

**Understanding Livelihood Strategies of Urban Women Traders:
A Case of Magaba, Harare in Zimbabwe**

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requirements for the degree of**

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by

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This thesis is dedicated to both my parents. I thank my father, Hebert, who heavily taxed himself over the years of my education and intellectual development. And I thank my late mother, Ginnety, who did not only raise and nurture me but was a source of inspiration and encouragement especially in times of hopelessness. Incidentally she met her demise shortly after I presented the proposal for this thesis. I will forever cherish her motherly care and support.

Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand and analyze the livelihood strategies of urban women traders at Magaba in Harare (Zimbabwe) in the context of the contemporary economic and political crisis. The crisis emerged in the 1990s with the introduction of a structural adjustment programme and deepened further with the fast track land reform programme initiated by the Zimbabwean government in the year 2000. The crisis has involved a down-sizing of the Zimbabwean economy and a massive rise in the rate of unemployment in the formal economy. Consequently urban life became increasingly unbearable for poor blacks and informal economic activities blossomed and started to make a significant contribution to household income and livelihoods. The role of women in the informal economy was particularly pronounced.

Theoretically, the thesis is underpinned by the sustainable livelihoods framework. In examining the vulnerability context of the Magaba women traders and the institutional interventions which complicate the lives and livelihoods of these traders, I identify and unpack their diverse livelihood activities and strategies and the resources (or assets) they deploy in constructing urban livelihoods. Though their livelihood portfolios complement any earnings from formal employment by household members and though they contribute to their household's sustenance, there are a number of daily challenges which they face in their trading activities and which they seek to counteract through a range of often ingenious coping mechanisms.

The thesis is important for a number of reasons. It fills an important empirical gap in the study of Magaba market specifically, it brings to the fore the gendered character of the informal trading activities in urban Zimbabwe, and it deploys the livelihoods framework in a manner which is sensitive to both structure and agency.

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Acronyms

BEAM	Basic Education Assistant Module
CBO	Central Business District
DIFD	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
ICBT	Informal Cross Border Trading
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
OM	Operation Murambatsvina
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SEDCO	Small Enterprises Development Corporation
SLA/F	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach/Framework
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TCPC	Total Consumption Poverty Line
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEC	Zimbabwe Electoral Commission
ZHRF	Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum
ZIMPREST	Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation
ZINWA	Zimbabwe National Water Authority
ZNA	Zimbabwean National Army

ZRP

Zimbabwe Republic Police

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

The concept of livelihoods is prevalent in academic literature on Africa, where many of the world's underdeveloped countries lie and are facing ongoing economic and political crises. In sub-Saharan countries, urban livelihoods are often tenuous with employment and income-generation possibilities mainly in the informal sector. For example, for urban Zimbabwe, it is currently estimated that 80% of households rely in some way and to some extent on informal economic activities. Poor black women in many cases dominate the informal sector and they show acts of ingenuity and courage in thorny circumstances in contributing to household income generation. At the same time, they in the main are 'managers' of a significant proportion of urban households. In this sense, they carry a dual responsibility and burden.

This thesis explores, examines and analyses the livelihood strategies of poor urban women in contemporary Zimbabwe in the context of harsh economic and political conditions. The particular focus is Harare and specifically an area called Magaba which is located in Mbare, a (low-income) high-density area in the capital city of Zimbabwe. Within the Magaba area there are open-air markets collectively called Magaba, which is located three kilometers from Harare's city centre. At this market a diverse group of women engage in vending activities on a near daily basis. The lives and livelihoods of these women are the focus of the thesis.

This introductory chapter is divided into five sections. The following section (section two) highlights the background of informal sector employment in Africa. The third section details the Zimbabwean crisis and urban informal sector activities during the crisis. In the next section (section four) the theoretical framework which informs and underpins this study is outlined. The fifth section discusses the research methodology used for the fieldwork for the thesis and some of the challenges faced during the fieldwork. The last section provides the chapter outline for the thesis.

1.2 The Rise of the Informal Economy and Women

The growth of the informal sector (such as petty trading) in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the underdeveloped world can be attributed to a number of factors (Edwards 1995, Barrietos 2002). Ostensibly to stimulate economic growth, Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were implemented from the 1980s in thirty-four countries in Africa by the International

Monetary Fund and World Bank, and these neoliberal programmes significantly undercut urban livelihoods and encouraged a diversification of livelihood strategies (including within the informal economy). The embracing of these programmes led to a cut in government spending, the opening up of national markets to international competition and massive retrenchments (Benjamin 2007). For example, in Zambia, companies downsized to levels they considered economically viable; this increased the rate of unemployment and resulted in the formally unemployed seeking refuge in the informal sector (Muuka 2002).

In this light, Osirim (2003) observes that, in Africa by the turn of the last century, informal and micro-enterprise economic activities constituted the second largest source of livelihoods after agriculture. In terms of urban employment, the informal sector accounted for over half of economically active people in Africa and Asia, and a quarter in Latin America (Chen 2001). More recently, the global financial crisis increased unemployment in the formal sector (ILO 2009). As a result, in Accra in Ghana for example, 53% of the workforce earned their livelihoods from informal- or self-employment (Cohen et al. 2010). These trends are consistent with the argument that “informal employment tends to expand during economic crises or downturns” (Chen, Venek and Heintz 2006:2132), as also occurred earlier in the Asian financial crisis of 1998 (Bhowmik 2005). The concept of the informal sector is open to considerable debate in the academic literature, but Tamukamoyo (2009:331) rightfully argues that “the informal and formal sectors are not two distinct, separate economies” but rather they coexist within an intensely segmented single economy.

Informal livelihood activities by women are particularly important in this regard. In fact, for a number of reasons (including systems of patriarchy at sites of both economic production and social reproduction), women are over-represented in the informal sector (UN 2000, Chirisa 2004). A majority of women, and specifically women-headed households in underdeveloped nations, continue to pursue livelihoods through low-return informal economic activities. In Ibadan in Nigeria, for instance, women dominate petty trading in formal markets and street vending, including selling snacks and firewood (Jaiyebo 2003). This serves to exacerbate gender-based poverty.

There is therefore a discernible link between gender, working in the informal economy and conditions of poverty. As noted by Chen (2001:5), “a higