid, and still steeped in inequalities and injustices which remain unaddressed 30 years into democracy, the transition to a free and fair society has been difficult to translate into practice. This is despite what is lauded as one of the best constitutions in the world. The study demonstrates that food security cannot be separated from broader socio-political issues that affect individuals and communities.

The study approaches food insecurity as more than a state of lacking food for consumption, but rather a complete disempowerment of a people through economic, social and political exclusion. Poverty, unemployment and densely populated informal settlements have become fertile ground for exacerbated food insecurity in a country where unemployment has reached alarming heights. This study is undertaken in an informal settlement with the purpose of bringing in the voices from the margins to a conversation that is necessary for future generations to not only exist but thrive, together, as South Africans, beyond race, class or gender divides.

Adopting a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach, the study integrates Africana Womanist and Intersectional theories alongside uBuntu ethical praxis to frame the lived experiences of marginalised communities. Data collection methods included dialogues, focus groups, and gender daily calendars, enabling nuanced exploration of household and community-level food insecurity. Findings revealed that there is a need for gender-sensitive and context-specific interventions that promote collective action and leverage Indigenous knowledge systems. Through situating food insecurity within broader socio-political inequalities, the study advocates for empowering communities to co-create solutions that transcend race, class, and gender divides, fostering resilience and equity in the fight against hunger.

Throughout the study, there was a continuous thread of community learning for all involved. This included me as the researcher and the community partners in equal measure. The participatory nature of the study required contribution from all participants, in the form of knowledge and skills sharing. While I brought in a certain level of theoretical framing, the community partners brought in knowledge of the community and an understanding of what would work best for them given their circumstances. It positioned research not just as a form of knowledge production but as co-created knowledge for actionable community change. The process itself was a learning experience, with lessons on navigating relationships, approaching the research process as a mutually beneficial partnership for all involved as well as the importance of transparency in establishing community–university partnerships. This boded well for developing a conducive learning environment and set the tone for cooperation and active participation for all.

Keywords: vulnerability, community partners, knowledge production, food insecurity

Table of Contents

Declaration ii

Acknowledgements iii

Dedication v

Abstract vi

List of Figures xii

List of Tables xii

Glossary of Terms xiii

List of Abbreviations xiv

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

- 1.1 Introduction 1
- 1.2 The South African Context 3
- 1.3 The Context of Makhanda, Eastern Cape 6
- 1.4 Research Aims, Goals and Objectives 9
  - 1.4.1 Aims 9
  - 1.4.2 Goals 9
  - 1.4.3 Objectives 10
- 1.5 Research Questions 10
- 1.6 Conclusion 10

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 11

- 2.1 Introduction 11
- 2.2 A gendered analysis of African food security through a developmental lens 11
- 2.3 Thinking through Liberated Learning Spaces 13

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 17

- 3.1 Introduction 17

3.2 Africana Womanist Theory......18
3.2.1 Relevance to the study......20
3.3 Intersectional Theory......23
3.4 Ubuntu as Guiding Ethical Philo-praxis......24
3.4.1 The Unhu/uBuntu Ethical Model......27
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT......29
4.1 Introduction......29
4.2 Positionality......29
4.3 A case for actionable learning......30
4.4 Community Based Participatory Research......31
4.5 Hermeneutic Philosophy......33
4.6 Participatory Processes......34
4.6.1 Contextual scoping......35
4.7 Sampling and Instrumentation......36
4.7.1 Interactive methodologies......37
4.7.2 Preparatory phase......38
4.7.3 Implementation phase......38
4.7.4 Post-dialogue phase......39
4.8 Research as Empowerment......40
4.9 Data Engagement......44
4.10 Data Analysis and Participatory Meaning Making......45
4.11 Ethical Considerations......47
4.11.1 Validity......47
4.12 Study Process......47
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS......50

5.1 Introduction 50

5.2 Dialogues 51

5.2.1 Emerging themes from the dialogues 52

a) Experiences of oppression 52

b) *Levels* of vulnerability 54

c) Collective community action 56

5.3. Emerging Themes from Focus Group Discussions 62

a) Persistent experiences of food insecurity 62

b) Rising crime levels 64

c) Coping mechanisms 65

5.4. Reflections on Gender Daily Calendars 67

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH DISCUSSIONS 72

6.1 Introduction 72

6.2 Food availability, access, use and stability 72

6.2.1 “Siyalamba” (We are hungry) – Realities of being food insecure 72

6.2.2 “They lied to us” – Dealing with complex contributors to food insecurity 74

6.2.3 “We do not like violence” – Food insecurity and the unravelling of a community 77

6.2.4 Gendered experiences of food insecurity 79

6.2.5 Creating collaborative learning spaces 83

6.3. Taking learning into the future 86

CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 89

7.1 Limitations 89

7.2 Recommendations 92

CHAPTER 8: THE FUTILITY OF ATTEMPTS AT DIVORCING FOOD SECURITY ISSUES FROM HUMAN DIGNITY, FAIRNESS AND RELATED FORMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE 94

References 99

Appendices 110

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance 110

Appendix B: Community Dialogue Transcript 111

Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Excerpt 114

Appendix D: Gender Daily Calendar Excerpt 116

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Six values of Ubuntu (Ujomudike, 2016) 26

Figure 3.2: Unhu/uBuntu ethical model (Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe, 2012) 27

Figure 3.3: Analytical Framework 28

Figure 4.1: Research process 35

Figure 4.2: Three degrees of influence (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217) 42

Figure 4.3: The IPA process (Eatough & Smith, 2017) 46

Figure 5.1: Community timeline from 2017–2022 56

Figure 5.2: Household data 69

Figure 6.1: Collaborative learning flow 85

List of Tables

Table 4.1: CBPR principles in action 33

Table 4.2: Participation for change 48

Table 5.1: Summary of the focus group discussion 67

Table 5.2: Summary of men’s and women’s different priorities 70

Glossary of Terms

1. Food insecurity: The state of lacking reliable access to enough affordable and nutritious food.
2. Gender dynamics: The social and cultural norms, roles, and relationships between genders that influence interactions and power structures.
3. Informal settlement: A residential area where housing has been built on land that residents have no legal claim to, often characterised by inadequate infrastructure and services.
4. Collaborative learning: A process where individuals work together to achieve a common goal, sharing knowledge and ideas.
5. Ubuntu (uBuntu): An African philosophy emphasising community, shared humanity, and the interconnectedness of individuals.
6. Africana Womanism: A theoretical framework that focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women, distinct from mainstream feminism.
7. Intersectionality: The interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, creating overlapping systems of disadvantage or discrimination.
8. Community Based Participatory Research: A collaborative research approach that actively involves community members in the research process to address issues relevant to their context.
9. "Amaphara": Young males who are unemployed and abuse street drugs.

List of Abbreviations

CBPR	Community Based Participatory Research
FPSA	Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Food security in South African townships is a multi-layered issue that needs a nuanced understanding of local contexts. It cannot be separated from broader socio-political concerns that affect individuals and communities as it is characterised by complex socioeconomic dynamics, particularly influenced by gender roles, access to resources, and the effectiveness of government policies. The South African government's approach to food security has been criticised for its focus on transitioning subsistence farmers to semi-commercial farming without adequately supporting the immediate needs of vulnerable populations (Tomita et al., 2020). This can often overlook the importance of local food systems and the need for inclusive strategies that consider the unique challenges faced by urban poor communities. This study zooms into one of those unique situations, a case of a community in an informal settlement – seeking to understand how food insecurity is experienced in this setting and the level to which gender dynamics influence these experiences. It is worth noting that participatory approaches have been identified as essential for addressing food security in marginalised communities. The literature reveals that involving community members in the planning and implementation of food security initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment, which is particularly important for women (Engle, 2021, Roncarolo et al., 2016). This includes effective governance that incorporates local knowledge and addresses the unique challenges faced by women and marginalised groups.

According to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale, the proportion of those affected by severe food insecurity in South Africa increased between 2019 and 2020. The female population was the worst affected by both moderate to severe food insecurity and severe food insecurity when compared to males (Statistics South Africa, 2022). What became apparent during the study is that the generalisation of poverty at all levels completely ignores women’s lived experiences of being poor and food insecure, and this is problematic. The problem becomes more pronounced when one considers that African women in low-income communities are tasked with the responsibility of household care without the necessary resources to do so – for, in traditional African culture, it is through their wombs, nurturing and care that households and families are realised. In South Africa, women's roles in food production and household management are critical, yet they frequently face barriers such as limited access to resources and decision-making power which can exacerbate food insecurity (Hendriks, 2014; McIntyre & Hendriks, 2018; Pereira & Ruysenaar, 2012). Dirsuweit (2020), further emphasises that the connection between gender and socioeconomic status highlights the need for targeted interventions that empower women. The literature reveals that women, especially those from marginalised backgrounds, are more likely to experience food insecurity and bear the burden of coping strategies, which can include reliance on social networks and community support (Dirsuweit, 2020; Grobler, 2014). This speaks to the interplay between gender and social dynamics in relation to food security. Thus, the impact of food insecurity at different levels within the community cannot be ignored, particularly the household experiences.

The Eastern Cape province, where this study is located. stands at 16.6% for moderate to severe food insecurity and 10.2% for severe food insecurity. To combat rising food prices, households can produce their food through agriculture; still, less than 20% of households were involved in agricultural food production between 2017 and 2020 (Statistics South Africa). This is despite findings which argue that community-based interventions have shown promise in enhancing food security by increasing local food production and reducing dependence on external food sources (Carstens et al., 2021; Faber et al., 2011). Carstens et al. (2021), further states that community gardens and similar projects can significantly alleviate food insecurity, particularly when they are integrated into broader social support networks. This can be argued to reflect a need for collective, multi-dimensional, community driven strategies in addressing food insecurity. In a South Africa that is mired in corruption and extreme inequality, the levels of food insecurity have reached alarming proportions. According to Tuomala and Grant (2021), the urban poor, particularly those in townships, face significant barriers to food access due to inadequate infrastructure and services which are critical for improving food security. The lack of reliable food outlets, clean water, and electricity exacerbates the vulnerability of these communities, making it important to address these infrastructural deficits as part of any food security strategy. Amid these complex social realities, the

COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already alarming situation and created even higher levels of food insecurity in a country with extreme inequalities and complex social realities.

The study initially focused on the impact of Covid-19 on food security and expanded to investigate the interplay between gender, social dynamics, and food security in an informal settlement in Makhanda, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The participatory nature of the study allowed both me as the researcher and the community to navigate the focus of the study as determined by the process itself. The study sought to illuminate the need for context-specific approaches to address food insecurity. It aimed to encourage action that flows from understanding community and household dynamics by building on existing strengths, local knowledge, and collaborative efforts. On a secondary level, it sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interactions of gender and socioeconomic dynamics in relation to food security in South Africa in general and the Makhanda context in particular.

The study utilised critical dialogical approaches to promote active participation of participants in the study, recognising them as collaborators and knowledge co-creators, positioning their voices and experiences as the core of the study. In the Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy, (2019), Farias et al, refer to critical dialogical approaches as having the capacity to increase possibilities for social change by enacting dialogue as means to illuminate and problematise the systemic causes of injustice (p 237). The adoption of dialogical methods like community dialogues and focus groups allowed for equal participation and the construction of knowledge through shared narratives. It also allowed for knowledge sharing that was context conscious, taking into consideration dynamics of space and place to shape deeper understanding of the participants' lived realities.

1.2 The South African Context

The South African geographical landscape consists of but is not limited to the following areas – urban, peri-urban and rural. These settings have different contexts that require consideration when delving into the dynamics of food security and gender. In addition, one cannot ignore the racial, socioeconomic and cultural influences that differ across communities. Throughout history, Black people have navigated different forms of strife and oppression. Some of these forms happened to them (colonialism and apartheid) and some were inflicted by them (dictatorship and civil wars). It can be comfortably argued that it is always from one strife to another, always one people – the Black race – just different struggles. The legacy of apartheid has resulted in persistent inequalities in access to resources, education and employment opportunities which in turn affect food security (Hendriks & Olivier, 2015; Mmbengwa, 2012). The South African government's policies have often been criticised for their narrow focus on agricultural production without adequately addressing the immediate needs of urban populations (Hendriks & Olivier, 2015).

In South Africa the current struggles can be likened to a case of wounds inflicted by the people on the people; the ones that were put into power have turned against their own, and liberators have become oppressors. In his book, Fanonian Practices in South Africa (2011), Nigel C. Gibson speaks of “intellectual laziness”, a lack of concrete links between radical intellectuals and the masses of people. This has resulted in the Black populace being segregated according to class lines; the celebrations of achieving freedom have given way to an ethical shift amongst party leaders, with an emergent Black middle class, who, having fought for freedom now want a pay-off (Gibson, 2011, p xiv). This has replaced one form of discrimination with another: racial segregation for classism. Strong economic influences perpetuate this, and it is evident in the levels of food insecurity which have reached alarming proportions. Fanon (2004, p. 68) writes:

> The colonist and the colonised are old acquaintances. And consequently, the colonist is right when he says he “knows” them. It is the colonist who fabricated and continues to fabricate the colonised subject.

The author goes further to state:

> Decolonisation never goes unnoticed, for it focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to a nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. (Fanon, 2004, p. 2)

Nuances of privilege and grandiosity for the select few have resulted in a state that mirrors the oppression once fought against. The major socio-political unrest that led to looting and destruction in certain parts of the country in July 2021 highlighted hunger and food insecurity as two of the most critical indicators of profound inequality. In an article published in the Consumer News and Business Channel Africa in August 2021, it was stated that the consequences of this unrest would have long-term impacts (Smith, 2021). It was believed that this would drag down economic recovery and disrupt food supply chains, causing ongoing threats to food security in the foreseeable future. In addition, in a study investigating household food access and food insecurity in South Africa, Chakona and Shackleton (2017) note that although South Africa is rated as a food-secure nation, large numbers of households within the country have inadequate access to nutrient-rich diverse foods. Focusing on the Eastern Cape province, in particular, home to the city of Makhanda where the study was undertaken, this is an undeniable reality. Ngumbela et al. (2020, p. 1) state:

> Food security in South Africa varies across its nine provinces, with the Eastern Cape province frequently measured as the poorest province in the country. Most of the people who are poor in the Eastern Cape are African, and a high percentage of women-headed households are poor. Thus, interventions need to take local contexts into account and focus on particular communities and their unique needs.

VanVolkenburg et al. (2022) conducted a study to ascertain whether COVID-19 and food insecurity influenced existing inequalities between men and women in Africa. This study produced critical insights that became part of the cornerstone of this study. The authors insist that

> [t]he COVID-19 pandemic in Africa has exposed the need to better understand what is happening on the ground in terms of food insecurity and other inequalities faced by women. There is a need to explore not just how we think individuals may be affected but how they are being effectively affected. (VanVolkenburg et al., 2022, p. 8)

The emphasis propelled this study to focus on lived experiences unfolding in real-time, with the desire to promote co-learning and co-creation of solutions towards collective action in addressing community challenges. This study sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex interactions of gender and food security in an African context.

1.3 The Context of Makhanda, Eastern Cape

Makhanda, where the research study was located, is part of the Makana Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape province. The Eastern Cape province stands at 16.6% for moderate food insecurity and 10.2% for severe food insecurity. Estelle Harris, in her article for the Daily Maverick, calls it the “Eastern Cape’s swollen hunger crisis” (Harris, 2023). These words alone paint a dire picture of how critical the state of food insecurity is in the province. The Makana Local Municipality had an estimated population of 91 200 in 2021 (Makana Local Municipality, 2021–2022).

Approximately 70 000 people reside in Makhanda (Statistics South Africa, 2011). At a local level, Makhanda reflects the broader province and the country in general. Makhanda has high levels of unemployment coupled with alarming economic inequalities. In an October 2023 report, Food4Futures revealed that they have been distributing food to approximately 1 000 residents daily (Mamaila, 2023). These contrasts are manifested spatially and can be seen in the division between Makhanda East (a former Black township and Coloured group area) and Makhanda West (a former White group area) under apartheid laws.

The advent of COVID-19 found a city already heaving under the stresses of poverty, especially on the historically Black side of the city. Soup kitchens offering meals to the destitute struggled to meet the demand. The Makana Residents Associations’ Ntuthu Blow shared with News 24 in July 2021 that 30 soup kitchens supported by the association went from feeding 200 a day before and during the start of the lockdown to 400 per day at the height of the pandemic (Dayimani, 2021). This article further revealed that the age group of those struggling the most was between 35 to 59 years. The soup kitchens were almost all run by women, again begging the question of “who holds the burden of poverty?”

In addition, contextual literature reveals that the causes of hunger and deprivation in Makhanda are a complex mix of historical, social and economic factors. An article by

Mail and Guardian in 2020 revealed that the levels of unemployment in Makhanda are at 40%, which is higher than most cities in South Africa (McKaiser, 2020). In an Oxfam media briefing titled *“The Hunger Virus Multiplies”,* Zameka Chibi, a Makhanda resident, stated:

> With the unemployment skyrocketing in Makhanda and the effect of COVID-19, people are not able to have informal jobs … hunger is real in this town. (Aly, 2021, p. 14)

To further substantiate this point, Food4Futures (2023) reported on the state of hunger and poverty in Makhanda, citing high unemployment due to a lack of major industries and a collapsing municipality, leaving the city in a chronic state of poverty (Mamaila, 2023).

The informal settlement where the study was conducted is one of the most marginalised and neglected communities in Makhanda. This community emerged in 2017 due to the high unemployment rate in the city. People in informal jobs or mainly on government grants residing in other parts of Makhanda’s Joza Township could no longer afford rent and the informal settlement became the solution. This was after years of being on waiting lists for government-sponsored housing, popularly known as “RDPs” (Reconstruction and Development Programme), which turned out to be a flawed process riddled with corruption. This led to people organising themselves and orchestrating the occupation of a vacant piece of land in the township. Establishing this informal settlement sparked an ongoing struggle between rights holders – community members and duty holders – municipal officials.

According to a report by the Parliament’s Portfolio Committee on Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2022, para. 14), the Makana Municipality was found to be a dysfunctional environment, with the Auditor General highlighting that “its poor performance has led to the identification of a material irregularity, as the consequences involve substantial harm to the citizenry”. Residents in the informal settlement, which was the focus of the study, do not have quality service delivery. The municipality keeps making promises that they fail to deliver fully. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of service delivery further aggravated the situation. Residents had no steady access to water and at the height of the lockdown, women had to fetch water from a municipal drain that served as a livestock drinking hole (Ellis, 2020). This role of women as fetchers of water already alluded to the gender-specific social and cultural responses to crises at play within households.

The water crisis posed dire health challenges and dangerous exposure to the Coronavirus. Other service delivery concerns included a lack of proper sewerage and waste removal services. During the lockdown, the lack of electricity posed a challenge for emergency response and communication as community members could not charge their phones at home; instead, they had to devise alternative means of alerting each other to danger and leaning on each other for assistance in life-threatening situations.

In an admirable demonstration of community agency and resilience, they turned to the use of whistles at different, specific pitches to communicate various types of emergencies (Baloyi, 2021). Onyx and Bullen (2000) describe agency as the capacity of individuals to plan and initiate action. This indicates a community ready to actively participate in seeking solutions for their problems and is a clear example of how interconnected socioeconomic challenges not only lead to poverty but also cause poverty.

In responding to these problems, the community demonstrated the might of collective action by reclaiming their power and seeking solutions to their challenges. Unlike other areas in the township, there are no Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) based and operating in the area. When meetings are held to discuss developmental matters, no organisation serves as a mouthpiece for the community. Their support and development are driven from within the community, by community members, for community members. In cases where something is to be said for them, it is said by them through an established committee that represents and communicates on behalf of the collective.

As one looks at this community and their indefatigable spirit, one is reminded of Fanon in *"The Wretched of the Earth"*, when he speaks of the masses who, two or three years after independence, begin to ask the question, "What was the point of fighting, if nothing was really destined to change?" (Fanon, 2004, pp. 34–35). In South Africa, people have been trusting and waiting for the promised change for nearly three decades. These community members refuse to bow to systems that emulate an oppressive history in how they treat their own.

It is a community that rejects being defined by its circumstances but rather displays a solid commitment to being heard, seen and counted. In a town labouring under a dysfunctional municipality, this community has a mammoth task ahead of them. Regardless of the controversial nature of their actions and strategies, they have made their presence felt and their needs known to the powers that be. Based on the controversial nature of their relationship with a prominent government entity, the name of the community will not be mentioned in the study to avoid any possibility of negative repercussions.

1.4 Research Aims, Goals and Objectives

1.4.1 Aims

The study aims to determine the extent to which gender sensitivity, collaborative learning and solidarity between men and women can contribute to improved food security. An accompanying aim that pertains to the collaborative ethics of this study is for the community and I, as the researcher, to chart the research journey together through intentional co-engaged praxis.

1.4.2 Goals

The study examines how the pressures leading to and following the COVID-19 pandemic have affected food security in an informal settlement. The focus is on household, gender and community dynamics and how these influence responses to food insecurity. This includes a focus on gender and the different ways in which men and women experience food insecurity. The study also explores more equitable approaches to addressing food insecurity as a collective. Considering the way in which the community came into being, and its innate ability to disrupt and challenge, the study seeks to further acknowledge their agency and resilience as building blocks for nourishing collaborative learning processes aimed at addressing food insecurity.

1.4.3 Objectives

- To understand the role of women in households headed by men, the role of women in women-headed households, the plight of girls in food-insecure families and the hunger experience for both men and women.
- To determine the needs, priorities and challenges of both men and women in dealing with food insecurity.
- To create collaborative learning spaces that encourage men and women to fully participate in identifying, formulating and implementing food security strategies in their communities.
- To use the four pillars of food security to examine factors affecting household food security, namely availability, access, use and stability.

1.5 Research Questions

- How has COVID-19 exacerbated the pre-existing challenges of food security in the community?
- What are the forms of gender inequality most evident at household and community levels?
- How have gender dynamics shaped how men and women interact with food security concerns in the community?
- What role can collaborative learning play in strengthening responses to food insecurity in the community?

1.6 Conclusion

A key element of the study is its focus on gender roles and their relation to food security. Natural and political disasters have wreaked havoc in African societies, resulting in poverty and hunger. Among the hardest hit by these occurrences are women and children. Life itself is directly linked to food security, which puts women squarely in the middle of the food insecurity crisis as they are life givers and primary caregivers. In addition, African women carry the triple burden of race, class, and gender struggles. These struggles can be interlinked in different ways; for instance, some women may struggle because of their gender and race, while others may struggle due to their gender and class. Thus, gender, race, and class impact the levels of poverty and deprivation. This intersectional perspective is further discussed at length in Chapter Three.

In addition, the study is driven by an understanding that now, more than ever, it is becoming increasingly clear that there is a need to be more inclusive in our approaches to knowledge creation if it is to lead to sustainable change. These inclusive approaches should embrace and recognise all forms of knowledge, including Indigenous ways of knowing. The devaluing of Indigenous knowledge has created a chasm between communities and those perceived as knowledge holders in that it alienates rather than builds bridges. This serves as one of the key elements of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study and this chapter reviews the literature. It is worth noting that a literature review is a critical and analytical examination of previous research on a specific topic (Thomas et al., 2020). As a result, a literature review informs the researcher about what is known about the topic on which they are writing and assists in deciding where future research should be directed. This literature review was divided into subsections for the purpose of this study, a gendered analysis of African food security through a developmental lens and liberated learning spaces.

2.2 A gendered analysis of African food security through a developmental lens

The Sustainable Development Goals include three of the most crucial aspects of this study, beginning with zero hunger (No. 2), quality education (No. 4), and gender equality (No. 5). The intersection between these goals challenges us to consider the importance of a holistic approach in addressing community concerns. Part of the impetus of this study is acknowledging that one cannot discuss holistic approaches to community challenges while ignoring the role of women and the importance of lifelong learning as a part of any collaborative responses.

Two of the questions the study sought to respond to focused on gendered experiences of food insecurity at household and community levels. As a quick reminder, the two research questions are listed below.

- What are the forms of gender inequality most evident at household and community levels?
- How have gender dynamics shaped how men and women interact with food security concerns in the community?

In further exploring these questions, it became apparent that this study could not only be limited to matters of gender and food insecurity without touching on the interconnectedness of food security to more general human security concerns at play. It has been said that human security presents in multiple ways depending on the context, affecting individuals, groups, households, and entire communities differently, depending on the intersections of race, class and other cultural considerations.

In 2012, the United Nations General Assembly described human security as the right of all people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair. All individuals, in particular vulnerable people, are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential. In addition, the right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman, and child, alone or in a community with others, always has physical and economic access to adequate food or means for its procurement (United Nations General, 2012).

When writing about food security in South Africa, Ruiters and Wildschutt (2010) posit that poverty is relative to people, places, economics and resources, and from that premise, they proceed to map the intersection of food insecurity and women-headed households. Ruiters and Wildschutt (2010) provide an understanding of people's experiences by studying the impact their geographical location has on their economic status and the effect their race and gendered status have on that experience. They argue against the South African norm of poverty-related policies which address poverty in gender-neutral ways, accompanied by the generalisation of poverty at all levels, completely ignoring women's lived experiences of being poor and food insecure. This study sought to address that gap by spotlighting the need for context-specific approaches to addressing food insecurity.

De Wet-Billings (2023) outlines how the global pandemic created sub-populations that were very food insecure, and for those that were already food insecure, COVID-19 worsened their situation. The study showed that in the early stages of the pandemic, a higher percentage of women were more food insecure than their male counterparts, with that remaining the status quo even a year later. South Africa has a track record of women being disproportionately affected by poverty and inequality.

The Statistics South Africa Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) (2022) 4th quarter indicates that females have lower employment rates of 48% compared to 52% for males. It is in this context that the study was undertaken, a context that makes it almost impossible for women not to experience food insecurity. All this literature reveals that there is a contextual gap in dealing with poverty-related policies as poverty is normally addressed in gender-neutral ways and often generalised.

This study touches on socioeconomic concerns and the politics of physical space and access, delving into the root causes of food insecurity in the sampled informal settlement. Mengesha (2017) speaks of the dangers of limiting food security studies to household analysis while failing to understand and articulate the gender-differentiated needs of different household members. The study sought to respond to that by touching on the gendered nuances of food insecurity, understanding the role of women in households headed by men, the role of women in women-headed households, the plight of girls in food-insecure families and the hunger experiences of both men and women.

2.3 Thinking through Liberated Learning Spaces

The idea of facilitating “liberated learning spaces” was supported by the choice of critical dialogical approaches as discussed in the introduction chapter. The choice was influenced by a need to create spaces for free-flowing dialogue, unhindered by gender or power barriers, driven by a need for co-created, community led solutions to the challenge of food insecurity. In these spaces participants would seek answers to the following research questions:

- How has COVID-19 exacerbated the pre-existing challenges of food security in the community?
- What role can collaborative learning play in strengthening responses to food insecurity in the community?

In her essay *"The Politics of Cultural Knowledge"*, Wane (2011) speaks of the need to better understand how feminist knowledge, or lack thereof, impacts the lives of women and men and reveals how relations of power and knowledge intimidate women and men in our societies. This study sought to do just that – understand the intersections between gender and food security while at the same time accommodating the need for co-created learning spaces to address the "power and knowledge" imbalances through collectivism and collaboration.

The study moved from a premise that lack of knowledge and skills can often be a direct result of poverty, and in addressing food security, one also needs to integrate education and training strategies through community-led actions that are geared towards sustainable solutions. Paulo Freire's (1970, p. 48) work reminds us of

> [a] pedagogy that must be formed with, not for, the oppressed, in their struggle to regain their humanity. This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation.

In an era of decolonising and disrupting colonial and Western stereotypes about the Africans' lived experience, this study sought to explore, affirm and rediscover what makes the sampled community resilient and how they leverage that towards finding solutions for their shared challenge of food insecurity. It also looked at constructive aspects of gender relations and how these can lend themselves to women's self-actualisation and empowerment. In the book "*Gender in African Women's Writing: identity, sexuality and difference*", Nfah-Abbenyi (1997, p. 32) shares this observation:

> Since different groups of marginalised women can create new spaces and social locations for themselves within the dominant culture, marginality (be it represented as racial, sexual, historical, or cultural difference) will therefore be the point of intersection for identity politics, the location where identity finds full expression. By creating these new

> spaces and locations, women take the margins to the centre and vice versa. This constant shifting subsequently subverts dominant political, economic, and cultural conceptions of gender, both at the centre and at the margins.

In as much as the study encourages the coming together of both genders for collaboration – as opposed to Nfah-Abbenyi's (1997) call for women-only spaces – the notion of “creating spaces” resonates with this study. The study sought to create gender-inclusive collaborative spaces for knowledge co-creation to address food insecurity in the community. The spaces need not only be gender inclusive but also need to be accommodative of all knowledge forms, recognising and respecting Indigenous knowledge in equal measure.

In discussing sustainable solutions, one must consider the existing hierarchy of knowledge systems and how these are steeped in Western influences. This calls for a disruption and reframing of what constitutes knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018), in defining epistemic freedom, highlights that epistemic freedom is different from academic freedom. Academic freedom speaks to the institutional autonomy of universities and their right to express diverse ideas including those of authorities and political leaders. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018, p. 18) writes:

> Epistemic freedom is much broader and deeper as it speaks to cognitive justice; it draws our attention to the content of what it is that we are free to express and on whose terms. Epistemic freedom is about democratising “knowledge” from its current rendition in the singular to its plural, known as “knowledges”. It is also ranged against the overrepresentation of Eurocentric thought in knowledge.

Therefore, epistemic freedom is foundational in the broader decolonisation struggle because it enables the emergence of critical decolonial consciousness. It cannot be that the poor, downtrodden, and minorities are permanently relegated to the status of recipients but never the thinkers, doers, and experts. This negates the resilience and agency displayed by the community in this study – a community that is a testament to the long but often overlooked history of community activism that has marked our history for a long time, originating from grassroots action.

Knowledge cannot be overlooked because it does not fit the aesthetic of posh English and hallowed halls. The ability to write and theorise cannot be weaponised to drown out voices that speak to lived experiences, cultural knowledge, and wisdom-laden ancestry. Indigenous knowledge systems are valid, relatable, and unifying. In addressing food insecurity and justice concerns, one cannot ignore the power of collaboration, co-creation, collective action and trust-driven relationships. The resultant gift is co-created sustainable food practices and self-determined solutions for addressing food insecurity in marginalised communities.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

According to Kivunja (2018), a theoretical framework comprises the theories expressed by experts in the field into which you plan to research. The theoretical framework is the structure that summarises concepts and theories, and it is not a summary of the researcher’s thoughts about the study. It is a synthesis of theories in your field of study to understand and use them for understanding the study data. This research used the following theoretical lens: Africana Womanist Theory by Hudson-Weems (1993, p.47), strengthened by the Intersectional Theory with Ubuntu as guiding ethical Philo-praxis, including the Unhu/uBuntu Ethical Model.

This study shifted away from the usual exploration of male–female experiences pertaining to patriarchy and associated pitfalls but rather explored male–female interactions through the lens of co-existence and cooperation. The study sought to accommodate the myriad of cultural and historical realities that most African women exist and function in, including the many roles that they embrace by being women in their unique settings. The experiences of African women are not a monolith and thus cannot be blanketed under one description or understanding.

Interacting with colleagues during this study, the question often arose … why Africana Womanism, why not Feminism? According to Oyewumi (2004), one of the difficulties of applying feminist concepts to express and analyse African realities is that African ways of understanding and recognising power are not gender specific but rather based on seniority in age and kinship categories. For instance, in the Xhosa culture, there is uMafungwashe (the one we swear by). This is the first female born in the family. She is respected by male and female siblings alike, not only in their formative years but throughout their lives. Certain traditional rites in their lives require the consultation and blessing of uMafungwashe. It is believed that calling on her name has a certain sacred ability to make things work together for good. This role stays with the sister and evolves as she matures from a sister to an aunt to a grandmother. This is but one depiction of the powerful and distinctive roles that signify womanhood in African cultures. This made Africana Womanism a viable framework for this study, which sought to accommodate contextual realities that inform relationships and kinship outside of Western concepts of gender and power.

The challenge with Feminism is that it is more likely to come with assumptions that conflict with accepted traditions, norms, and experiences of the African woman. This is why it is often viewed negatively by African people outside the influence of academia. This is my observation having worked with communities at the grassroots level. These women face common struggles with their men, fight with and for their men, nurture and raise men, and are honoured and recognised in their families and communities for being such women.

Given these dynamics, the study intentionally sought to move away from a position of women being helpless or powerless, oppressed or challenged by patriarchy; rather, it focused on building bridges where there is a need and leveraging collective strength regardless of gender. At the same time, it did not seek to deny the challenges associated with patriarchy but recognised that African women might not necessarily have the same interpretations or response mechanisms to the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the study recognised that multiple situations and experiences can disadvantage people and that these can be unique to place, time and individual backgrounds, with one informing the other and often creating what can be viewed as a complex web of indicators of oppression. This is where the Intersectionality Theory presents itself.

3.2 Africana Womanist Theory

The literature reveals that the Africana Womanist Theory is grounded on a perspective of African women's lived realities and values (Hudson-Weems, 1993). According to Bardisy (2022), Africana is the feminine form of the Latin word "Africanus", meaning "Of Africa", and is preferred by Africana Womanists over "African". The theory argues for recognising African women and African ways of being in the ongoing struggles against inequality (Ntiri, 2001). It further explores the relationships between the African woman, her family, her community and the African man. It seeks to establish African ways of understanding gender dynamics from a traditional perspective.

The theory allows for specific framing of gender dynamics through an African lens, not tainted or burdened by Western understandings of what female struggles should be, which takes away the opportunity for African women to name and address their gendered struggles in culturally, socially and contextually relevant ways (Hudson-Weems, 2024). It defines the position of African women who recognise women's struggles and are willing to fight injustices women face, but not to the detriment and total annihilation of the male gender. Africana Womanism highlights the unique experiences of Africana women, their struggles, their needs and their desires (Hudson-Weems,1993; Kasun,2009). These women recognise the Black identity they share with Africana men and the struggles they fight alongside them.

In *"Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves"*, Clenora Hudson-Weems (1993, p. 37) writes:

> No matter what form of feminism one may identify with, be it mainstream, cultural, radical or Black feminism, the term "feminism" itself is firmly etched in the ideology or theoretical concept which replicates dominant Eurocentric perspective.

This is not to say that there are no relational challenges between Africana men and women, especially on the matter under scrutiny – the matter of women carrying the burden of food insecurity more than men do. Indeed, in most traditional African households, women play a key role in ensuring that food is available for the survival of their families, which gets more pronounced for women with economic challenges and is further exacerbated by race and class concerns. In Dangarembga's book, *Nervous Conditions*, Tambu narrates her mother's response to her confusion about the "role of a woman":

> This business of womanhood is a heavy burden, she said. How could it not be? Aren't we the ones who bear children? When it is like that you can't just decide today, I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated! When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one that must make them. And these things are not easy, you must start learning to do them early, from a very early age. The earlier the

> better so that it is easier later. Easy! As if it is ever easy. And these days it is worse, with the poverty of Blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other. Aiwa! What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength. (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 16)

Still, Hudson-Weems (1993, p. 7) insists that

> [t]he Africana woman has a different attitude and approach to the man in her world. His presence assures her of the struggle toward a common destiny. Africana males are unaccustomed to the privileges and advantages enjoyed by White males; therefore, it is not necessary for the Africana female to see her man as her primary enemy. Since Africana men have never had the same institutionalised power to oppress as have White men, family pride and solidarity are embraced warmly from the Africana woman's perspective. Complementarity between men and women is encouraged. In fact, to do otherwise would be most harmful and disadvantageous to a race that has been subjected to economic exploitation, racial oppression, and genocide in relation to the dominant White group.

In most African cultures, there is a long-held belief in the female gender being "the centre of life", the magnet that holds the social cosmos intact and alive. "Destroy her and you destroy life itself" (Hudson-Weems, 1993, p. 1). Africana women have had to navigate different forms of subjugation, all aimed at silencing their voices and limiting their options in life. To survive this, they have had to learn to "carry their burdens with strength" (Dangarembga, 1988, p. 16).

3.2.1 Relevance to the study

This study had a three-tier focus on community, households, and gender dynamics and how these interact to influence responses to food insecurity in a marginalised community. This theoretical framework is a move away from mainstream feminism that tends to lump the struggles of African women with those of their European counterparts. This is despite the undeniable differences in culture, beliefs, and practices, not forgetting the perceived elitist nature of the movement, which is celebrated by the educated and exposed but barely heard of in villages – and if it happens to reach those remote spaces, is often received with suspicion and judgement as an anti-traditional concept.

The Africana Womanist Society mentions 18 characteristics of Africana Womanism (Alexander-Floyd et al., 2006). These characteristics are clustered around three themes:

Agency: It is the basis of Africana Womanism and includes self-naming and self-definition. It allows Africana women to identify themselves outside of Eurocentric paradigms. In African culture, this is important because it is "in the correct naming of a thing that it comes into existence". It also serves as the basis for "individual identity and collective action" (Alexander-Floyd et al., 2006, pp. 69–70).

Alliances: This includes family centredness, community centredness and adaptability. It moves for Africana people to define their identity through their own worldview, their own experiences, struggles and needs. Adaptability is an important element in reaffirming flexible gender roles and the compatibility that exists between Africana women and men.

Attributes: This is in reference to the physical and psychological strength of the Africana woman, as she works in solidarity and brotherhood with the Africana man. The Africana Womanist sees herself as fighting a common struggle alongside the Africana man, recognising that this shared bond is important for community growth and resilience. This promotes the interests of the collective without subjugating the needs of Africana women.

The study largely lent on the following aspects:

a. ***Self-naming, self-definition, and collective action*** – these allow African women to identify, interrogate, label and deliberate on the multiplicity of struggles they experience.
b. ***Family-centredness, community centredness and adaptability*** – these honours the importance of building strong family units and meaningful community ties, which is crucial in the fight for the continued liberation of all Africans.
c. ***Gender, solidarity and resilience*** – these promote compatibility and positive engagement between African men and women as they navigate through shared struggles.

Africana Womanism refuses to assimilate understandings that are far removed from African women's experiences and contextual realities. This made it a theory well suited to a study rooted in the lived experiences of a community that is driven by communal relations rooted in shared struggles in a South African context. This is particularly important in understanding the daily struggles of Black women and men in this study, with a view of promoting cooperation towards co-created solutions for the community by the community.

The study sought to understand how these lived realities inform responses to food insecurity. This is not to impose gendered judgements but rather a deliberate effort to explore ways in which the relationship between men and women can be strengthened and used as a vehicle for social change. We have seen this previously with the collective struggle for Black freedom during apartheid in South Africa. It was both men and women who worked together in solidarity, outside the stereotypical gender roles to survive the harsh conditions of oppression and separation imposed by apartheid rule and who fought alongside each other to attain the shared dream of peace, freedom and prosperity in their land.

The study highlighted that the shared dream remains out of reach for the downtrodden and marginalised, a work in progress. It remains “aluta continua” for some members of society – those who remain on the fringes and continue navigating matters of class, race, gender, and insecurity. For them, the constitution, the rights, and the freedoms remain something heard of but not experienced. Africana Womanism reinforces the notion that there is no emancipation of the self, the family, the community, and even the country if it leaves the woman behind. Being left behind manifests in different forms, one being the overburdened Black woman, constantly in response mode, tied down by day-to-day activities with minimal spaces that allow for self-expression and sharing of gifts through reflection and affirmation.

This study recognised the centredness of women in community building. It aimed to create spaces where the agency and resilience of a Black woman are celebrated, not as a burden but as a strength, worthy of being shared and supported instead of being resented and abused. It is an opportunity for self-definition and deciding what works for communities based on how they see themselves. The theory argues for recognising Africana women and Africana ways of being in the ongoing struggles against inequality. It further explores the relationships between the Africana woman and her family, her community and her male counterparts in today's society, amid human suffering and the promotion of individualism over human rights and dignity.

3.3 Intersectional Theory

The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Professor Kimberle Crenshaw. It describes how race, class, gender and other individual characteristics intersect and overlap. Stating the origins of intersectionality, one of Crenshaw’s former students describes Kimberle Crenshaw as not really concerned with shallow questions of identity and representation but more interested in the deep structural and systemic questions about discrimination and inequality (Coaston, 2019).

From a gender perspective, the theory aptly portrays concerns about discrimination as experienced by women in this study – a case of women experiencing several forms of discrimination at once based on their gender, race and social status. Overall, it is a good representation of how different forms of discrimination interact to exacerbate inequality beyond gender because of deep-rooted systemic and structural concerns. This transcends identity concerns, further encompassing how systems and structures reinforce multiplicities of oppressions simultaneously. Losleben and Musubika (2023, pp. 72–73) give a simplified breakdown of understating intersectionality, and it goes thus:

> As individuals living and working in universities, we are never seen simply as an “educator” or “student”, but as complex beings with a profession or function and various identity markers like age, gender, sexuality, ability, ethnicity, skin colour, social background, language, religious beliefs, class, academic line, and so on. This “composition” changes over a lifetime depending on context, geography, time, experiences, the way we tell ourselves and others our story, and how others see and conceptualise us. The identity markers never mean anything by themselves, quite

> contrarily, we ascribe meanings to them. Despite or because of this fictive (sometimes authentic) character, these categories have very real consequences for individuals because of the structures of difference and discrimination that work along their lines.

In her article “*Intersectionality Undone*”, Sirma Bilge posits that the acclaim received by Intersectionality in feminist academic circles has depoliticised it (Bilge, 2013). This author further argues for a reconnection of intersectionality with its initial vision of “generating counter-hegemonic and transformative knowledge production, activism, pedagogy and non-oppressive coalitions” (Bilge, 2013, p. 405). Bilge (2013) critiques what she terms “disciplinary feminism” arguing that it is more concerned with the “institutional success of the knowledge it produces than institutional and social change through counter-hegemonic knowledge production” (p. 409).

This study surfaces the fluidity of oppressive practices, highlighting the complex and often contradictory nature of lived experiences of inequality, oppression and deprivation. Dill et al. (2009) describe intersectionality as a theory and praxis – an analytical and political tool elaborated by less powerful social actors facing multiple minoritisations to confront and combat the interlocking systems of power shaping their lives, through theoretical and empirical knowledge production as well as activism, advocacy and pedagogy. The participatory nature of this study aligned with this view as it combines the theoretical aspects of knowledge production with an actionable element resulting from collective deliberations.

3.4 Ubuntu as Guiding Ethical Philo-praxis

The study was conducted with the understanding that ethics could not just be relegated to a mention or an activity; rather, it is a unifying thread throughout the study. The guiding ethics for this study are rooted in Ubuntu philosophy or Philo-praxis. Based on South African understanding, Ubuntu is associated with humanness or being humane. In further explaining humanness or being humane, Johnstone (1981, p. 547) states that

> [to] be humane suggests that one’s conduct is guided by a respect for and tenderness toward other beings. It suggests a prizing of these beings and a desire to protect and nourish them.

Respect and tenderness were intentionally cultivated in every aspect of the research process. More insight into how this was operationalised is reflected in the deliberate surfacing of community voices, in their own words, detailed in the next chapters.

Ubuntu is a value-based system that has guided African ways of living for centuries. It complements the Africana Womanist Theory in its concerns with African ways of knowing and doing, rooted in community, solidarity, and collective action. The Philo-praxis highlights the importance of leveraging existing community strengths and wisdom to co-create value-based solutions that lead to actionable solutions.

Ujomudike (2016) defines Ubuntu as a set of values centrally driven by reciprocity, common good, peaceful relations, emphasis on human dignity and the value of human life and consensus, tolerance, and mutual respect. Mbigi (1997) further states that in African cultures, an individual is not complete without the group and the group is not privileged over the individual. He further relates Ubuntu to the Collective Fingers Theory, based on this principle:

> A thumb, although strong, cannot kill aphids on its own; it would require the collective cooperation and equal contribution of efforts from other fingers. Firstly, like fingers, individual persons need to work collectively and cooperatively to achieve any aspired goal. Secondly, recognition as equals promotes willingness to participate. Thirdly, fingers, in the proverb can represent core African values which, when internalised and nurtured, can promote a collective culture. (Mbigi, 1997, p. 33)

The six core values of Ubuntu emanate from a belief that as a human being, one’s conduct is guided by respect for and tenderness towards other beings. It alludes to valuing these beings and having a desire to protect them. This is encapsulated in six values of Ubuntu as follows (Ujomudike, 2016):

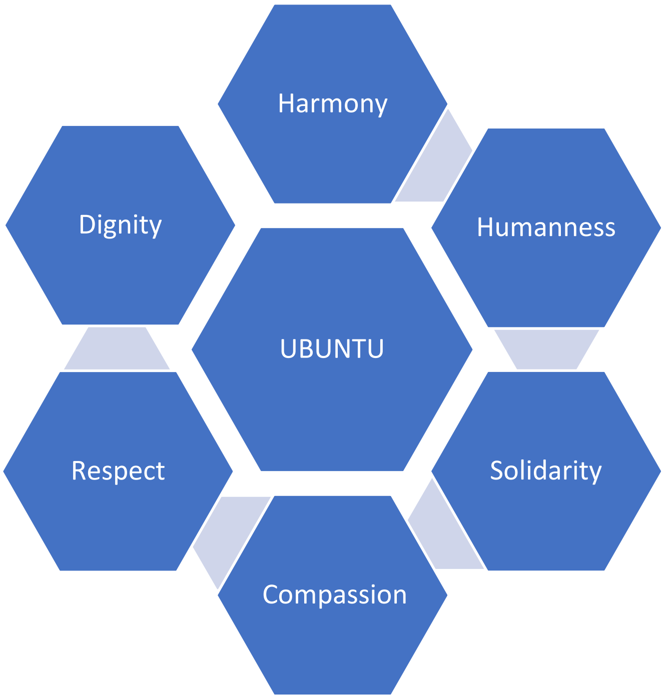

Figure 3.1: Six values of Ubuntu (Ujomudike, 2016)

Ubuntu philosophy validates the existence of Indigenous knowledge systems that emphasise survival as an essential aspect of communal living in often harsh and challenging conditions, understating the need for humanness and community cohesiveness to accomplish that. Solidarity further cements the inter-dependence, encapsulated in the saying, *"umntu, ngumntu, ngabantu"*, meaning *“I am because we are”.* The spirit of solidarity encourages cooperation and working together to achieve common goals.

Compassion gives people from different backgrounds a sense of belonging and connectedness, creating unity in diversity. All of this is underpinned by respect for all, which is inculcated from an early age, with a responsibility for self and others and an overarching striving for the dignity of all. This dignity is the ultimate symbol of a life well lived, in the community, and in harmony with one's environment. These are the foundations of traditional African knowledge.

The Unhu/uBuntu ethical model, as adopted by the Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe, further states that a social worker recognises and promotes uBuntu; they know that inherent to each person is dignity and value, that each person deserves respect, that a person exists within a cultural setting and a community and that the individual and community shape, influence and benefit from each other (Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe, 2012). This study sought to empower people by working in ways aimed at understanding and honouring their humanity, experiences, wisdom, perspectives, and actions. It is the way of Ubuntu, to truly see and be seen.

3.4.1 The Unhu/uBuntu Ethical Model

Ubuntu emphasises the community as bigger than the individual thus highlighting the need to support each other. This echoes the Africana Womanist Theory which champions the necessity for African women to draw strength from their contexts as women, family makers and community builders. The Unhu/uBuntu ethical model (see Figure 3.2), as adopted by the Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe (2012), is a guide that allows communities to draw strength and power from each other and collectively face their struggles in ways that are meaningful and aligned with their contexts and identities.

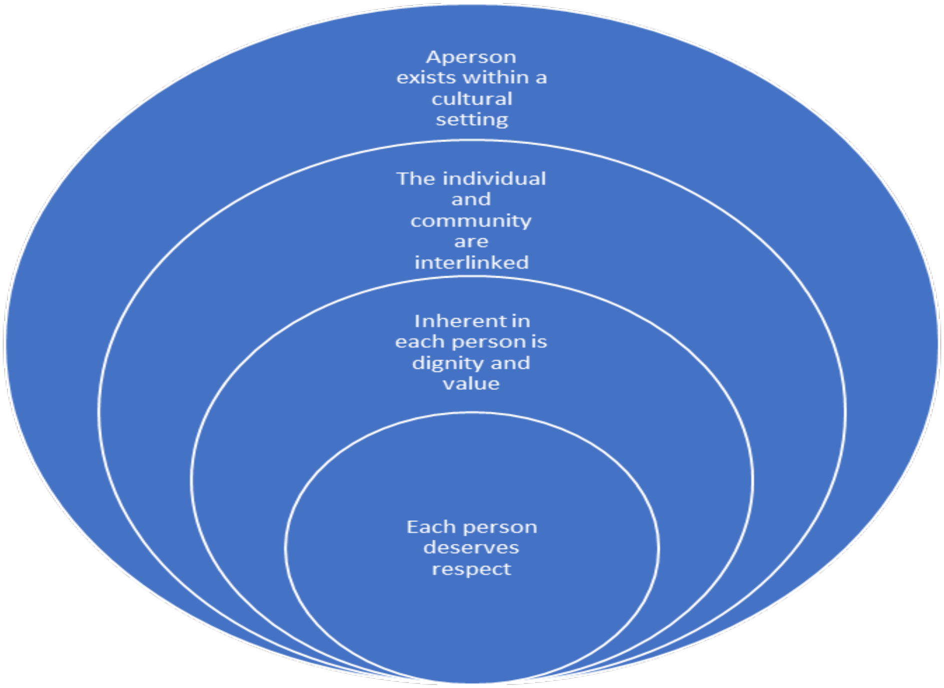
Aperson exists within a cultural setting
The individual and community are interlinked
Inherent in each person is dignity and value
Each person deserves respect

Figure 3.2: Unhu/uBuntu ethical model (Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe, 2012)

Concerning this study, one can argue that Ubuntu is the catalyst of the community resilience that community members display in the face of what could be insurmountable challenges, including food insecurity. To do this, they marshal practices rooted in Ubuntu, encouraging community-level responses to community challenges. The study was conducted in a manner that encouraged participants to have a say in what is ethically acceptable for them. Right from reading out the consent form, which was verbal rather than written, it was emphasised that they had options and could voice what they were uncomfortable with.

For instance, none of them were comfortable with their pictures being taken, so there are no pictures of groups or individuals accompanying this study. This reluctance was due to the nature of the study, which necessitated sharing information that might put them at odds with some institutions of power.

3.5 Overview

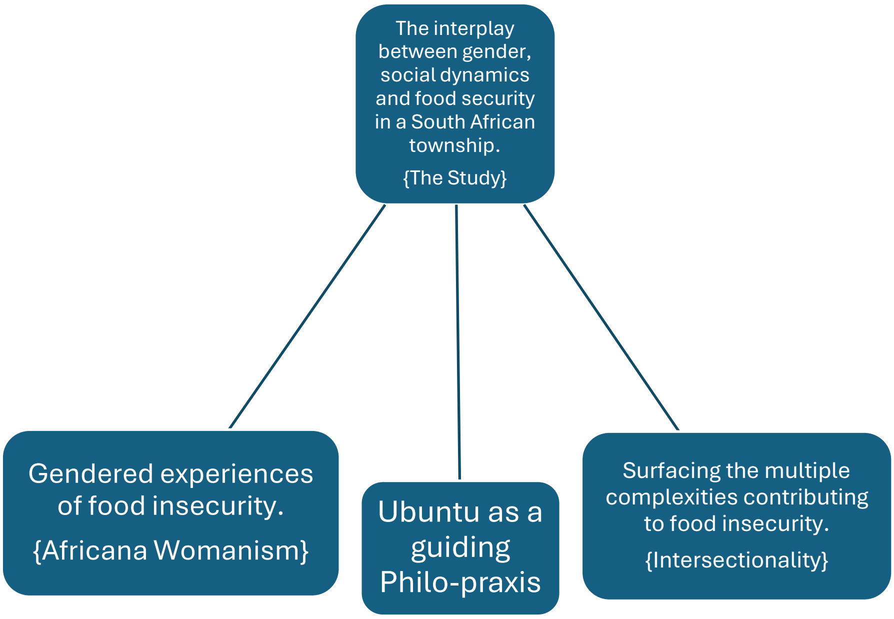
The interplay between gender, social dynamics and food security in a South African township.
{The Study}
Gendered experiences of food insecurity.
{Africana Womanism}
Ubuntu as a guiding Philo-praxis
Surfacing the multiple complexities contributing to food insecurity.
{Intersectionality}

Figure 3.3: Analytical Framework

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND CONCEPTUAL LAYOUT

4.1 Introduction

Al-Saadi (2014) defines methodology as the strategic approach or action plan that supports the selection and use of specific methods. It is defined as a broad term used to refer to the research design, methods, approaches, and procedures used in a well-planned investigation to discover something. Methodology, according to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), articulates the logic and flow of the systematic processes used in conducting a research project to gain knowledge about a research problem. Furthermore, it focuses on how we come to learn about different parts of the world. It is based on the desire to provide the best possible answers to study questions to contribute to knowledge.

4.2 Positionality

I am a community development practitioner with a long history of contributing to grassroots initiatives addressing socioeconomic challenges. I am also a Black woman from a rural community, which falls under the group of communities most likely to be overlooked and marginalised pertaining to matters of service delivery in our country. Through my work in the development space, I soon realised the importance of partnerships, realising that the complex nature of social challenges required coordinated efforts through partnerships.

In the process of seeking relevant partnerships and collaborations, I increasingly recognised the need for spaces and engagements that allowed community voices to be heard, recognised and respected. This is because communities are best positioned to identify their challenges and thus contribute meaningfully towards solutions. What became glaring was the absence of platforms and opportunities for such to happen. Having worked and resided in a university town for more than a decade, I had witnessed the efforts and willingness of the local university towards uplifting the local community – the main challenge was that progress was slow.

It is only through planned dialogues and interactive engagements that we began to collaboratively craft pathways towards sustainable impact, which required equal commitment from all partners, intentional and informed action and moving away from working in silos. Witnessing such made me interested in collaborative knowledge creation geared towards actionable solutions for social change. My mind was opened to the possibilities of intentional partnerships with institutions of higher education.

This led to a desire to explore mutual benefits that could emanate from research that sets out to be collaborative and meaningful for all parties involved, especially regarding possibilities for amplifying Indigenous voices, concerns and solutions beyond the margins. With this mindset, I embarked on a study built around the active participation of all parties, viewed as a community–university partnership for knowledge co-creation and committed to applying context-specific approaches for addressing local challenges.

4.3 A case for actionable learning

UNESCO (2009) states that higher education institutions, through their core functions (teaching, research and service to the community) carried out in the context of institutional autonomy and academic freedom, should increase their interdisciplinary focus and promote critical thinking and active citizenship. This would contribute to sustainable development, peace, well-being and the realisation of human rights. Higher Education must not only give citizens solid skills for the present and future world but must also contribute to the education of ethical citizens committed to the construction of peace, the defence of human rights and the values of democracy.

Mukhungulu et al. (2017) refer to Nyerere’s “Ujamaa” (a Kiswahili word for familyhood or brotherhood), as an alternative form of education, beyond colonialist ways of knowing in African contexts. As an educator and head of state, Julius Nyerere proposed the philosophy of “Ujamaa”, which was meant to counter the following limitations in colonial education on the African continent:

> First, education inherited from the colonialists is elitist in nature, designed to meet the interests and needs of a very small proportion of those who enter the school system. It induces a feeling of inferiority among the majority and can thus not produce either the egalitarian society we should build nor the attitudes of mind which are conducive to an egalitarian society. Second, this education has a tendency of divorcing its participants from the society it is supposed to be preparing them for. Third, is the tendency to encourage the idea that all worthwhile knowledge is acquired from books or "educated people", with the knowledge and wisdom of others being despised, and "them" being regarded as being ignorant and of no account. Fourth, education does not combine school learning with work. (Mukhungulu et al., 2017)

This highlights an urgent need to recognise the multiplicity of ways in which knowledge can be garnered and how this can emanate from multiple systems and communities, in multiple versions, especially if one considers the first and third points on the limitations espoused by Nyerere. If this is overlooked, there is a risk of stifling diverse perspectives and locally held wisdom, thus decreasing chances for meaningful action for change.

Higher Education Institutions as place-based institutions are in a position of not only possessing the capacity to generate knowledge that can contribute towards addressing social ills but are also bound by an invisible "social contract" to contribute to the sustainable growth of the environments they serve. There is a need for intentional engagement with higher education institutions in a bid to co-create learning opportunities through research projects that have communal benefits and, hopefully, academic validation, which then raises the potential of amplifying Indigenous voices, concerns, and solutions.

This study aimed to do that by attempting to use a more grounded and inclusive approach to addressing community concerns.

4.4 Community Based Participatory Research

In support of the aforementioned, a Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach was used to conduct this research. This approach is considered value-based and focuses on useful outcomes for participants (Banks et al., 2013). As argued by Blumenthal (2011) it rests on two pillars:

1) *Ethics* – responding to a history of community exploitation in research.

2) *Community empowerment* – geared towards action for change.

The CBPR is a research approach and not a specific research method. It seeks to bring communities and researchers together to engage and realise ways in which research can be a co-created and mutually beneficial process that serves both academic and community needs. This requires intentional engagement to build relationships based on trust. It is geared towards knowledge for application and is a collaborative approach committed to sharing power and resources while working towards beneficial outcomes for all partners. In this study, the intended application is towards improved food security and hinges on participants' active involvement in the knowledge co-creation process (Blumenthal et al., 2013, pp. 2–5).

The CBPR approach is guided by the following principles:

- Mutual respect
- Equality
- Active participation
- Mutual benefit

The study accommodated these principles in the following manner shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: CBPR principles in action

Recognising community	Respecting and accommodating the community, using that as a starting point for the research process.
Facilitating collaborative partnerships	A particular focus on inclusive engagement, consultation, and accountability throughout the research process.
Building on strengths and resources within the community	Recognising and respecting lived experiences, involving community logistical planning and execution of the research processes.
Fostering co-learning and capacity building among all partners	Emphasising the exchange of skills, capacities, and knowledge towards actionable solutions – recognising that all partners bring diverse experiences and perspectives to the process.
Including a commitment to sustainability	Committing to the long-term engagement required in CBPR and the critical evaluation and actionability of research findings.
Involving all partners in analysis and dissemination processes	Sharing findings in an accessible and considered manner with the community and relevant stakeholders.

Source: Smith et al. (2015, pp. 52–56)

4.5 Hermeneutic Philosophy

To aid with authentic engagement, I leaned on Hermeneutic Philosophy. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2021) cites Hans-Georg Gadamer in referring to Hermeneutic Philosophy as connecting interpretive experience with education. This views the success of understanding as educative in that we learn from our interpretive experiences. Furthermore, Gadamer's' Hermeneutic Philosophy rests on four claims:

1) hermeneutic philosophy is a fundamentally practical philosophy.

2) truth is not reducible to the scientific method.

3) all knowing is historically situated; and

4) all understanding reflects the ubiquity of language.

This complements this study, which sought to make meaning of people's lived experiences in their own words, articulated in their language. It further complements Africana Womanism on the elements of self-naming, self-definition, and solidarity. In these dialogues, community members were encouraged to share and unpack their understanding of the meanings and consequences of their lived experiences. Hermeneutics is concerned with understanding in the deeper sense of grasping not just facts but their integration into a meaningful whole.

Through careful selection of research methodologies, the study delved into personal experiences for practical knowledge that is rooted in a sense of familiar journeying as shared by groups and individuals. Zimmermann (2015) argues that for Hermeneutics, knowledge is more than naming and describing; it often involves understanding meaningful structures we already participate in. This resonated with this study, which had a strong social element, with an understanding of the structures within which people operate at a community level.

Zimmermann (2015), quoted above, also touches on the importance of language, adding that language is more than just a toolbox of labels we attach to things in order to handle them. He argues that language is more than words and ideas expressed to communicate our needs, persuade, describe, or control. For the hermeneutic thinker, it goes beyond that; it is an intricate linguistic web of words and concepts that develop historically over time, words and terms inherited through people’s upbringing, which provide guiding concepts for the recognition of meaningful human experience. This was further motivation for why the study focused on surfacing community voices with direct translations of their words where possible.

4.6 Participatory Processes

The participatory process was designed to involve participants throughout the research to facilitate maximum buy-in and establish ease of process understanding for everyone involved. Below is a summary breakdown of the process detailing how it unfolded:

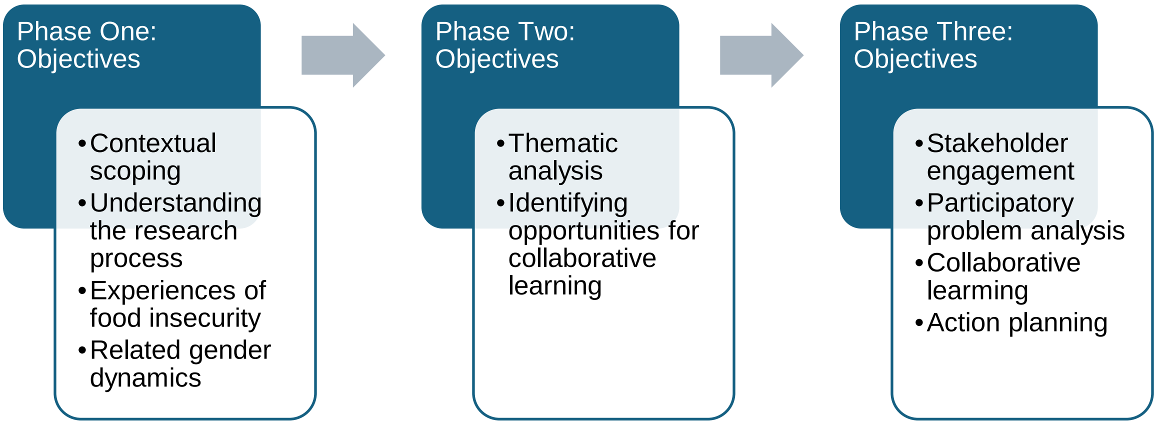
Phase One: Objectives
Contextual scoping
Understanding the research process
Experiences of food insecurity
Related gender dynamics
Phase Two: Objectives
Thematic analysis
Identifying opportunities for collaborative learning
Phase Three: Objectives
Stakeholder engagement
Participatory problem analysis
Collaborative learming
Action planning

Figure 4.1: Research process

4.6.1 Contextual scoping

The concept of active participation is very central to CBPR as it encourages equitable community participation in every phase of the research project (Banks et al., 2013). I approached the Community Committee and requested an opportunity to introduce the research project. The aim was to determine whether a topic focused on food security would be relevant to the community and, if that was the case, to emphasise the level of participation required for a successful study. This involved a presentation to the committee members, introducing the research project and negotiating entrance into the community. The goals and processes shaping the research project were shared transparently, then interrogated and agreed upon collectively, thus creating solid relationships and establishing common ground. This initial phase involved weeks of relationship-building to understand the structure and dynamics of the community before embarking on the research process. The logistics, needs, and participation levels needed for the dialogue were discussed, and some unanticipated barriers were flagged, along with alternative recommendations from committee members. One of those barriers was the availability of a venue for the dialogue and the focus group discussions. In my planning, I had assumed that we would have access to a nearby hall. This turned out to be an incorrect assumption. The hall did not belong to the community and even though they could book it for use, it would be a self-defeating exercise as they were in a battle to convince the municipality to provide them with their own community assets. The recommendation was for these discussions to be held at the homestead of a committee member. This directly affected the numbers planned for each interaction. This highlighted what I already knew, that ideally if the process was truly participatory, I should have approached the community for co-designing right from the beginning. Unfortunately, because of processes guiding university research, this was the best approach at that time.

Unpacking the topic with the committee resulted in an impromptu discussion of what they understood to be food insecurity and whether the research process would allow that to be reflected in the study. Having assured them of the aim for a community-centred and driven process, we reached an uneasy consensus. The unease stemmed from the fact that they know they are a challenged community continuously at loggerheads with local authorities. They did not want to commit to a process I might later withdraw from once I understood the nature of their daily lived realities.

They raised safety concerns, theirs as well as mine. They were open about being a community in conflict with the state. They emphasised that if authenticity were central to the study, it would require a level of trust which they could not afford to give to a stranger – the relationship-building period helped to allay some, if not most, of these concerns. They then suggested that I speak to a local municipality representative, a stakeholder with whom they have a difficult relationship. This was to ensure that I understood the nature of the relationship that I was proposing to get into, considering that I would have to journey on a knowledge co-creation process with a “rogue” community that was a thorn in the flesh to the local municipality due to a myriad of issues, including the right to adequate means of securing food.

4.7 Sampling and Instrumentation

A simple random sampling approach was used. This created equal chances for each member of the community to be selected thus allowing for appropriate and transparent representation of the community. According to Noor et al. (2022), simple random sampling ensures unbiased, representative, and equal probability of the population.

As part of being introduced to the community, the Community Committee members arranged a dialogue with community members. This involved an introduction of the research project and community members sharing their collective journey as a community. We rounded up with 20 interested community members self-selecting as participants in the study. The qualifying criteria was for participants to be above 18 years of age across genders. The focus was on people of African descent and not limited to South Africans only, as the settlement intentionally invites and welcomes the displaced and marginalised from across the continent. Although some White people in South Africa do identify as being of African descent, they are omitted here, as they are rarely found in predominantly Black informal settlements.

Regarding gender, the study was limited to an inquiry based on traditional gender understandings of gender in this context. In this community, understandings of gender remain, at the most, binary with much emphasis on traditional male and female understandings of gender.

Some argue that researchers should avoid over-emphasis on sampling considerations, which might be interpreted as “methodolatry”, referring to “a preoccupation with selecting and defending methods to the exclusion of the actual story being told” (Janesick, 2000, p. 390).

In our daily lives, we might not view our realities as stories, but in narrative form, our lives are “storied realities”. This was an essential element of the study which sought to surface the authentic voices of the participants as they shared their stories. The random sampling technique used here was meant to be unbiased and afford equal opportunity for all community members to be chosen to represent their community. Various sources were used to collect data. These included a recorded community dialogue, a timeline graph, recordings of focus group discussions and gender daily calendars. These sources were chosen based on being interactive and allowing for reflexivity.

4.7.1 Interactive methodologies

Interactive, qualitative methods were used to establish individual understanding and interpretation of specific phenomena. These included dialogues, timelines, and focus group discussions.

Dialogues**:** According to Klugman et al. (2019), community dialogues provide a method of determining viewpoints and values for representative populations and offer a means of educating and empowering participants on the topic being discussed. In this study, dialogues were used to understand the values and experiences that shaped the community. This was important for building a contextual understanding of the place.

There was intentionality in recognising and honouring existing ways of being when going into the research site. To promote community participation, the dialogue session was designed to serve as an introduction to the broader community. For a study highlighting lived experiences and the promotion of authentic voices this was effective for joint reflection, problem identification and analysis to create common ground for action geared towards improved outcomes for all. The dialogue process consisted of three stages: 1) the preparatory phase 2) the implementation phase and 3) post- dialogue phase.

4.7.2 Preparatory phase

This included a formal introduction to some members of the Community Committee. The goal was to create a shared understanding of the research process especially the expected level of partner engagement and for the leaders to advise as to the plausibility of the plan. This is where matters of community representation and confidentiality were first discussed. Discussions also touched on whether the community would be inclined to work together towards a common goal as the research process would ideally end in some form of collective action. This laid the groundwork for a potential collaborative process with informed participation and a commitment to research for social change. This was wrapped up with plans for a bigger group interaction to be arranged by the community leaders.

4.7.3 Implementation phase

This included an introduction to the community and the opportunity to speak about the research. This covered background information on why the community was chosen for the study. Participating community members were allowed to introduce themselves and give a brief background of how and why they joined the settlement. The goal was to create a sense of shared identity and generate feelings of ownership of the project. The dialogue was designed to be an open discussion, and participants' levels of knowledge, perspectives and ease of participation were prioritised.

4.7.4 Post-dialogue phase

This was to evaluate whether the objectives of the dialogue had been met. It was also an opportune time to review notes and recordings for precise documentation.

Focus group discussions**:** According to Nyumba et al. (2018), focus group discussions are frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a selected group of individuals rather than a statistically representative sample of a broader population.

This study involved two focus groups with 10 participants per group. The aim was to understand the impact of food insecurity in the community and the actions of both men and women in responding to the challenge. Focus group discussions, using narrative interviews, were conducted to encourage people to share their individual experiences in ways that accommodate contextual dynamics and meaning making. A philosophical hermeneutic interview approach was used to elicit a storied understanding of food insecurity from the participants. According to Johnson (2000), philosophical hermeneutic interviews seek to uncover what it means to be as it shows up or reveals itself through the story. As the stories are elicited, the interpretation begins. Simultaneously, the practical interconnected experiences are revealed.

Gender daily calendars**:** Seasonal, weekly, and daily calendars are qualitative participatory rural appraisal tools which allow men and women to indicate or discuss their labour participation in the daily operations of running a household or a farm (Marimo et al.,2021).

For purposes of this study, diaries were shared among 20 participants for use over four weeks. The committee assigned two young people – participants themselves – with the task of distributing the calendars and initiating weekly reminders with each participating family. The goal was to determine whether gender roles influenced responses to food insecurity and whether that reflects community dynamics in responding to concerns associated with food insecurity. Both men and women used gender daily calendars to detail their daily activities. This further aided the understanding of gender dynamics and contexts at the household level. The assumption was that they could also be used to identify how men and women spend their time and show the interconnected elements between household level responses and community level responses related to food security. It also created a broader understanding of matters of access and control of resources crucial for food security.

The questions were developed once a certain level of contextual understanding was established from the initial scoping exercise. All communication for the dialogues and interviews was in isiXhosa. Discussions were recorded and translated into English, with excerpts in isiXhosa where there was a risk of meaning being lost in translation. Particular attention was paid to retaining meaning and individual voices.

4.8 Research as Empowerment

Cohen and Uphoff (1980) describe participation as people’s involvement in decision making about what should be done and how to implement the project, sharing the benefits of a project, and the evaluation of the project. They further maintain that in examining how participation occurs in a particular project, consideration should be given to a) where the initiative starts – from above or below b) what inducements for participation are involved – how voluntary or coerced it is c) the structure and d) the channels of participation. Furthermore, they suggest that consideration should be given to e) duration and f) scope of participation.

Cognisant of the above, Arnstein’s Ladder of Citizen Participation was used as a guide to determine what participation could mean and practically look like in the context of the study. The Ladder of Participation is a model developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969. It is based on the belief that true participation in any setting requires redistribution of power. Arnstein (1969) states:

> Citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits are parcelled out.

This model guided my approach to the partnership with community participants. It also aligned with the ethos of the study, which sought to surface community voices and highlight lived experiences. It was a challenging exercise as it required intentionality and periodic reflection to assess the level to which inclusive and active participation was practised. The eight rungs of the Ladder of Citizen Participation work hierarchically, with the lower rung being symptomatic of problematic forms of participation, leading towards greater levels of citizen control (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217). They are as follows:

1) ***Manipulation*** – misled into believing that power is being given in a process, whereas it has been intentionally designed to deny power.
2) ***Therapy*** – driving a narrative that powerlessness is akin to mental illness, dodging responsibility for the problem and refusing to acknowledge institutional powers and policies that are the cause of the problem.
3) ***Informing*** – a one-way flow of information with no feedback mechanisms and no scope for negotiation.
4) ***Consultation*** – informing without inviting input and no accommodation for concerns or ideas.
5) ***Placation*** – limited degree of influence in a process; involvement just for the sake of involvement.
6) ***Partnership*** – scope to participate as partners and negotiate, question and share.
7) ***Delegated power*** – some degree of control, management and decision making.
8) ***Citizen control*** – the ability to participate in and lead programmes or institutions, influence policy and negotiate terms and conditions for change processes.

The degrees of influence are clustered into three, demonstrated below in Figure 4.2.

Citizen control
Delegated power
Partnership

- **Degrees of Citizen Power**

Placation
Consultation
Informing

- **Degrees of Tokenism**

Therapy
Manipulation

- **Non-participation**

Figure 4.2: Three degrees of influence (Arnstein, 1969, p. 217)

It can be argued that the eight-rung ladder is a bit of a simplification considering the complex nature of participation; in real-life processes, there might be more than eight rungs. However, it does serve to illustrate the significant levels of participation and aids with reflective and evaluative processes where participation is central to achieving desired outcomes. An awareness of this goes a long way in making participants comfortable enough to voice their concerns and contribute freely, especially with traditional research having a history fraught with power dynamics and infantilisation of participants when it comes to research. The ladder juxtaposes citizen powerlessness with the powerful to highlight the power dynamics involved. In this study, the model contributed to the process in the following ways:

- It gave participants time and space to reflect, articulate and share their hopes and challenges.
- It allowed for free-flowing engagement, leading to a more relatable and contextually relevant research process.
- It promoted individual and group empowerment through the active participation of all in deliberating on community matters and potential solutions.

Overall, this research hinged on active participation. This required equitable community participation in every phase of the research project. This posed a challenge given the disconnect between academic processes and community dynamics. For instance, even though the study was designed to be participatory and geared towards practical outcomes for collective action, the challenges stemmed from the fact that at the research design stage, participants were not involved in co-designing. This created a gap between what was imagined (by me as the researcher) and what existed (on the ground), which had the potential to create struggles aligning with what was expected (by participants from the research process).

This is a critical consideration if we are to close the gap between research production and research use. For this to happen, community partners should be able to find value and relevance in the study in order to motivate the application of lessons learnt /findings.

4.9 Data Engagement

Exercise books were used for the gender daily calendars. Each of the 20 participants was given an exercise book where they could document their daily activities over a period of four weeks. A trusted family member was identified by the participant to assist where there were challenges with writing. The study used multiple methodologies to explore the research question. Methodological triangulation was used to decrease bias and clarify data findings. Triangulation is best described as a combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Denzin, 1978).

To get a sense of collective experiences across individuals and groups, listening to recordings and engaging with the diaries included highlighting repetitive narratives and metaphors and heightened awareness of tone. The dialogue session was the first to take place, quickly followed by two focus group discussions. The quick succession assisted with retaining clarity and flow through the sequencing of the discussions. Reflecting on the recordings and gender daily calendars involved some notetaking, which assisted in knitting the data together.

This, in turn, contributed to the identification of emergent themes. I viewed the emerging themes through a fugitive lens as they aligned with the lived realities of the community. Fugitivity challenges essentialist narratives and cartographies of oppression (Madera, 2015). It also challenges liberal understandings of freedom as an abstract, beyond physicality. Gross-Wyrtzen (2023, p. 1262) articulated it as follows:

> Fugitivity is a method rooted in the experiences of African, African-descended, and Indigenous peoples as they struggle(d) against dispossession and dehumanisation wrought by colonial and capitalist enclosures and foreclosures.

In an article published in *Dismantle,* Sikka (2020) writes about the one-dimensional refugee and the importance of recontextualising the identities and experiences of those in flight, be it from fear, pain, injustice, violence or oppression – in certain cases all the above. She argues that the one-dimensional simplification of the identities of marginalised people results in dehumanisation. The study aligned with the argument in its surfacing of land matters, dispossession and the quest for conducive spaces for living and thriving – which includes means of being food secure.

Clustering of themes involved looking for connections between emerging themes and clustering them together. These were grouped into three themes that remained priorities based on the strength of supportive narrative/evidence.

4.10 Data Analysis and Participatory Meaning Making

In the vein of active participation and empowerment, the study adopted an open and inclusive data analysis and interpretation process. For these reasons, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) became the preferred method of data analysis. Phenomenology as a philosophy is not limited to an approach to knowing; rather, it is an intellectual engagement in interpretations and meaning making used to understand the lived world of human beings as they perceive it (Eatough & Smith, 2017). It explores in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social world, and the main currency for an IPA study is the meanings particular experiences, events, and states hold for participants (Eatough & Smith, 2017).

The IPA encompassed the perspectives and experiences of the community in analysing their situation, thus positioning them as experts in their own lived experiences. In his paper titled *Livelihoods: Whose reality counts?* Chambers (1995) poses a question that seeks to understand the following – between professionals and the poor, whose reality counts? The reality of the few in centres of power or the reality of the many at the periphery? In most cases, those who are deemed professionals or experts would be the ones who hold the power. This author (Chambers) then notes that these realities differ more than most professionals recognise. He proceeds to argue that in assessing conditions and seeing what to do, professionals' realities tend to be universal, reductionist, standardised, and stable – thus not allowing much room for context-specific understandings. In this study, IPA attempts to dislodge these data analysis distortions through participatory meaning-making processes in reflecting the realities of "the many at the periphery" (Chambers,1995, p. 175). It can also be argued that IPA has a layered interpretation, with the participants trying to make sense of their world and the researcher trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world (Eatough & Smith, 2017). How this unfolds is shown in Figure 4.3.

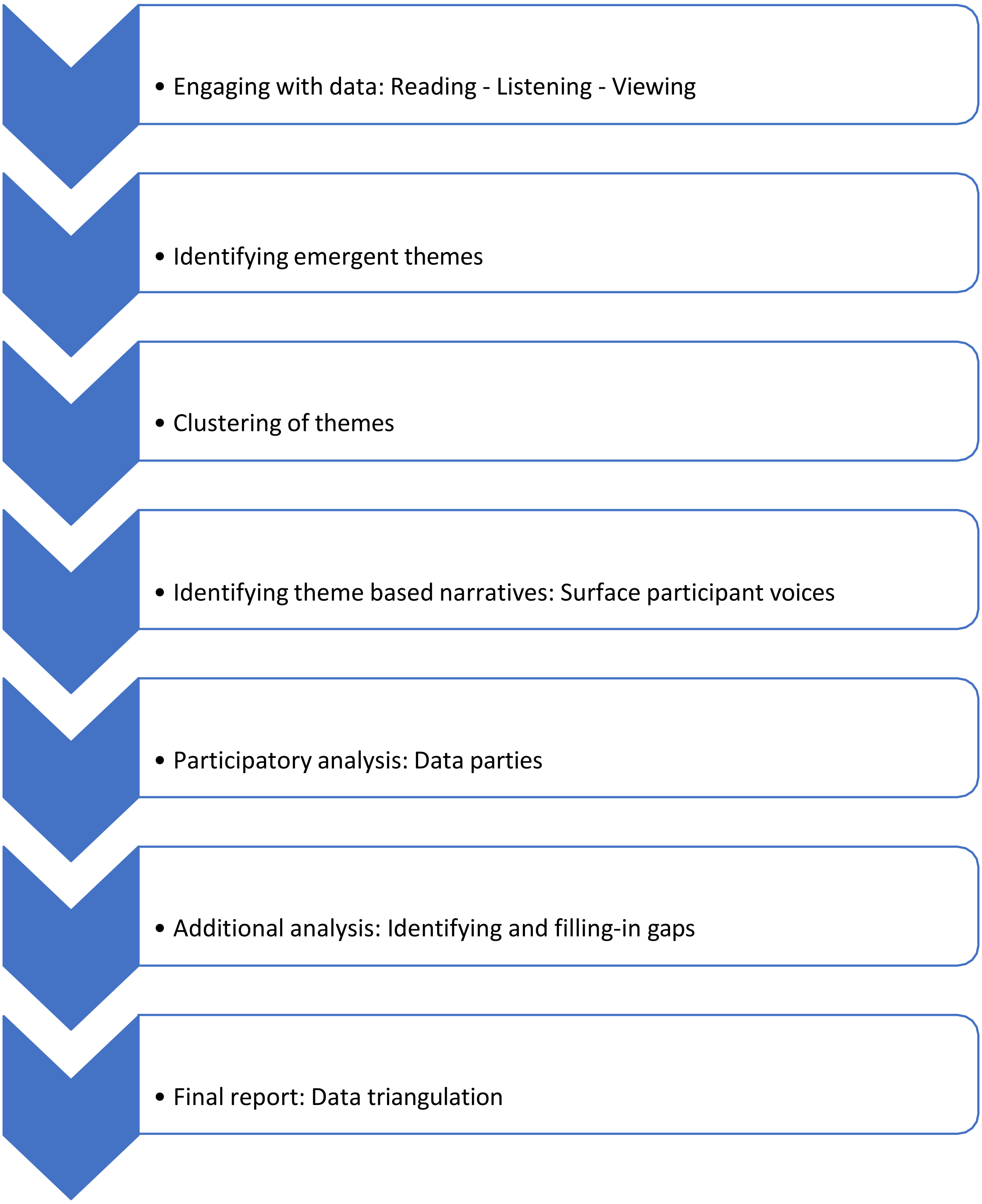
• Engaging with data: Reading - Listening - Viewing
• Identifying emergent themes
• Clustering of themes
• Identifying theme based narratives: Surface participant voices
• Participatory analysis: Data parties
• Additional analysis: Identifying and filling-in gaps
• Final report: Data triangulation

Figure 4.3: The IPA process (Eatough & Smith, 2017)

4.11 Ethical Considerations

The study was guided by the Unhu/uBuntu ethical model which is credited to the Council of Social Workers in Zimbabwe. It states the following:

> A Social Worker recognises and promotes uBuntu, she knows that inherent to each person is dignity and value, that each person deserves respect, that a person exists within a cultural setting and a community and that the individual and community shape, influence and benefit from each other. (CSW, 2012, p8)

4.11.1 Validity

Participatory data analysis involving the research participants was undertaken to ascertain whether the identified themes were a true reflection of what came out of the research process. The process involved sharing the findings from the research. This was an interactive, oral process with the participants commenting on emergent themes and what needed to be prioritised in the context of addressing food insecurity. The probing questions were as follows:

- Is this a true reflection of the research as you understood it?
- What further insights do you have based on the findings?
- What findings stand out the most for you?
- What action would you like to prioritise as informed by the findings?

An equally important layer of the process was the opportunity to devise a plan for actioning the research findings.

4.12 Study Process

Table 4.2 below offers a brief outline of key research moments. It centres the study on interactions with community members aligning with the key driver of the process which was aimed at amplifying community voices.

Table 4.2: Participation for change

Key Moments	Interaction	Date	Number of Participants
Community Introduction	Introduction to the Committee Leader	13/12/22	2
Project Introduction	Meeting Committee Members	14/01/23	5
Community Dialogue	Dialogue with Community Members	08/03/23	23
Focus Group 1	Discussion with the first group of community representatives	08/03/23	10
Focus Group 2	Discussion with the second group of Community Representatives	08/03/23	10
Planning Meeting	Introducing gender daily calendars	07/06/23	09
Gender Daily Calendars	Collection of completed gender daily calendars and process reflections	08/08/23	3
Participatory Analysis	Collective data analysis	01/05/24	11
Participatory Action Planning	Responding to research priorities	01/05/24	11

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Analysis</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Community Co-learning
(Research Process)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Chapter 5</td><td>Chapter 6</td></tr>
<tr><td><i>Dialogue</i>
o Experiences of oppression.
o Levels of vulnerability
o Resilience factors.
<i>Focus group discussions</i>
o Persistent experiences of food insecurity.
o Rising crime levels.
o Coping mechanisms.
<i>Gender Daily Calendars</i>
o Reflections on gender daily calendars</td><td><i>Storied realities</i>
o Siyalamba.
o They lied to us.
o We do not like violence.
o Issues of gender.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Community Co-learning
(Way Forward)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Chapter 6
o Reflections.
o Taking learning into the future.</td></tr>
</table>

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodology used to help answer the research questions. The data from the research analysis method used in this study is presented in this chapter as the findings and provides an analysis of the data collected through various methods mentioned in the previous chapter. Data analysis is important as it helps to give meaning and understanding to the collected data. The themes that emerged from the analysis are discussed in alignment with the research questions.

It is important to note that how this and the following chapters are written is embedded in a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology emphasises data findings that are authentically presented to ensure narratives and reflections that are central to the findings. In addition, this approach allows for a participant-centred understanding of complex social phenomena. To effectively allow for participants' realities to be interpreted in a way that reflects their own lived experiences, I employed a phenomenological approach to present and analyse the results. Phenomenology allows for a dual interpretation of the results and gives both the researcher and the participants equal opportunity for interpretation.

Various sources were used to collect data in this study. These included dialogues, activities timelines, focus group discussions, and gender daily calendars. The aim was to understand the impact of food insecurity in the community and the actions of both men and women in responding to the challenge. Excerpts from the discussions are coded as PR (Participating Residents) for the dialogues, and FGP (Focus Group Participants) for the focus group discussions.

Owing to the multiplicity of the methods employed it is important to first recap the methods employed to analyse the data and then present the findings under each methodology.

5.2 Dialogues

Dialogues were used to clarify the community's evolution, interrogating what led to the settlement and seeking to understand what contributed to building a sense of community. The exercise had a three-pronged focus: 1) experiences of oppression 2) levels of vulnerability and 3) resilience factors. In closing the dialogue, timelines were used to highlight important community events over three years. The dialogue was meant to introduce the research project to the broader community, gain buy-in and establish a foundation of trust and shared interests. The questions were designed to understand how the informal settlement started, the challenges they faced in their collective struggle to build a functional community, and the factors contributing to their resilience.

Dialogue - Guiding Questions

- When you think about your life before joining this community, what are the three things that come to mind?
- What makes you most proud of your community?
- What examples can you give of the times when community members have worked together as groups or communities to achieve something?
    a. How did these come about?
    b. Who was involved?
    c. What was achieved?
- What motivates/limits you when it comes to active participation in community efforts?
- Since you joined this community, what has improved most in your life?
- When you think about a thriving community, what comes to mind?
- What role are you willing to play to support growth and development in your community?

In most African cultures, when people are invited to share their stories, cultural protocols and respect require that they be allowed to do so in their own words, at their own pace. You honour the process by creating the space for such to happen; you do not hurry the process nor dictate terms and conditions. After all, as Africans, we believe that “it is the one who wears the shoe who feels the pinch”. The same applies to storytelling, especially stories that require authenticity and revisiting sunken places.

As an audience, we offer our listening hearts, honoured by the generosity of the traveller, who, having travelled the road, now honours us with knowledge and direction. Based on that, it was more than fitting to open this research process with a community dialogue.

5.2.1 Emerging themes from the dialogues

Understanding the interplay of contextual dynamics and food security

a) Experiences of oppression

Through storytelling, individuals shared their journeys and accounts of how they ended up in the settlement. It soon became apparent that there was a common thread of unemployment, oppression, and displacement in most of the journeys shared. For writing purposes, these have been translated from Xhosa to English.

A community member shared the following:

> *I left my marital home. I left because there were too many of us, my mother-in-law’s children, my sister-in-law, their children … there were just too many of us – grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all living in one two-roomed RDP house at Lingelihle. (PR4)*

Another community member added:

> *There isn’t enough space in these houses for families to raise their children without compromising certain values. Sometimes children learn about sex in these situations because there is no privacy for adults; children see these actions and then experiment outside, especially with the rise in poverty; girls as young as 12 years of age are taken advantage of by older men who selfishly exploit their vulnerability and poverty. (PR11)*

Listening to these stories, one not only hears but also feels the palpable anger and disillusionment in all the voices, with the realities of being disenfranchised, displaced, and disregarded surfacing in different modes. Men, women, and young people narrated the different but oh-so-similar journeys that led them to establish this community. This is a community that arose out of a refusal to play dead – a resistance to accommodating a system that had betrayed and butchered the hopes and dreams of a freedom that was paid for in blood, by South Africans who believed that the enemy was racism and apartheid, only to discover that sometimes, the enemy looks like you, shares the same history as you but no longer identifies as you. In describing this phenomenon, Fanon, in his book, *The Wretched of the Earth*, wrote thus:

> During the colonial period the people were called upon to fight against oppression. Following national liberation, they are urged to fight against poverty, illiteracy, and underdevelopment. The struggle, they say, goes on. The people realise that life is an unending struggle. (Fanon, 2004, p. 51)

The above quote echoes this community's shared reality: the dance between identity and politics – the “unending struggle” (Fanon, 2004, p. 51), of a people betrayed and wilfully forgotten, the intersections of race and class. There were clear indicators of the multi-layered nature of this betrayal, of how different elements emanated from different stressors depending on individual journeys. The biggest takeaway from the dialogue was a strong sense of shared identity which is the most significant lens through which the community interprets and views their collective reality.

> *When we retaliate the treatment from the municipality, they target uMama because she is the one who got us all here. At those time we sit there at the top, by the stones, we sit there the whole night, burning tyres, ready for any trouble. Umama helped all of us and we will always stand for her. (PR17)*

This shared reality and meaning making is the glue that holds them together. It has become the foundation for collective struggles, lessons and action. The state's neglect and being treated like outlaws has resulted in a community that bands together – ironically, like outlaws – with an incredible focus on contextually relevant action and an amazing clarity on what matters for community “survival”.

> *Dealing with the Municipality has been one of our biggest struggles. We would not sleep at night. We would use whistles to call each other for meetings, there to five people moving around the whole area blowing whistles, then people would come out. (PR14)*

In closing the dialogue sessions, participants developed a timeline detailing collective community actions and outlining actions taken towards addressing service delivery concerns in the community.

b) *Levels* of vulnerability

For this study, it was important that I aimed for a context-specific understanding of the realities of living in an informal settlement. This included understanding the nature of the vulnerabilities of day-to-day life in a settlement and how men and women experienced these. What came out strongly were feelings and experiences of “otherness” shared by all participants, who felt that they were not treated nor recognised as part of the township or the city. One participant articulated this pain as follows:

> *In this community we live in hardship. For us to get any services we must fight. We hear that we have been temporarily allocated to Ward 5. I personally do not know how true that is, I have not seen that counsellor. If I knew him, I would approach him and ask him some questions. (PR19)*

Being dwellers in an informal settlement meant that their existence started as a “crime” from having occupied land illegally and evolved to them being treated worse than criminals and being denied basic service delivery. This continued to be the lens through which they were viewed for the longest time, resulting in significant clashes with the local municipality. There are multilayered vulnerabilities plaguing this community. These include lack of livelihood opportunities, inadequate forms of shelter and a lack of access to arable land.

The latter is more of a consequence of state neglect in the form of non-existent or slow service delivery which has limited access to water and other resources needed to support agricultural development. These circumstances contributed to several protests and clashes with the local municipality, with major concerns being unemployment and service delivery. It was only through direct conversation with the community that one was able to ascertain the magnitude of the challenges besetting the community. It was further testament to the rampant corruption and the resultant inequality that led to the establishment of this community.

Inadequate forms of shelter have proven to have a ripple effect in heightening vulnerabilities at household levels, having dire effects on family dynamics, especially the most vulnerable group, children. Corruption in the allocation of government housing led most families to the informal settlement. They were removing themselves from overcrowding in spaces shared with extended family members, up to three generations residing in cramped spaces. These shared experiences also highlight the vulnerability of children in these situations.

Even in cases where parents managed to leave for the informal settlement, the scourge of poverty did not allow them to build the healthy and conducive environments they wanted for their children as detailed in the following snippet:

> *When I joined this community, I did not have a job, but I needed a place to stay. I had five children and depended on their government grants – as I still do today, but only three remain on the grant. I managed to build one room in this place, so that I could move away from a crowded place and stay with my children. I moved with my children, we stayed in this one room, a mother, a father and five children – in one room. In the end, I had to take the older children to go and live with my mother, because the whole situation became too oppressive. (PR3)*

No matter how one views it, how children are affected by these circumstances will have long-lasting consequences on their growth and development. It begs the question of what kind of future generation we are raising. They are raised in circumstances that expose them to the dangers of abuse, they do not have adequate care or nutrition, and their grant money is stretched to cover extended family needs – in some cases even being used for building these one-room structures due to parents not having a stable income.

c) *Collective community action*

Figure 5.1 below captures the community's long fight for service delivery over the six years from 2017–2022.

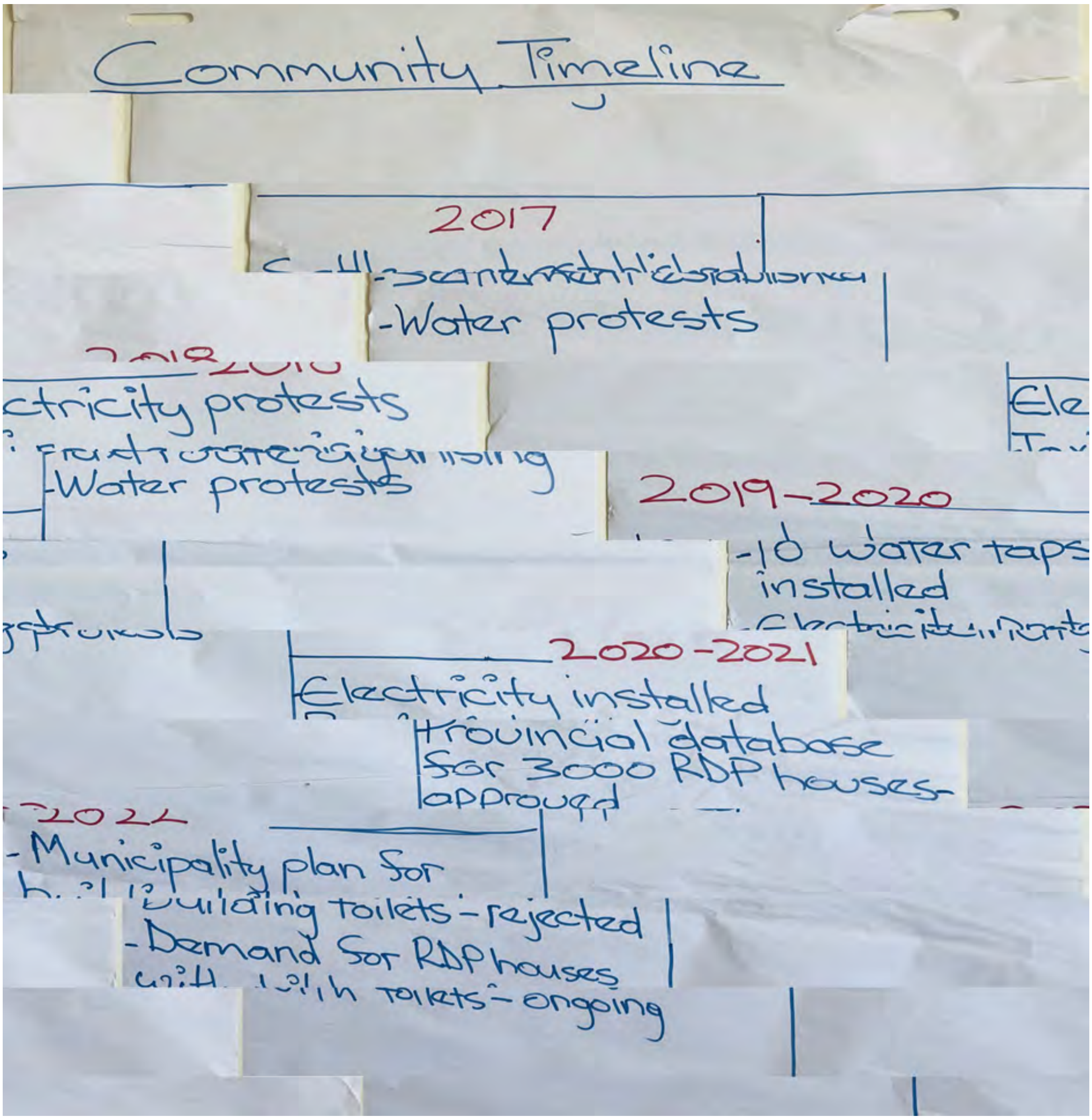
Community Timeline
2017
-Water protests
2018
ctricity protests
-Water protests
Ele
2019–2020
-10 water taps installed
2020-2021
Electricity installed
Provincial database for 3000 RDP houses approved
2022
-Municipality plan for building toilets - rejected
-Demand for RDP houses with toilets - ongoing

Figure 5.1: Community timeline from 2017–2022

d) Resilience factors

The settlement has shown high resilience despite constant run-ins with authorities. It is important to note that as much as the community has displayed a strong sense of agency and collective action, there is a figure that remains a constant and is central to the establishment and evolution of the community. Even though the study is not about an individual, it is impossible to ignore her as most community members mention her in the discussions, referring to her as “umama” or “imbokodo” (the grinding stone).

While constantly having to justify and fight for their existence and recognition, the community has survived and grown over the years. Referring to the resilience of marginalised urban communities, Bene et al. (2018) note that except for a few exceptions, urban resilience literature has chosen to avoid embracing any strong social justice element or promoting or acknowledging the needs of the most marginalised and disenfranchised urban groups.

This is a significant injustice because a key challenge for such settlements is their vulnerability which arises from interconnected concerns linked to the peripheral nature of their existence. From the onset, the community was aware that to survive and rise above their daily challenges, they needed to organise themselves into a cohesive force that could challenge the existing status quo on many fronts. A participant captured this sentiment:

> *What we have as a community is an understanding that we are all we have, nobody is coming to rescue us. We know this because even when one of us dies, with our prevalent unemployment, we come together to assist each other, we help each other plug holes in our mud huts for the burial send-off, we bring food to the bereaved family. (PR 5)*

Another added:

> *We are lucky to have this mbokodo (umama). This woman has shown us what standing together can do. We have survived many things together. We came from different places with different problems, but we all found shelter here. We have survived COVID-19 and the likes together. This woman is a parent and a doctor, when we don’t have medication, she shares medication. So, we are well, surving and with shelter despite the lack of*

> *services because we believe that one day all will be well – so long as we have each other. We are clear on what we need and what we want. (PR19)*

This required a certain level of resourcefulness and adaptability. A measure of the community's resilience and collective strength is found in the community action they undertook between 2017 and 2021. This period is notable because, in those five years, they organised themselves into a community and planned and allocated plots in a way set to minimise safety and fire hazards; this is commendable given that fires occasionally raze most informal settlements due to the proximity of housing.

> *We fought a lot in the beginning, especially when trying to design for a safer community. At some point people would come an erect their houses anyhow. We did not want that; we did not want to be congested like informal settlements in Cape Town and risk being overwhelmed by potential fires. We would dismantle people's structures and there would be a lot of fighting. In the end it all worked out. (PR5)*

Fire statistic data provided by the South African municipalities and analysed by the Fire Protection Association of Southern Africa (FPSA) revealed that for the 2016/17 municipal reporting period, there were 5 283 informal dwelling fires recorded by municipalities and reported to FPSA (FPSA, 2018). The space, which was nothing but an unused piece of land, is now home to 3 000 households. The sheer volume of these numbers is, on its own, an indictment on the state for dereliction of duties in providing state-sponsored housing for those in need.

The community still does not have adequate water, with just 10 taps servicing all 3 000+ households. They still live in makeshift housing, with the duty holders illegitimately delaying the building project. There is no sewerage system or rubbish collection as these are municipal functions. Despite what might have been insurmountable challenges for some, they have managed to organise themselves to respond to one of the biggest crises recently faced by mankind, COVID-19, with hardly any state support due to their challenges with municipal service delivery. This did not prevent them from adapting during the COVID-19 pandemic, even if it was under the most undesirable and disturbingly inhumane conditions.

Data from the dialogues revealed that community resilience stemmed from three factors:

- The ability to self-organise – this is supported by robust community leadership structures and participatory consensus-building processes.
- Community diversity and flexibility – the community is a microcosm of diverse Eastern Cape groups, with Xhosa, Coloured and African immigrants. This has contributed to innovative and adaptable decision making.
- Community responsiveness – their ability to maintain cohesion and strength for collective action in the face of social, political, economic and natural shocks.

Instead of adopting a defeatist attitude, the community draws strength from its challenges. They are proud of what they have achieved; they have established a cohesive community from nothing and with nothing but a resolute spirit, thus affording themselves the opportunity to identify their reality in their own words and address their challenges in relevant and intentional ways, as dictated by necessity. Despite the many challenges, they have built a strong identity that has propelled them into powerful collective action. They narrated a story of a visit from a provincial government official:

> *Someone from the provincial government once came to visit us. He told us that they are wrong for our actions – that the Municipality was planning to build rent and buy housing on the occupied land. We challenged him and asked what they were doing with the resources they were selling from our community, like the clay which is collected from this same area and transported to Port Elizabeth to be sold in places we don't know. How does the community benefit from that? With all these job losses, what are people supposed to do with rent to buy houses? (PR11)*

Dialogue discussions highlighted matters regarding marginality and marginalisation, surfacing experiences of landlessness which is a fundamental component in addressing food security. The land is not just a space for food production but land as a foundation for shelter, productive activities, legacy building, and identity building – a place of belonging but, above everything else for security, in all its multi-faceted dimensions. Reflections on the land concerns dwelt on how the land was lost and how the people felt justified in taking it back with or without cooperation from the government.

> *We had to remind the government that clay being sold for profit across provinces and countries is Rhini clay, the people of Rhini never agreed to the sale of the land nor the clay, the people want to benefit now … they need the land. (PR11)*

On the importance of shelter, one participant noted:

> *When I first came here in 2019, I did not have anything except my four children and their grant money. The most important thing was finding shelter, and I have found shelter. I tell myself that I have shelter, even when I find a snake inside because of lack of building material. I have no windows because I do not have the money. My children must eat and be clothed from the R420 grant each. The only way I will not have a snake in my dwelling is if the municipality do what they should do. (PR19)*

This interaction with “place” has significantly influenced how people in the “space” understand and respond to certain phenomena. The interchange of space and place has dictated the communities’ understanding of food insecurity. Just as none of us is beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, forms, images, and imaginings (Said, 1993).

5.3 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions using narrative interviews were conducted to encourage people to share their individual experiences in ways that accommodate contextual dynamics and meaning making. These were informed by a gender-transformative approach, which explored ways of enhancing gender sensitivity and encouraging equal participation of genders in improving food security in the community. Gender-transformative approaches create opportunities for individuals to actively challenge gender norms and address matters regarding power imbalances between people of different genders. Guiding questions for the discussions had a certain level of flexibility and were as follows:

- As a community - what are your experiences of food insecurity?
- How do you manage food shortages at home?
- Based on your experience, what are the most contributing factors to food insecurity in your community?
- How does being food insecure make you feel?
- What lessons can you share from the experience?
- What are your recommendations towards addressing food insecurity?

Instead of burdening women with the responsibility for equality, gender-transformative approaches engage men and women together as agents of change. Thus, this approach insists on working with both women and men to transform the social relations of gender to be more equitable; for example, in decision making, access to resources and how women and men are relatively valued in all spheres of society (Wong et al., 2019).

The participants were storytellers while I listened and asked prompting questions when required. Referring to qualitative research interviewing, Kvale (1996) describes it in the traveller metaphor as follows:

> The traveller metaphor understands the interviewer as a traveller on a journey that leads to a tale to be told upon returning home. Furthermore, the interviewer-traveller wanders through the landscape and enters into conversations with the people encountered. The traveller explores the many domains of the country, as an unknown territory or with maps, roaming freely around the territory. (Kvale, 1996)

In addition, the traveller may also deliberately seek specific sites or topics by following a “method”, or “method” as understood the original Greek meaning of “a route that leads to the goal”. The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them - in the original Latin meaning of “conversations” as “wandering together with”. The journey may not only lead to new knowledge, but the traveller might also change as well. The journey might instigate a process of reflection that leads the interviewer to new ways of self-understanding, as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs in the traveller’s home country (Kvale, 1996).

5.3. Emerging Themes from Focus Group Discussions

Food insecurity – Experiences and responses

a) *Persistent experiences of food insecurity*

What became apparent as the study unfolded is that experiences of food insecurity before and during the COVID-19 pandemic did not differ much in this neglected and marginalised community. In the discussions, participants highlighted how COVID-19 brought additional challenges to an already challenging situation, especially when lockdown restrictions led to the shutdown of almost all opportunities for informal jobs. Households headed by young people were heavily affected, as initially, there was hardly any social grant relief.

The Social Relief Fund was made available months later, and it still presented many limitations and challenges for young people to access. All these factors combined created fertile ground for crime. Community voices highlighted the interconnectedness of socioeconomic challenges affecting food security. In a community of more than 3 000 households, served by 10 community taps, any form of food production is almost impossible and requires creativity and knowledge of gardening driven by a strong will and determination to succeed despite the intimidating odds.

In addition, most of the households are not fenced, leaving produce vulnerable to animal consumption even if one manages to navigate the water scarcity. This has led to significant reliance on the few shops in the area to purchase food items. This does have its limitations, given the high unemployment rate in the community. This has led to less than desirable coping mechanisms, especially for young boys and girls who are forced into petty crime and sexual transactions for bare necessities. All these factors point to challenges of availability, affordability, accessibility and equality. A community member shared a real-life scenario about the cycle of poverty in the community.

> *It begins with rampant unemployment, which leaves the burden of taking care of families squarely on the shoulders of the elderly, who receive an old age grant from the government. The small grant is not enough to cover the needs of the whole family for*

> *the whole month. A week into the month, there is no means to put food on the table; this sends the grandparents to moneylenders to feed the family for the rest of the month. When the month ends and another grant comes, the first to be considered is the money lender, with interest. This leaves very little for household expenses, then back to the money lender again … and the cycle continues. (FGP1)*

When faced with minimal resources, food accessibility becomes a complex exercise. It involves decisions around transport costs to go and buy food. At a logistical level, the community struggled with accessing food for purchase. This was due to the absence of grocery shops in the community. This meant that people had to travel to town to purchase food items. This was a financially draining expense, given that most rely on government grants without formal employment. It was also a safety and health risk for those who opted to walk the long distance to town.

The Community Committee invited immigrant shop owners to come and set up businesses in the community, thus addressing the matter of access and safety. With community-based shops, people could easily buy what they needed and negotiate for credit. Even though these shops are an option, the prices are not competitive, and nutritious choices are limited, which links food insecurity to health outcomes such as chronic illnesses like sugar diabetes which need to be managed through proper diet.

In a conference on Strategies to Overcome Poverty and Inequality held at the University of Cape Town in 2012, it was noted that most South Africans buy their staple food from commercial suppliers rather than growing it themselves and are dependent on having direct or indirect access to cash. Therefore, food insecurity in South Africa is not due to a shortage of food but rather inadequate access to food due to structural poverty and inequalities. This points to the multiple elements related to food insecurity, but what complicated this study was how all these elements need urgent and equal attention to address the question of food insecurity in a solution-driven manner.

The study surfaced the links between food and economic and social insecurities. Although the residents have secured a space that they now call home, occupation without any structural considerations has sunk the community further into food insecurity and acute poverty. The shared concerns were hard to miss in this comment from a participant:

> *We need more water taps, infrastructure etc, but all they do is look for ways to be more corrupt – we will never stop fighting. (FGP2)*

A preferable alternative is working the land, but without proper resources, it is difficult to get produce from the land – the result is chronic food insecurity. These are the range of factors that hinder food security in this community. This has been an ongoing struggle since the establishment of the settlement.

b) Rising crime levels

As a result of COVID-19 and the resultant hunger and deprivation, crime became rampant in the community. The perpetrators were primarily young people who would break into dwellings and steal the meagre possessions that people had. This was a consequence of food insecurity, which, depending on who you speak to, can also be seen as a coping mechanism – a means of putting food on the table. With the community running a parallel justice system within a state, these young people were punished according to community-set standards.

The community claims they cannot depend on the state. The argument is that when crimes are reported, responsible officials complain that there are no proper addresses or GPS coordinates in the area; this then means that police are always late to arrive or never arrive and this also applies to ambulance services. Still, community efforts at combating the criminality that arose out of extreme poverty and lockdown restrictions were met with the full might of the law, with police miraculously being able to track and arrest community members who were out patrolling their neighbourhoods to keep criminals out. These community members were arrested for flouting lockdown restrictions. Several of them were still attending court cases for not complying with curfew restrictions at the time of the study.

There is a strong sense of behaviour correction rather than punishment in how these matters are handled. When community members beat up *Amaphara* – unemployed, young, male, drug addicts – they also nurse them back to health because they are still their children. After they have “dealt” with them, they then call the police or ambulance to come and collect them at a designated field where they deposit beaten-up suspects. In a conversation with a municipality official (during the relationship-building stage when the community encouraged me to talk to stakeholders from both sides of the conflict for a contextually broad perspective), he shared that the settlement now has the lowest crime rate in the whole township due to the ‘active measures’ they take against crime.

Crime levels reflect the high unemployment rate among young people and the entire community in general, further heightened by the absence of adult support and supervision in their homes. This breakdown in traditional family structures can be traced back to the reasons that led people to the settlement. One of these reasons was overcrowding in shared extended family spaces. Abuse and ill-treatment would be rife in such conditions, and family structures would disintegrate.

c) Coping mechanisms

The focus group discussions revealed that there could be no separation of food insecurity from the broader forms of insecurities ravaging the community. One participant highlighted this in a comment:

> *Food is very expensive, where both the mother and the father are not working, there is no hope for the children, children cannot go to school on empty stomachs, education suffers, and substance abuse becomes the norm. In this community, there are a lot of school-going age children who are not in school. (FGP1)*

Coping mechanisms largely revolved around leveraging social capital and solidarity for community action. Dale and Onyx (2010) describe social capital as that which strengthens communities and is a necessary ingredient for community development. According to Harvey (2002, p. 173), social capital is “the capacity of persons to transform existing state of affairs”. Both descriptions are apt for this study. Social capital is nothing without agency, and theirs became meaningful because they combined it with community agency to transform their lived experiences.

Coping mechanisms included the establishment of community soup kitchens at the height of the pandemic. Committee members organised donations, some offering their homes as temporary kitchens. The soup kitchens were run daily but gradually closed as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. The community relies on social connectedness and collective effort. At a household level, they support each other with food, and at a community level, they rely on collective action to navigate challenges of access, power and politics. Table 5.1 summarises the focus group discussion.

Table 5.1: Summary of the focus group discussion

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS	
Key Points	The interconnectedness of factors affecting food security. State neglect as the biggest driver of food insecurity. Social connectivity as a response to addressing food insecurity. Community agency for collective solutions.
The Unexpected	The multi-layeredness of insecurities linked to food insecurity. The tension between law and justice. Processes of public service and service delivery. Gender solidarity.
Strengths	Shared identity. Solidarity. Collective action.

5.4 Gender daily calendars

Gender Daily Calendars were used to understand the impact of food insecurity in households and the actions of both men and women in responding to the challenge. The aim was to determine whether the socialisation of men and women influenced the division of labour at a household level, thereby introducing power dynamics and powerlessness concerning access to adequate food. Understanding these dynamics was meant to contribute to the co-creation of collaborative learning spaces that would allow the community to bridge any perceived gender divides and work together in informed and meaningful ways towards addressing food insecurity.

5.4. Reflections on Gender Daily Calendars

A consequence of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa is the phenomenon of women being left alone to be the head of the home and fend for themselves and their children due to migrant labour and political unrest. In Buchi Emecheta's "*The Joys of Motherhood*", when the British colonisers abduct Nuu Ego's husband, Nnaife, to join the army, the people lament, saying:

> What type of life do we live when a man with a large family can be abducted in broad daylight? … Why can't they fight their own wars? Why drag innocent Africans into it? (Emecheta,1979, p. 254)

This indicates how coloniality thrived on breaking African family structures in multiple, violent forms. The separation of men from their families disrupted the traditional division of labour along gender lines, where African men did the heavy labour of hunting and providing. These separations resulted in women being left behind to shoulder the burden of survival. Remnants of that legacy remain today, as evidenced in the gender daily calendars.

The diaries included a section for capturing the socio-demographic characteristics of each participant with a focus on age, gender, family size, and source of income. This was useful in understanding gender dynamics and contexts within households. Focus group participants were given diaries which they updated daily for four weeks. The focus was on daily activities. For ease of interpretation, the analysis included the division of activities into categories as listed below:

1. Production: This included activities that contributed financially or directly linked to food production for household consumption.
2. Home management: These encompassed all home care activities, i.e. childcare, housekeeping, food preparation and caregiving.
3. Community involvement: Activities inclusive of social interventions towards hunger alleviation.

What emerged were intersections between income insecurity and food insecurity; if you throw in the accompanying health hazards which include chronic sicknesses, malnutrition and stunted growth for the young ones then you have a triple threat. All participating households were recipients of social grants. From capturing the socio-demographic characteristics of each participant, it was ascertained that 99% of participating households had no family member in formal employment, and all households indicated social grants as a steady source of income. This highlighted that the most urgent need across all genders in all households participating in the study was viable job opportunities.

The gender compatibility evident in social interactions becomes compromised at the household level due to the dwindling of traditional family structures. There is a clear difference between male-headed and female-headed households based on prioritised activities. This is strongly influenced by stereotypical gender-specific roles, with blended households having somewhat of a balance in activities. This highlights the importance of gender relationality between men and women in all community structures, including households. In this study, the number of participating female-headed households was the highest, followed by blended households, then male-headed households and the lowest being households headed by teenagers, where first siblings, mostly girls, took the brunt of the responsibility. There were no participants below the age of 18 years (see Figure 5.2).

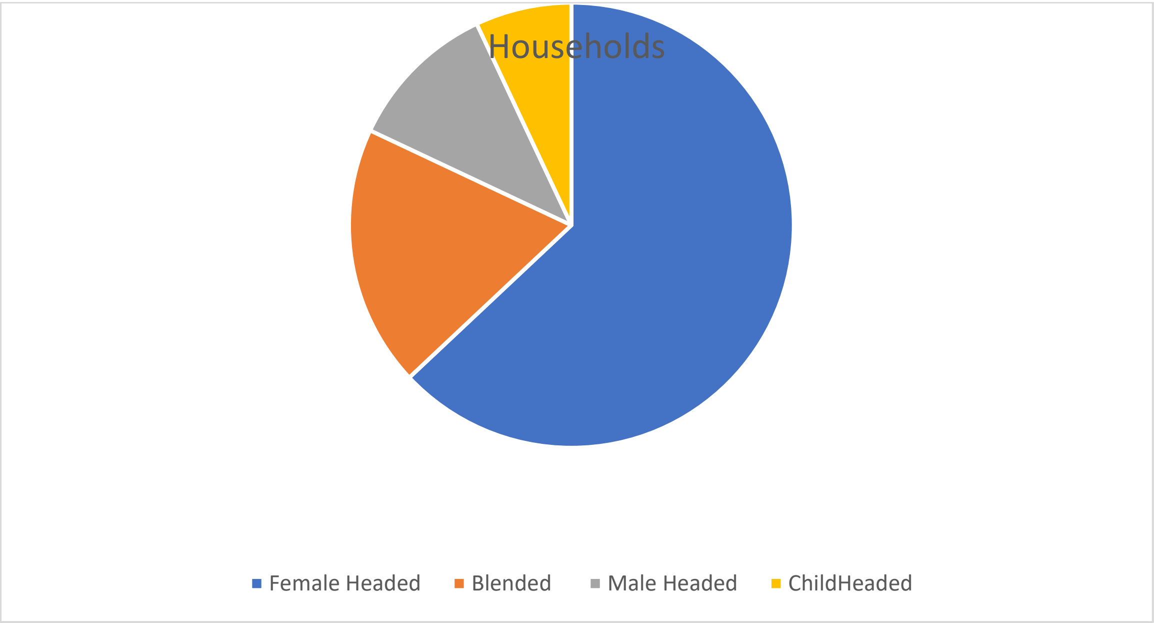

Figure 5.2: Household data

The high unemployment rate limits possibilities for resource acquisition because with no jobs there is no stable household income, which automatically translates into limited access to adequate food or means of food production. Concerns of power and powerlessness can, therefore, not be attributed to gender dynamics but, for now, solely point towards *state inadequacy*. Social grants pose a Catch-22 situation, with their ability to suck people into a cycle of dependency and entitlement that is purposefully designed to give them a false sense of security, relegating them to voting fodder for those who seek to destroy and plunder, as stated in the following excerpt.

> *Being Black is a heavy burden, we struggle, we have nothing. In our struggles, we still continue voting for this government … we vote, but we do not benefit in any way. The only benefit we get is more oppression. (PR5)*

The study highlighted different priorities for men and women based on activities clustered around the three focus points: 1) production 2) home management and 3) community involvement activities. The "X" indicates the gender with the highest score. Women indicated higher participation in home management activities. This can be because roughly 63% of the participating households were female-headed. They also had more dependents than male-headed households. Women also indicated higher participation in community involvement geared towards solutions to food insecurity. Men indicated higher participation in production activities, including intense labour like gardening and livestock rearing. Table 5.2 shows the summary of the different priorities for men and women.

Table 5.2: Summary of men's and women's different priorities

Activities	Women	Men
Production		
Gardening		X
Livestock		X
Income generation		X
Social grants	X	
Home Management		
Cleaning	X	

Laundry	X	
Caregiving	X	
Childcare	X	
Wood fetching	X	
Water fetching	X	
Cooking	X	
Community Involvement		
Food Bartering	X	
Soup Kitchens	X	

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Introduction

According to the United Nation's Special Rapporteur, the following is argued:

> The right to food is the right to have regular, permanent, and unrestricted access – either directly or using financial purchases - to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food, corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear. (Ziegler, 2008, p. 9)

The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (2002, p. 3) further includes considerations on water rights, stating the following:

> Water is required for various purposes. For instance, water is necessary to produce food (right to adequate food) and ensure environmental hygiene (right to health). Water is essential for securing livelihoods (right to gain a living by work) and enjoying certain cultural practices (right to take part in cultural life).

This chapter seeks to understand the extent to which the research discussions were able to bring a contextually relevant understanding of factors contributing to food insecurity in an Eastern Cape informal settlement.

6.2 Food availability, access, use and stability

6.2.1 "Siyalamba" (We are hungry) – Realities of being food insecure

When participants were asked to share their understanding of food insecurity, it became clear that there is no single, direct translation for "food insecurity" in isiXhosa. It has different interpretations depending on culture, experiences and language. For this community, the meaning was interchangeable between hunger, poverty, and unemployment – *"indlala, intlupheko, intswela-nqgesho".* The group discussions focused on the frequency of food, referring to abundance or scarcity and the most common response was *"siyalamba, asinamanzi, asinacingo, abantu abasebenzi*"

Xhosa for *“We are hungry, we do not have water, we do not have fences, people are unemployed”*.

What was also interesting was the tone of these discussions. Yes, there was anger, but also determination, hopefulness and a belief in their ability to turn things around. The sharing of these experiences was accompanied by an indication that it was a collectively owned community problem that called for a collective approach to solving it. There was a noticeable “we-ness” in the individual responses accompanied by a shared understanding of the complexity of factors affecting food accessibility. Furthermore, there was also a notable resistance to acting as victims even though they felt victimised by the state – their circumstances had not paralysed them.

They all expressed deep anger towards a system they felt had abused and abandoned them. As indicated in the preceding section, their frustrations concerning food insecurity were also linked to landlessness and voicelessness. Theirs was an anger that had a galvanising effect, communicated through words like *“asiboyiki”* (we are not scared of them), referring to state officials, accompanied by *“sinendlela zethu”* (we have our ways), alluding to their refusal to shrink or cower.

A community’s level of security in its immediate environment determines the extent to which people can respond constructively to the challenges of food insecurity. This reflects an understanding of place as an inescapable aspect of daily life and is intimately linked to life experiences. Keith et al. (1993, p. 13) posits:

> Places provide the context in which we learn about ourselves and make sense of and connect to our natural and cultural surroundings; they shape our identities and our relationships with others, and our worldview.

The above quote beautifully encapsulates this community’s story: the people, the journey, the struggle, and the vision. The dialogue also highlighted matters regarding landlessness, food insecurity and coping mechanisms. It explored the realities of an existence lived as a crime due to how the very existence of the informal settlement began as a form of resistance against state neglect and forced landlessness, with the landlessness being defendable by law while the resistance remains a crime.

> *The municipality is not making life easy for us. Instead of seeking for solutions they are quick to bring out court orders to arrest umama for helping us establish this community. This was not even their land – it belonged to a White man who got it by whatever means he used. He wasn't using the land, we then took it, in fact we made him understand we needed the land more than he did. He, the White man, came here shouting and destroying structures but we soon made him understand. (PR11)*

On the one hand, there were those who felt abandoned and forgotten by a government they voted for. They had been waiting for government-sponsored housing for years; instead, they had to witness their houses being allocated to non-qualifying individuals, propelled by corruption and greed. The rampant corruption in these allocations rendered them helpless and hopeless until they took the land by force. This is the story of many in the community – a story of identities heavily shaped, influenced and oftentimes crushed by politics – politics of being Black and poor in the not-so-new South Africa.

On the other hand, some felt generationally bound to poverty and deprivation, a struggle they had grappled with since 1994, the year of the dawn of democracy. What was seen by the whole country as the dawn of a new era, meant to translate into a better life and better opportunities for "all", proved to be nothing but a mirage for some participants and their families. For them, the not-so-new dispensation has been a revolving door of chronic unemployment and countless barriers to accessing government support.

6.2.2 "They lied to us" – Dealing with complex contributors to food insecurity

Before moving to the settlement, some shared four-roomed shoebox houses with three generations – grandparents, parents, and their children. This was seen as a big betrayal of the hopes they had held for a Black-led government, especially after close to three decades of "freedom" under a democratic government. Talking about the betrayal by the local government, the sentiments were as follows.

> *They lie to us; they come here with empty promises. We are the ones who are always running after them, and I just want to find out from them … they call themselves the municipality, and the municipality has a duty to provide services and ensure human*

> *rights. Even prisoners have rights, so even us, in as much as we are their prisoners, they should still provide us with the services that are due to us by law. (PR4)*

This has negatively affected their access to food security. The community views food insecurity as a weapon and punishment wielded towards the Black, poor masses. If you are a "nice" Black person, compliant in your poverty, supportive of the status quo, barely seen and with no aspirations to ever be heard, a suffering and smiling kind of attitude, a "knowing your place" type of existence – then you might qualify for scraps from the Black masters' table – the corrupt, ruling elite. On the other hand, if you are a community that challenges the status quo, does not cower and diminish, and fights against political dominance, then the struggle is perpetual.

The instruments of law and order under democratic rule are then used as anti-Black and anti-poor weaponry. These constant struggles have exposed the community to limitations and barriers specific to the dispossessed and disempowered. This was clearly evidenced during COVID-19 when accessing state-distributed food parcels was almost impossible because the community did not have a designated ward councillor. Instead, they were expected to attach to another ward because their community was not recognised as legitimate, and as one would expect, they were not a priority in that ward.

In protest of such behaviours and attitudes from political duty holders, Fanon (1964), in his collection of essays, "*Toward the African Revolution*", argues that true liberation is not the pseudo-independence in which ministers, having a limited responsibility, hobnob with an economy dominated by the colonial pact. Liberation is the total destruction of the colonial system, from the pre-eminence of the language of the oppressor and "departmentalisation" to the customs union that in reality maintains the former colonised in the meshes of the culture, of the fashion and the images of the colonialist (Fanon,1964, p. 105).

Considering all this, this community's fight for food security cannot be separated from the fight for land, housing, service delivery and human dignity. In thinking about ways of addressing inequalities regarding food access, they had to first address matters concerning Black hate – hate that is dished unequally along class lines, with a particular brand of disdain for the downtrodden as displayed by state institutions that continue to drag their feet on service delivery matters. This is the psychology of the matter, where the oppressed, once in power, act like the oppressor – aligning with Steve Biko’s view about the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor being the mind of the oppressed (2017).

Embarking on this study, I had no inkling that it would be so closely intertwined with politics. The community dialogue provided an opportunity to revisit the community's origins and understand the nature and impact of their food insecurity. Established in 2017, this informal settlement has a population mass of 3 000 households. It is from having built all of this out of nothing that one begins to glimpse this community's resilience. Factor in that there is barely any government support, and the almost non-existent instances where there have been some considerations have been attained through struggle, strife and sometimes even violence.

One can argue that apartheid is still alive and kicking – now based on a hierarchy of “deserving Blacks”. Those at the bottom of the ladder are treated merely as voting fodder, propped by social grants and starved of dignified labour. In contrast, those at the top of the ladder are seen as “better Blacks”, revelling in self-aggrandisement and untouchability, once a characteristic of the oppressor. It is a rollercoaster of betrayal and forfeited dreams in the land of the “liberated” and “democratically ruled”.

Focus group discussions unearthed a whole myriad of concerns connected to violence which include systemic abuse, complex social challenges, hunger, criminality and escalating anger. Surprisingly, South Africa is not a country at war as generally understood by the term, which often involves military action; rather, South Africa is a country at war with itself, as evidenced by occurrences in the community where the study was located. For a country cited as the most dangerous country in Africa in 2023, (Defence Web, September, 2023) this makes for a combustible situation.

In the foreword to the book *Fanonian Practices in South Africa* by Nigel Gibson (2011), S’bu Zikode of Abahlali Basemjondolo argues that every struggle must begin at the point where the people who have decided to rebel find themselves, with the resources they have, based on the experiences that they have had, in the face of the limits and dangers they encounter and with the understanding that they have.

6.2.3 "We do not like violence" – Food insecurity and the unravelling of a community

For years, the community has been agitating for service delivery from the local municipality. They do this with the hope of securing resources that will enable them to be food secure. These include access to water, electricity and housing. Water protests spanned two whole years before they got the 10 water taps servicing 3 000 households. This is far from fulfilling basic household requirements, not to mention gardening. It is still an ongoing struggle. What makes the situation even more difficult is that communication channels with the municipality are fraught with barriers and friction. Participants shared their experiences as follows:

> *They refuse to give us appointments, so we plan and organise to get them to listen to us. Very early in the morning, we send runners in front, to their offices, where we meet the security and 'temporarily relieve him of his duties'; that way, we access the offices before anybody gets in; by the time they arrive, we are already inside, waiting for them. That is the only way they can listen to us. (FGP3)*
>
> *We do not like violence – but unfortunately, it is the only language they understand. All we want is service delivery. (FGP4)*

People in the community are living under conditions that perpetuate hunger and food insecurity. The impacts are felt at household and broader community levels. Food insecurity is intertwined in a complex web with other aspects that involve corruption in high offices and criminality at all levels (state, community, household), all emanating from an interplay of socioeconomic and political factors. Food insecurity is linked to resource scarcity and state abandonment. This has created fertile conditions for violence. Violence in households, violence in the streets and violence against the state.

Unemployment has led to a breakdown in traditional family structures, with family members being incarcerated or falling victim to substance abuse. This erosion of family structures and loss of values is a form of household violence; it emanates from desperation associated with hunger and deprivation, which puts young people at risk of being exploited for sexual favours to put food on the table. In the focus group discussions, this was referred to as a “coping” mechanism and a curse, and though seemingly conflicting statements, they are both true.

Violence in the streets is associated with criminal behaviour, breaking into houses, and stealing uniforms from the backs of children coming from school, all associated with youth unemployment, hunger and substance abuse. Household break-ins were the handiwork of “Amaphara”, young males who are unemployed and abuse street drugs. These young people devolve from being functional young men, full of hope, to neighbourhood menaces fuelled by drugs.

They come from all sorts of backgrounds with the common denominator being their joblessness. In an unpublished collaborative 2022 study on youth unemployment in Makhanda, “*Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures*”, young people cited drug use as a coping mechanism to unemployment and the feelings of inadequacy accompanying it. The community summarily addressed this by establishing the Neighbourhood Crime Watch Unit. They patrol the neighbourhoods at night and administer street justice to those caught in acts of criminality.

Violence against the state includes violent protests, rampant state corruption, the mysterious deaths of whistle-blowers, death threats and intimidation of a female committee leader … the list seems endless. The COVID-19 pandemic was another form of violence which further exacerbated existing conditions regarding unemployment and food insecurity. The link between food insecurity and a rise in crime levels during COVID-19 was attributed to an inability to access the informal job sector due to lockdown restrictions and the desperation of those who saw no other way of putting food on the table except through crime.

This is in direct contrast to the Governance, Public Safety, and Justice Survey, 2020/21 and released by Statistics South Africa, which states that crime levels experienced by individuals and households dropped in 2020/21 at the height of the pandemic (Statistics South Africa, 2022). One might argue that the discrepancy could have resulted from lockdown restrictions, which would have hindered people from travelling to police stations to report such crimes.

6.2.4 Gendered experiences of food insecurity

With the gender daily calendars, the goal was to understand the role of women in households headed by men, the role of women in women-headed households, the plight of girls in food-insecure families and the hunger experience for both men and women. The study highlighted a higher percentage of women than men involved in food-securing activities. Instead of unequal gender dynamics and traditional stereotypes, the evidence pointed to this being a result of broken family structures. This surfaced in the community dialogue, where participants were asked to share stories of how they ended up in the settlement.

Reasons ranged from escaping abusive marriages and extended family challenges. Most of those who filled out the gender daily calendars were in single parent/guardianship households, with most of the households led by women. This placed the burden of responding to food insecurity largely on the shoulders of women by necessity and not necessarily by choice. Findings from the gender daily calendars revealed the complex gender constructs at the household level. Unlike community-level gender interactions where compatibility is the main element, at the household level there are stark differences in how concerns of gender, masculinity and femininity play out.

Most of the households were female-headed households leaving women with the sole responsibility of food provision. Again, it reflects what was highlighted in the community dialogue when sharing reasons for why some people, females in particular, relocated to the settlement – most women had run away from abusive situations in family homes. In households, gender inequality emerged in nuanced and complicated ways. One was because of unemployment and how men checked out either emotionally or physically from their own families once they felt that their ability to provide was challenged.

The gender element in this is that men seem the most likely to choose themselves and walk out of difficult situations while the women are the ones who stay, taking over the burden of food provision. The argument is almost always that men, traditionally and theologically, are expected to lead and provide and once that ability is compromised or challenged, the woman is faulted and “punished” by being abandoned. None of that compatibility in gender roles, modelled publicly and brilliantly in community collective action, is evident in the privacy of homes.

The gender daily calendars surfaced a pattern of women and girls shouldering the responsibility of food provision in most households. These included cases of sibling-led households where the eldest takes on parenting duties, mostly taken up by the first daughters. This brought the focus on the plight of girls in food-insecure families, especially considering coping mechanisms that had been discussed in focus group discussions, some verging on criminality and exploitation of girls but cited as means of responding to food insecurity.

Participants in the focus group discussions were motivated to pursue a more in depth focus on this “coping” mechanism but pursuing it further would have had ethical implications as some of the girls were underage. The broad range of food-securing activities at the household level includes travelling long distances for wood fetching, water fetching, food bartering and involvement in local soup kitchens, food budgeting on social grants, food preparation and allocation. In most households with a male presence, the activities included animal husbandry, which is more male-related, and supportive income from “piece” jobs (temporary jobs) undertaken by males.

Women had a lower score on “piece” jobs because of childminding or caregiving activities on the home front but instead had a higher percentage of relying on child grants. This highlights an urgent need for women to access sustainable income-generating activities for improved food provision in their families. In a community where unemployment is rampant, this is an urgent concern. It has consequences not only for food provision but also for food quality. The daily calendars also indicated that none of the families had three square meals a day; the most food preparation documented was for breakfast and supper.

Early in the study, it became apparent that notions of gender, collaboration, and support were unique to the space. In group discussions about lived experiences, it surfaced that daily lived experiences were inextricably linked to and influenced by the environment in which said experiences unfolded. For the most part, men and women work together to build an environment that allows them to effectively address matters that are of collective concern to the community. Shared struggles have largely influenced gender dynamics, which are more fluid and responsive to community needs with little emphasis on traditional gender roles. Consequently, gender dynamics emerged as a strength, allowing for solidarity. This is in stark contrast to gender dynamics in households, as revealed by the gender daily calendars.

Regarding tackling service delivery concerns, the community has an approach that involves women as planners and organisers while the men are primarily the heavy-lifters and muscle. Women are more visible and lead from the front, while men operate from the fringes. This is an interesting dynamic because one would assume that women would be less visible and more marginalised in a community grappling with matters regarding social injustice and failed democracy. Currently, the overriding concerns are security and service delivery. For them, this is a shared struggle that trumps sexism and upholds collective responsibility. This has already been mentioned above and is supported by the participant below concerning confrontations with the municipality:

> *When they refuse our requests for meetings, we walk from this place, down to town, to the municipality. When we get to town, we choose a particular street that allows us to move undetected on the way to the municipal offices. At the front of our group, we lead with young boys who are sprinters. They run so fast that before the security realises, we are already inside. We then blow our whistles, to indicate to the rest that we are inside. If the officials continue refusing to hear us, we move on to plan B, there is always a plan B. (FGP9)*

This is not to say that sexism and related forms of oppression are not a problem; they are just not permitted to be a distraction from the urgent agenda of securing their environment from destructive forces, which ironically, also happen to be state forces. Other internal challenges, including exploitation and violence against women, are dealt with just as decisively by both men and women working together. Participants in a group discussion shared the following story which highlighted the shared commitment to gender collaboration for effective action:

> *A man had just been released from prison and raped a woman on her way to town. Due to the slow pace of police response, the woman reported to the Community Committee and described the suspect. Young men moved around, asking questions and taking pictures of similar featured individuals. Female committee members strategised and coordinated the identification process; the men searched for the suspect and delivered him. Eventually, the victim identified the suspect through the pictures. The suspect confessed and was held by the community till the police came to collect him. The whole process took less than a day. No gender was more burdened than the other.*

This not only highlights the interconnectedness of unemployment – a significant contributor to food insecurity and crime – but also reflects a community that works together in gender-compatible ways to bring about positive change, safety and stability. The women in this study do not view themselves as separate from men in the struggle for food security and other related forms of security, instead, they are a vital part of a collective, which is the community, regardless of gender.

This sense of gender solidarity emerged as a significant part of community dynamics. It allows them to leverage their diverse strengths towards addressing systemic problems that serve as barriers to food security. Right from the inception of the settlement, concerns regarding landlessness and limited access to resources have been the primary barriers to food security in the community. The community understood that these underlying factors would have to be addressed first if food security was to be a possibility.

For instance, it was a woman who, having witnessed people protesting “irregularities” in RDP allocations to no avail, then decided to lead in the identification of vacant land space and invited others to join the settlement. This was viewed as a transgression by the state and gradually led to resistance from men and women responding to the threat of forceful eviction. In narrating the story of their beginnings, a participant shared:

> *They are refusing to give us services because they are mad at us for having such strong female leadership. They know we have ‘umama’, and they don’t like it. As a woman, I would like to thank Mama for taking the lead on the land issue. We all have different stories that left us despondent and hopeless in our previous lives (sniffles and tears in the background), but because of this woman, we are here now. (PR5)*

In understanding this variable of gender solidarity, one begins to see the thread that connects the men and women. This further connects them to the land, which ties them in a bond of shared struggles – struggles which include concerns about safety, unemployment, health and scarce resources. The basics of survival, from the community's perspective, dictate that when people feel safe, they plan better; for them to execute their plans, they need to be healthy, and for them to be healthy, they need sustenance – in the absence of employment, proper sustenance is a challenge and food security remains nothing but a distant dream.

6.2.5 Creating collaborative learning spaces

The collaborative learning space in the study process demonstrated among other things the value of inclusivity and mutual respect. From the first step, the CBPR approach highlighted mutual learning, active participation and the importance of shared ownership. The shared ownership element allowed for mutual trust; this required deliberate engagement with the community and ultimately laid a foundation for meaningful participation in the study process. The participants became co-creators of knowledge as opposed to mere subjects. This made the whole study a collaborative community learning process for me as the researcher and community participants and their families to a certain extent. For instance, during the planning stage for the gender daily calendars attendance was low. What assisted was that the data collection methods had already been discussed when introducing the project. This then allowed for a negotiated process of getting the diaries to the participants who could not attend because there was already an understanding of how the process would unfold. Two young people were tasked with the delivery of the actual diaries and weekly touchpoints with the 20 households to ensure continued updating of the diaries. This not only spoke to the collaborative aspect but also allowed for a certain level of competency building on understanding research processes, communication and assisted data collection.

The use of the Hermeneutic Philosophy approach allowed for the co-creation of knowledge in that participants narrated their lived experiences – this can be argued to have created an in depth understanding of food security and gender dynamics. The study was enriched by diverse perspectives from knowledge co-creation to data collection methods that allowed for collective meaning making.

The study process in relation to creating collaborative learning spaces was not without challenges. Initially, there were tensions rooted in community distrust of external interventions. This required collaborative learning spaces that are transparent and flexible. These spaces allowed participants to capacity build by integrating local knowledge in addressing their challenges. The learning from this was that collaborative learning spaces at a community level work best when driven by relationships with communities in the promotion of people-centred initiatives. Furthermore, this requires targeted capacity support to enable communities to be at the forefront of change making. Most importantly, the designated spaces need to adapt to the continuously changing needs and aspirations of the community.

As part of the collaborative learning aspect of the study, men and women were encouraged to fully participate in identifying, formulating and implementing food security strategies in their communities. This had a three-pronged focus:

- how COVID-19 has exacerbated the pre-existing challenges of food security;
- the influence of gender dynamics in response to food insecurity; and
- the opportunities for creating collaborative learning processes to address food insecurity in an informal settlement.

This involved making the connection between four factors repeatedly surfaced by all methodologies. These were community-level factors, vulnerability elements, sources of resilience and resilience indicators. All of these were linked to experiences of food insecurity and resultant coping mechanisms.

Community-level factors included the following:

- Landlessness
- A dysfunctional municipality

- Limited access to resources
- COVID-19

Vulnerability elements were:

- Service delivery
- Safety and security
- Unemployment

Sources of resilience were:

- Shared identity
- Community agency

Resilience indicators were:

- Solidarity
- Collective action

These informed the nature of the envisaged collaborative learning planning and actioning.

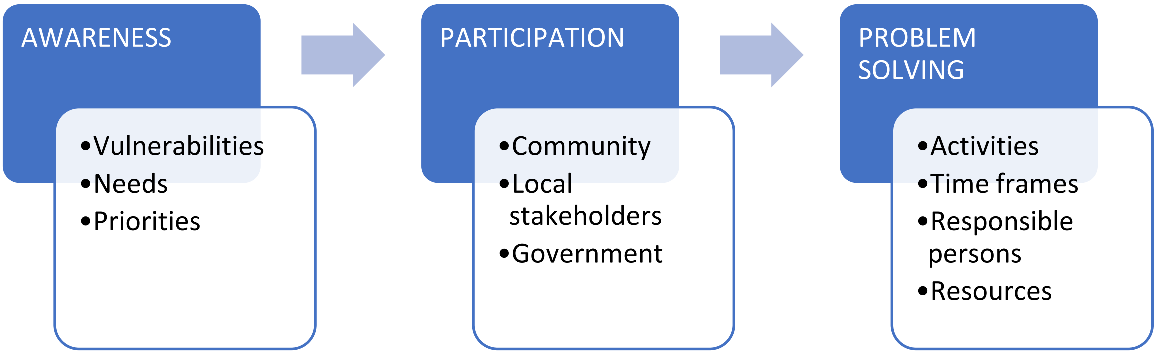
AWARENESS
•Vulnerabilities
•Needs
•Priorities
PARTICIPATION
•Community
•Local stakeholders
•Government
PROBLEM SOLVING
•Activities
•Time frames
•Responsible persons
•Resources

Figure 6.1: Collaborative learning flow

Having engaged with the community for participatory data analysis, it was further emphasised that there should be intentionality in creating diverse opportunities for addressing concerns about food insecurity within the community. Community members suggested the following:

> *We need employment opportunities for the youth, we need a centre for skills development, young people need to do something productive with their time. (FGP6)*
>
> *There is a business with a garden in the front, it is a small garden but that White man even sells to local businesses, we could also have something like that. Not only to eat but also to sell, we could sell to Pick n Pay, we have a lot of unemployed men here, there is no shortage of manpower. Most of us love gardening, we are unemployed, we love our community and want the best for all of us. (FGP7)*
>
> *There is a piece of land we are eyeing; we can use that for our community garden. (FGP8)*
>
> *Education is the key – it all begins with education; without it, we are nothing – there are no schools in this area. (FGP1)*

All the above reflect an admirable level of awareness and commitment from the community. They are aware of their challenges, are quite capable of articulating the nature of said challenges and committed to actively participating and seeking solutions.

6.3. Taking learning into the future

To round up the theoretical aspect of the research process we held a collective reflection session which included taking people through the emerging themes and affirming priorities. This was followed by formulating future actions in line with the identified priorities. The session began with a question on whether there had been any progress with the municipality in the past year. This was in recognition of the fact that throughout the study this had been a central and ongoing concern. The response was as follows:

> *Nothing has changed – the municipality continued to ignore us. In frustration we hijacked their water truck and then sent five people to request a meeting with them. Eventually*

> *they agreed to a meeting which included some officials (names mentioned) and the five community delegates. The meeting was about broken promises on repairing roads, installing pipes for household water taps and the issue of toilets. The only this they have done is to close that pit hole where we used to get unsanitary water. (Action Planning Session)*

The community is still committed to collective efforts for their own progress. To support this, they have plans for collaborative learning and empowerment. It was agreed that a multi-stakeholder meeting would be held to discuss a collective way forward and I will facilitate the action planning process. Participants from the focus groups will be joined by a youth group from the community, as recommended by the participants themselves.

Representatives from various government entities, local NGOs and institutions will be invited to assist the community in navigating some of the challenges highlighted by the study and develop a collective action plan. The participants are clear as to whom they want to be invited.

1) Food Security Forum – to discuss opportunities for food gardening training and access to agricultural resources.
2) Department of Social Development – to address concerns about access to social workers, counselling services and support for the indigent.
3) The Department of Correctional Services – to raise awareness of the consequences of crime especially for the youth.
4) Rhodes University – for training opportunities for young people’s work readiness.
5) Journalism Department – to raise awareness and advocacy on their struggles with the municipality.

It was clear in the discussions that the choice of stakeholders was not solely from a dependency perspective. The biggest driving factor was seeking accountability and answers to the multitude of “why” questions that the community has. They had this to say on the matter of toilets:

> *The most worrying thing is that the person who promised us toilets later tried to convince us to allow installation of 10 or 15 toilets. Our question was – Where is the rest of the money? There was a big fight afterwards. You want to say you have done the job and then keep the rest of the money? We later saw that person in court where she was accused of 2 million rands fraud … the individual has since been fired from the municipality. (Action Planning Session)*

For the longest time, the community has tried its level best to seek out amicable ways forward with most of the state bodies to no avail. This stakeholder engagement organised as part of a research project would be the perfect platform to confront and dissect the resistance and resultant militancy that had plagued these relationships for the longest time. As one resident put it:

> *They will not allow us to have members of the press in meetings with them, we want witnesses. (Action Planning Session)*

Findings from the research process will be used to outline an action plan that is informed by multiple perspectives, are contextually relevant, and can lead to change. This will include considerations of communal values, understandings, perceptions and behaviours. It will be driven by community networks and stakeholders who are willing to contribute to addressing the challenge of food insecurity through capacity building and shared resources. This will be a show of active decision making from the people, to be admired and recognised as a sign of resilience and determination to not just exist but to thrive, a show of defiance from a people that have been constantly treated like the living dead.

CHAPTER 7: RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Limitations

Venturing into the study was an exciting but equally daunting process. Much of the anxiety was because CBPR, the approach used for the study, required genuine interaction with communities to build trusting relationships. Thus, the relationship-building stage morphed into an entire project on its own. As previously mentioned, understanding community dynamics was a big part of the process which proved very time-consuming. This is because knowledge garnered from the research must be actionable and useful to the community.

This link between knowledge and implementation calls for depth in interaction. Ideally, one should involve the community in identifying the problem and designing the research but since this was not possible due to the university ethics process, I went into the field with a deficit. Some of the time had to be allocated to familiarising the community leaders with the research design and getting their input after the fact, but as time-consuming as it was, the process was instrumental for buy-in.

Having conquered the first hurdle, the next task was ensuring continued participation. This was necessitated by the fact that the study took some time, as it required frequent touchpoints to make sure that everybody was fully engaged. There were several planning meetings, cancellations and rescheduling. All these required conversations in-between, not necessarily about the project, but to keep in touch and connected. This would be in the form of visits or phone calls. During the study, some participants passed on, others lost temporary jobs, cutting off the limited access to livelihoods/jobs, and some were assaulted; this required care and presence as the relationships had been established on authenticity and trust.

Continued participation heavily hinged on maintaining this feeling of connectedness. This connectedness then challenged boundaries and blurred the lines between the research process and the objectivity that is preached in traditional research. It is impossible to be disconnected and still relate on a personal level. Of course, the process penetrated parts of my being, and I carried it with me beyond working hours. This was both a blessing and a curse. It was a blessing because it affirms the humanity in all of us as per Ubuntu, it was a curse because it makes it difficult for one to be removed from these human experiences. The participants become your people, and you become theirs.

When my mother passed away, I did not inform them, and this caused some tension for a while because it was interpreted as meaning that I did not value them; that I did not find them worthy to carry my grief with me. This was akin to an insult, given that they had opened their hearts and homes to me, trusting me with their secrets and troubles. So, between midnight WhatsApp calls to report the rape of yet another minor, which had nothing to do with the study but spoke to me having been accepted as part of a caring circle, this study got under my skin. The good part is that I have gained an extended family.

What I felt at a deeper level was a lack of supporting structures for the CBPR process, beginning with the tension between university ethics and ethics as understood and practised by the community. Having chosen food security and gender as central to the topic, I soon learnt that based on interpretations informed by experiences, this could be stretched far. For instance, when their understanding of food insecurity turned out to be connected to a myriad of other forms of insecurity, it was clear that the study called for much more than I had bargained for. I then had to resist the urge to deep dive into each of these insecurities as I attempted to contain the study and avoid spending more time on it than I could afford.

This was the same for the gender component. Participants insisted they would benefit from a breakdown of food insecurity experiences by age when it came to females, given that there was real and immediate harm attached to how they experienced and coped with food insecurity. For this element, it was not just about time and resource constraints but also about ethical considerations. This was beyond the ethical scope of the study. The support structure inferred here was both human and financial. The participatory process is resource heavy. The travelling, calls and catering cost money

– in the African culture, you cannot invite people to a gathering or meeting and not feed them.

Another unexpected component was the politics of place and space. The ripple effect of power dynamics between the local municipality and the community and how this, in turn, affects so many aspects of community life, results in a complex mess of social, economic, educational and health challenges that affect the community. An argument can be made that it all begins with education. As one participant shared…

> *Most parents here have children who are not in school. We do not have a school in this community but there are schools in surrounding areas. The problem is that some parents are tired, they have stopped caring. We currently have a nine-year-old that is breaking into houses, stealing food. Children here are suffering. Even those who want to be in school do not have shoes or uniform. Parents are being destroyed by homemade beer. (FGP9)*

A young person added:

> *We would like to have centres in our community, places where all these children who have no parental care can be assisted. The children can be assisted to learn while parents can be taught about things also, things like the dangers of alcohol and substance abuse.*

A parent responded:

> *Education is the key Monica; we want our children to know the importance of education. Jobs are scarce, our children need education. We don't want the youth to give up – we want them to persevere – education is the key. (FGP7)*

A regrettable fact is that I could not be as innovative as I set out to be with some of the activities, like having data parties for participatory data analysis – this would have called for a proper set up and celebration of rounding up the process. Instead, we arranged for a reflection meeting with a few key members. The process could have suffered from diminished attendance if not for the fact that we'd been having ongoing reflections as part of the research process. The other aspect that suffered from a lack of resources was the proposed stakeholders meeting for a co-created action plan. The community agreed on the desired outcomes, but the stakeholder meeting is yet to be held. Transport, catering and venue logistics slowed down the planning. The first date had to be rescheduled due to the national elections, and finding a time when all the needed pieces aligned was challenging. In the meantime, the pressure to finish the study was relentless. Fortunately, the pressure to complete didn't translate into an inability to make the necessary connections. I communicated with an established NGO in the food security space and they will be running a workshop on permaculture skills with the community to equip them with skills for cost-effective and sustainable approaches to agriculture. The multi-stakeholder engagement will still take place, especially because the relationship with the community still endures. We will be planning for the first quarter of 2025. The local university, Rhodes University, has got a Community Engagement division with a Knowledge for Change Hub, a space created to encourage dialogue, partnership and cocreation - this will be a conducive space for the envisaged multi-stakeholder engagement.

7.2 Recommendations

It is worth noting that food insecurity remains a pressing global challenge, particularly in communities where socioeconomic and political vulnerabilities exacerbate the matter. A comprehensive response is required to address not only immediate needs but also the systemic factors that perpetuate food insecurity. The collective approach is important as it allows governments to implement adequate measures to ensure food security. A collective approach, which involves collaboration among community members, NGOs, and other stakeholders, can mitigate the effects of governmental shortcomings. Such mobilisation would foster resilience and empower communities to take ownership of their food systems.

By pooling resources and knowledge, communities can develop sustainable solutions tailored to their unique contexts. Education plays a critical role in combating food insecurity, whether delivered formally or informally. Providing individuals with access to information about sustainable practices equips them with the tools needed to address food challenges effectively. Furthermore, for younger generations, education serves as a safeguard against engaging in risky behaviours born out of desperation, while for adults, it minimises health risks associated with unsafe food practices. Moreover, education fosters awareness of innovative and community-friendly coping mechanisms that enhance the sustainability of local food systems.

The interplay of safety, unemployment, and violence significantly hinders efforts to achieve food security. High unemployment rates reduce household incomes, limiting access to nutritious food. Simultaneously, violence and safety concerns disrupt community cohesion and restrict access to food resources. Addressing these concerns requires frameworks that prioritise holistic, community-based interventions. These interventions must consider the socio-spatial dynamics of affected communities, ensuring solutions are both context-sensitive and inclusive.

Community-based approaches to food security should prioritise leveraging existing strengths, local resources, and networks. These assets provide a foundation for cost-effective and sustainable initiatives that address resource scarcity. By capitalising on local knowledge, skills, and social connections, communities can create tailored solutions that are more likely to succeed and endure. This approach not only maximises the use of available resources but also fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among community members.

Land ownership and access remain central to food production and long-term food security. In many regions, inequitable land distribution restricts opportunities for communities to engage in sustainable agriculture. Addressing the land concern involves implementing policies that ensure fair access to arable land, enabling communities to cultivate food for their own consumption and economic benefit. Resolving land-related challenges is essential for fostering self-reliance and achieving equitable food security outcomes.

A collective community response, coupled with the prioritisation of education, the mitigation of socioeconomic barriers, the use of local resources, and the resolution of land access concerns forms a robust framework for addressing the root causes of food insecurity. These strategies empower communities to build sustainable and resilient food systems, ensuring equitable access to food and fostering long-term socioeconomic stability.

CHAPTER 8: THE FUTILITY OF ATTEMPTS AT DIVORCING FOOD SECURITY ISSUES FROM HUMAN DIGNITY, FAIRNESS AND RELATED FORMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

The year is 1996, the 8th of May, and the then South African President Thabo Mbeki gives an iconic speech titled ***"I am an African".*** In South Africa, this sparked ongoing debates about what made one an African. In a country with a history of division along racial lines, this was to be expected, but the question of what makes an African still lingers to this day, especially when tackling matters regarding hunger and food security, because hunger has a face in South Africa, and that face is Black and African. The speech juxtaposes fear, abundance, and loss, and amid it all are declarations of being loudly, unapologetically, and fearlessly African. An extract from the speech notes:

> I have seen what happens when one person has superiority of force over another when the stronger appropriate to themselves the prerogative even to annul the injunction that God created all men and women in His image. I have seen the destruction of all self-esteem, the consequent striving to be what one is not, simply to acquire some of the benefits which those who had imposed themselves as masters had ensured that they enjoy. I have seen the corruption of minds and souls as a result of the pursuit of an ignoble effort to perpetrate a veritable crime against humanity. I have seen concrete expressions of the denial of the dignity of a human being emanating from the conscious, systemic and systematic oppressive and repressive activities of other human beings. (Mbeki, 1996)

Considerable time has passed since President Thabo Mbeki said the words above. It is now another century, yet the speech still resonates, especially for people residing in communities similar to the one where the study was conducted. One could swear that time has stood still as this community still faces significant socioeconomic challenges in general and food insecurity in particular. Sadly, the daily struggles of this community cannot be separated from our past experiences of oppression through colonial and apartheid rule, followed by the unfortunate capitalistic tendencies of the Black ruling class.

The “superiority of force over another” (Mbeki, 1996), is evident in the municipality–community relationship where service delivery to the study community is almost non-existence due to the municipality's dysfunctionality and wilful ignoring of the existence of the place. Residents of this community are denied dignity, and this limits their human right to have access to, among other things, food.

The speech echoed the realities of the study location, an informal settlement in a free, democratic South Africa and the reality of witnessing, at close range, the daily struggles of a community making ends meet, with little to no support from state officials. This also speaks to the dysfunctional municipality which, according to this community, has become an enemy of the people, the place and its progress. One wonders what happened to the aspirations of an “African Renaissance”.

On a social level, food insecurity is intertwined with other factors that include security concerns. These security concerns manifest at different levels with impacts felt at the community level, on access to livelihoods and through political tensions. Given the influences of these elements, food insecurity then arises from resource scarcity, displacement of people, and landlessness. The political tensions further highlight the complex interplay between socioeconomic factors and political dynamics. The relationship between livelihoods and food security is undeniably linked as it speaks to people’s ability to generate the resources necessary to produce and access food. This further contributes to economic insecurity as it results in people being trapped in debt cycles by unscrupulous money lenders that prey on government grant recipients.

The study delved into specific vulnerabilities faced by women on a social and household level as well as the coping mechanisms they apply in response to these vulnerabilities. What emerged is a question about the adequacy and sustainability of these coping mechanisms and whether they translate into viable pathways towards food security. Women’s opportunities for sustained food security are acutely hindered by cultural, socioeconomic and political factors, thus heightening their susceptibility to food insecurity.

Women in this study are a particular case in point. They grapple with the triple burden of gender, race and class. This poses a significant challenge not just for families but also for communities whose emancipation from food insecurity is linked to the unlocking of opportunities for women in the struggle for access to food. This places women under additional stress as they often blame themselves, thinking they might be falling short of the required standards of motherhood, often battling feelings of inadequacy when they see their children falling through the cracks while trying to navigate the multiple insecurities associated with food insecurity. This speaks to socioeconomic factors being key influencers of behaviour in communities that struggle with food insecurity. It is a psychological and generational struggle which is mostly lived and understood by Black women of a particular class.

On the other hand, associated concerns of household gender dynamics and respectability often play out in harmful ways within households. When women are limited in their ability to prepare and provide meals it impacts heavily on the male head who cannot provide the resources for women to carry out this duty with ease. Africans are people of culture and culturally a man is supposed to provide for the family. When that fails, women cover for their man, in ways that hide this “shame” from the rest of the community.

African women have been known to carry their burdens in silence, to protect not just male dignity but the family name. The family name is important, as it not only affords respect to the man but also fuels a woman’s pride in her man, her family and her place within the community. These are the complex and often intertwined realities of food insecurity, gender and social dynamics.

There is a self-knowing that is required for us to reconnect to who we are as a people, to that which makes us great and which we collectively hoped for – unity and equal opportunities for all – The African Renaissance. The community in this study has tried to re-imagine and re-create that for themselves, beginning with an understanding of who they are, what unites them, what drives them and what they hope for. It is a sad reflection of the state of our governance to witness the drastic measures they have had to adopt in the process of reimagining, requiring almost a “separateness” from a government they no longer view as representative of their hopes and aspirations.

The struggle against oppression and exploitation and its associated inequalities is at the root of the food insecurity crisis in neglected and underserved communities, with this informal settlement being a prime example. In this community, the ongoing lack of service delivery has led to frequent protests for water access, sanitation, and electricity. Intertwined with this are concerns of spatial justice. This supports Soja's (2010) assertion that spatial injustice and the global divide between rich and poor are best illustrated by the presence of informal settlements and 'slums'. Soja (2010, p. 20) further argues:

> Although never completely uprooted from the law and legal adjudication, the concept of justice obtains a much broader meaning as the quality of being just or fair. In this sense of justice as fairness and in conjunction with the establishment of rights under the law, the concept expands in scope to apply to many other conditions of social life and everyday behaviour. It links the active notion of seeking justice to other broad concepts referring to the qualities of a just society: freedom, liberation, equality, democracy, civil rights. Seeking to increase justice or decrease injustice thus becomes a fundamental objective in all societies, a foundational principle for maximising human dignity and fairness.

These inequalities highlight the futility of attempts at divorcing food security concerns from human dignity, fairness and related forms of social justice. Soja (2010) proceeds to highlight the interconnectedness of spatial justice with other forms of the search for justice, stating that seeking spatial justice is not meant to be a substitute for or alternative to the search for social, economic, or environmental justice. It is intended instead as a means of amplifying and extending these concepts into new areas of understanding and political practice.

Herein lies the South African conundrum, with a landscape that remains fiercely contested, riddled with acts of corruption and disenfranchisement – where democracy has not translated into equity and inclusivity but has instead established new hierarchical forms – where Black "worthiness" is viewed through the lens of Western standards of respectability, language proficiency, education, knowledge and overall socialisation – thus the chasm between "nothingness" and "enoughness" ensues. The South African "liberation" did not seek to destroy what it fought against; it only focused on a dress-up exercise, swapping “white skins for black skins” in leadership positions, forgetting that the power and the destruction lay in the systems that perpetuated the oppression.

It is important for me that I end this with a personal reflection about the importance of being seen, not just as you are at a particular moment, but also for all the possibilities that are contained within each individual, possibilities to be better and do better, at any given point in life. This is a sentiment that echoes my motivation for this study. It is a study inspired by human courage and resilience; it speaks to the parts of us that might be changed by the circumstances we come across in this journey of life, but still refuse to be diminished and defined by that which limits us. This is a study undertaken with individuals; individuals who formed families, families that banded together in a community, a community that has refused to give up and play dead. It is human resilience in motion.

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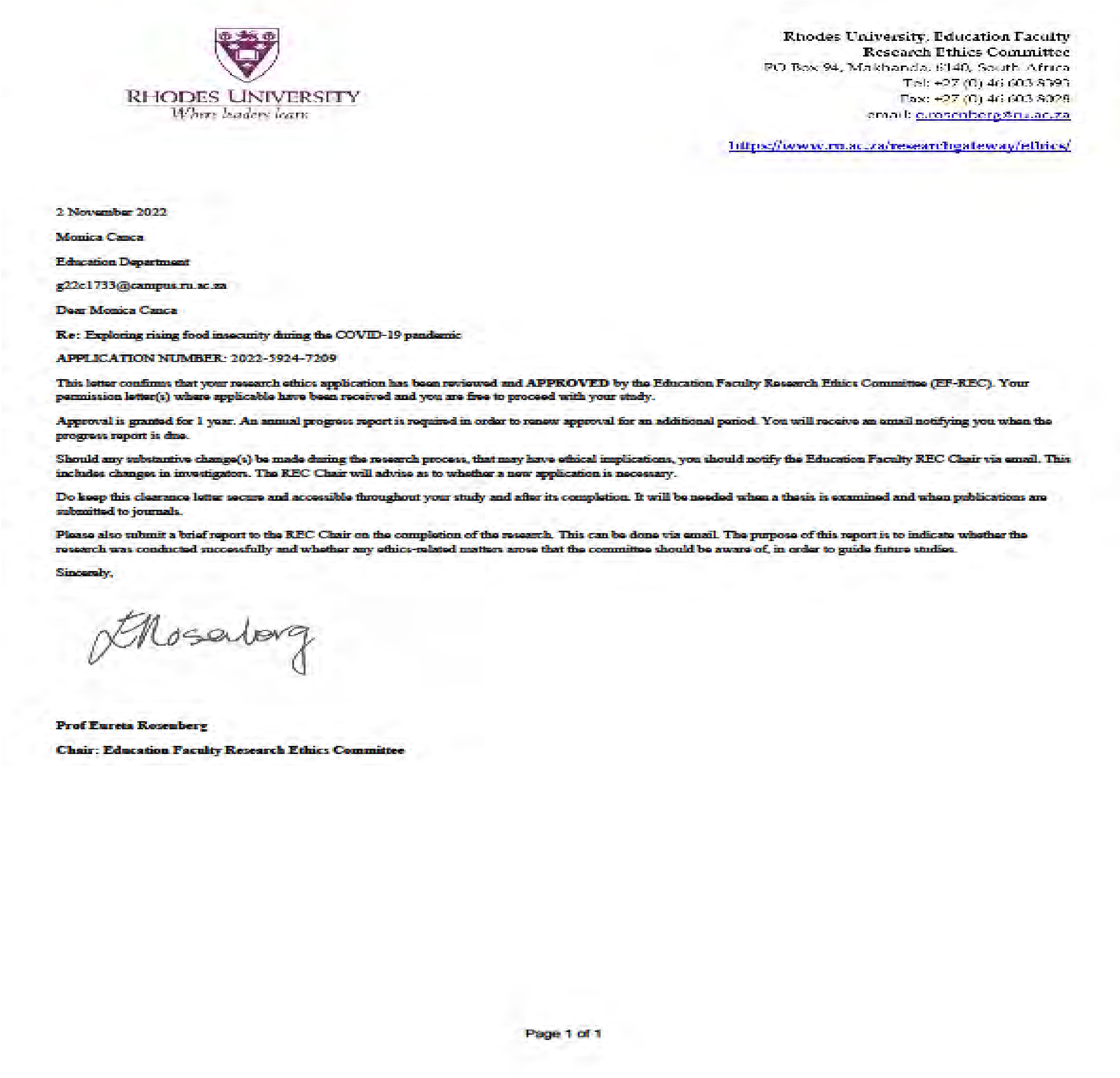
Appendices

Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



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2 November 2022

Monica Canca

Education Department

g22c1733@campus.ru.ac.za

Dear Monica Canca

Re: Exploring rising food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic

APPLICATION NUMBER: 2022-5924-7209

This letter confirms that your research ethics application has been reviewed and APPROVED by the Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee (EF-REC). Your permission letter(s) where applicable have been received and you are free to proceed with your study.

Approval is granted for 1 year. An annual progress report is required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the progress report is due.

Should any substantive change(s) be made during the research process, that may have ethical implications, you should notify the Education Faculty REC Chair via email. This includes changes in investigators. The REC Chair will advise as to whether a new application is necessary.

Do keep this clearance letter secure and accessible throughout your study and after its completion. It will be needed when a thesis is examined and when publications are submitted to journals.

Please also submit a brief report to the REC Chair on the completion of the research. This can be done via email. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully and whether any ethics-related matters arose that the committee should be aware of, in order to guide future studies.

Sincerely,

Prof Eureta Rosenberg

Chair: Education Faculty Research Ethics Committee

Page 1 of 1

Appendix B: Community Dialogue Transcript

Community Dialogue Transcript Sample – (the first question).

Facilitator: Monica Canca

Date: 08 March 2023

Location: Makhanda

Acronyms: MC = Monica Canca, PR = Participating Resident

Transcript sampling begins at 13min: 27sec and ends at 42min. (Recorded)

Question – What made you join this community?

MC – We are going to try and give as many people as possible an opportunity to respond. Bhuti, what was your reason for coming to stay here?

PR 1 – I came here because I did not have a place to stay. I am one of the people who came here first.

PR 2 – I could no longer afford paying rent in the back-room I was staying at. I also had problems with the family I was staying with due to my inability to pay sometimes. So, when this community was established I saw it as an opportunity to start afresh.

PR 3 – I came here because there were too many of us staying in one small family home. When I joined this community, I did not have a job, but I needed a place to stay. I had five children and depended on their government grants – as I still do today, but only three remain on the grant. I managed to build one room in this place, so that I could move away from a crowded place and stay with my children. I moved with my children, we stayed in this one room, a mother, a father and five children – in one room. In the end, I had to take the older children to go and live with my mother, because the whole situation became too oppressive.

PR 4 - I came here because I had to leave my in-laws. I left my marital home. I left because there were too many of us, my mother-in-law's children, my sister-in-law, their children…there were just too many of us – grandchildren and great-grandchildren, all living in one two-roomed RDP house at Lingelihle.

PR 5 - Being Black is a heavy burden, we struggle, we have nothing. In our struggles, we still continue voting for this government…we vote, but we do not benefit in any way. The only benefit we get is more oppression. When I first saw this place, I was going to a funeral. I asked people, what does one have to do to join this community? That day I didn't get clear direction, but I still came back on another day, a Tuesday. This time I asked a young person for information on who was in charge of the place. I was directed to sis XXX (the founder and committee member). I went straight to her and I met this woman I had seen before. She was surprised to find out that I hadn't gotten my RDP house allocation at Extension 10. She quickly organised someone to allocate a plot for me. In as much as I did not have money, I used the children's grant money to erect a one room structure to which I moved with my husband and five children.

PR 6 – I had to leave my husband. Every time he got drunk he would beat my children. When this community was established, I saw it as an opportunity to remove us from that situation. I now stay here with my children.

PR 7 – My own story is long as well. I come from Hlalani. In Hlalani I stayed with my family, my children. I no longer have parents or siblings – I am the only one left with three children. In coming to this community I met many challenges as I don't have much. People that were supposed to help me betrayed me. It is sisXXX who helped me, and she is still helping me till today. Poverty dealt with me. We would go hungry and sleep without food, together with the children, but she supported us.

PR 8 – Before I came here, I was staying at Seven Fountain. I had three children who stayed with my mother while I went out in search of jobs. When my mother fell sick there was no one to take care of her so I had to stop work to do so. This affected my children's schooling. Eventually I came across this community and requested for information on how I could move here. I needed to be nearer schools for the sake of my children. SisXXX assisted me to settle here. At that time the place didn't have much. We were fetching water from a pit hole as there were no community water taps at that time.

PR 9 – I used to stay in Transit Area and then my husband stopped working which is when we started arguing a lot. I then heard that sisXXX had started a community here. Now I stay here. My husband and I are divorced. I stay here alone with my three children, there is no child support. Right now I am not working but at least here I do not have to pay rent.

PR 10 – We are sisters and we stay here. We were chased out of our house; we dropped out of school and now we stay here.

PR 11 – I didn't have a place to stay. I was also hearing a lot of stories from women who were being chased away from family homes by in-laws. One day I heard people complaining in the street about the corrupt practices around allocation of RDP houses.

Officials were being accused of not following due process. I sked them if they really wanted a place – they said yes. I told them to bring poles and nails and that was the beginning of the community. I grew up in a back-room, most of them they treat tenants as less than human beings. I saw an opportunity to do something about that, together with a group of people who had run out of options. These RDP houses don't even have enough space to accommodate a whole family. There isn't enough space in these houses for families to raise their children without compromising certain values. Sometimes children learn about sex in these situations because there is no privacy for adults; children see these actions and then experiment outside, especially with the rise in poverty; girls as young as 12 years of age are taken advantage of by older men who selfishly exploit their vulnerability and poverty. We started with three houses, then we became five. Afterwards we elected some of the men to be in charge of planning and allocations, to ensure that that were enough spaces between houses so as to avoid dangers of fires easily spreading. We also wanted proper streets, we wanted to make space for future backyard gardens and for people to have toilets a bit removed from the residential space – we were thinking of health considerations.

PR 12 – I come from the farm. I came here because our White boss was relocating and we had to leave.

PR 13 – I was staying in the Coloured area in my grandmother's house. When my grandmother died, the house was not in my name and I had to move. I found a place here. I am still in the process of building, only the doors are remaining for me to finish my building.

Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Excerpt

Focus Group Discussions Sample – (the first question).

Facilitator: Monica Canca

Date: 08 March 2023

Location: Makhanda

Acronyms: MC = Monica Canca, FGP = Focus Group Participant

Transcript sampling begins at 3min and ends at 7min 50sec. (Recorded)

Question – How have you experienced food insecurity?

FGP 1 – We used to have a soup kitchen, it really helped, but it has since closed down.

MC – How did the soup kitchen help?

FGP 2 - Let me give you a scenario. If not for soup kitchens most people would not have a full meal per day. People rely on grants, some of them receive old age grants while some receive disability grants. People are hopeless, they drink. When they get grant money they do not buy enough food. Some of them are on medication. They buy alcohol and have to take medication on empty stomachs, which is not right.

FGP 3 - It begins with rampant unemployment, which leaves the burden of taking care of families squarely on the shoulders of the elderly, who receive an old age grant from the government. The small grant is not enough to cover the needs of the whole family for the whole month. A week into the month, there is no means to put food on the table; this sends the grandparents to moneylenders to feed the family for the rest of the month. When the month ends and another grant comes, the first to be considered is the money lender, with interest. This leaves very little for household expenses, then back to the money lender again…and the cycle continues.

FGP 4 – I also depend a lot on the soup kitchen. The money I get for the children's grants is not enough to buy food. For instance I buy 10kg of mielie-meal but it does not last the whole month. I then have to run around asking people for bowls of food and that does not always go well. With the soup kitchen at least I know that I can get a meal once a day for me and the children. At least when the children come back from school they can eat that food.

FGP 5 – Sometimes when people have families, like a husband and children, we are able to dish them food on a big container and they share as a family.

FGP 6 – The soup kitchen is something we would really love to have back.

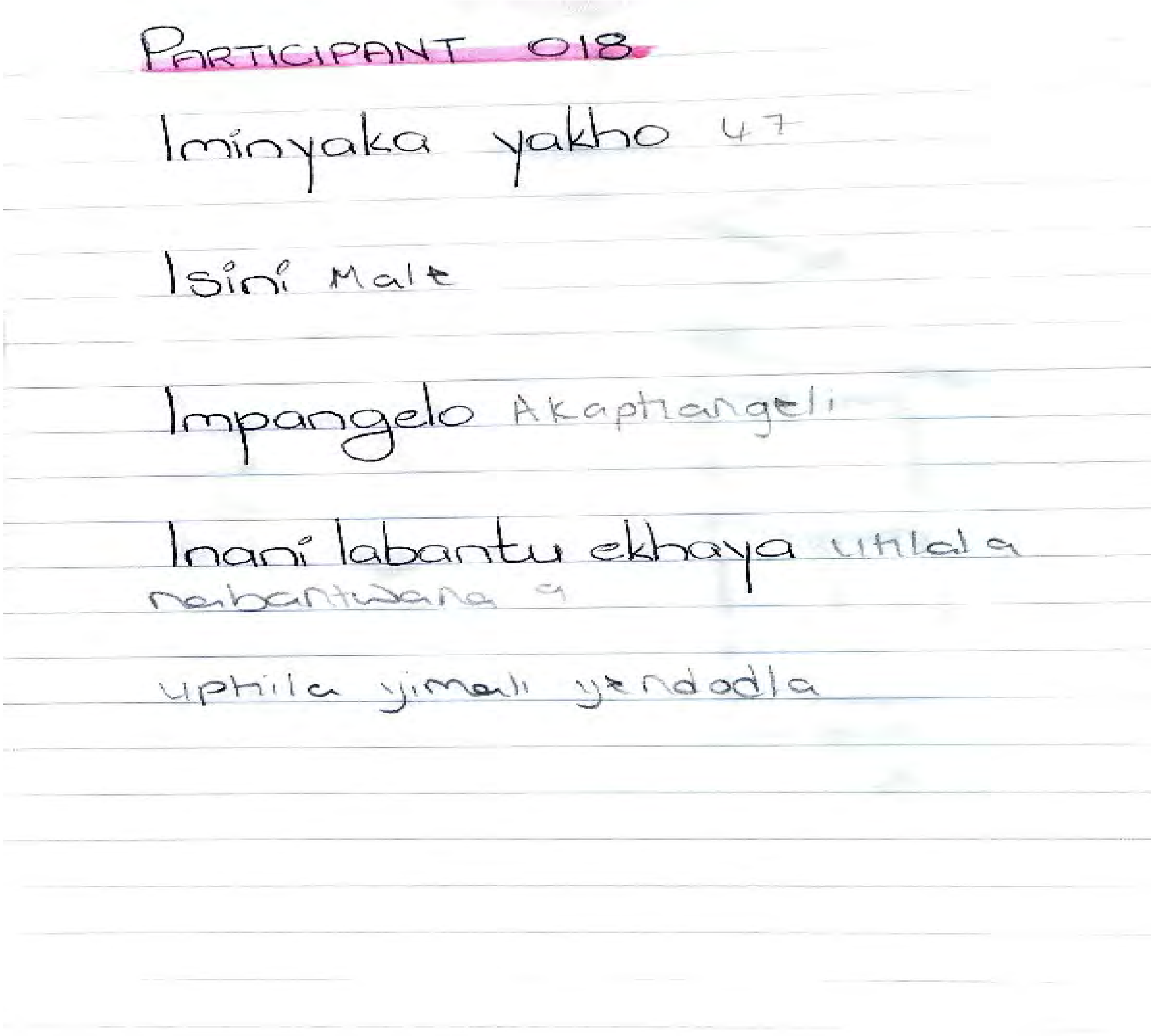
FGP1 – A community garden would really help with reviving the soup kitchen and people put food on the table. People could also sell and have an income. For example, there is a garden there kwaNobomvu, those people take some of their produce and sell it to Spar and Pick n Pay. What is stopping us from doing the same thing?

FGP 4 – We love our community and we care for each other. We do not have jobs; a community food garden would work for us. We are used to working together to help each other. I can make an example of myself. I do not have an insurance policy for when I have to bury someone but every time I have a burial in my family it is the community that rises to help me.

FGP 7 - What we have as a community is an understanding that we are all we have, nobody is coming to rescue us. We know this because even when one of us dies, with our prevalent unemployment, we come together to assist each other, we help each other plug holes in our mud huts for the burial send-off, we bring food to the bereaved family.

FGP 4 – The community garden would be extremely helpful. When such things occur we would know that we have vegetables in the garden, then community members could each bring things like rice etc.

Appendix D: Gender Daily Calendar Excerpt



PARTICIPANT 018

Iminyaka yakho 47

Isini Male

Impangelo Akaphangeli

Inani labantu ekhaya uhlala nabantwana 9

uphila yimali yendodla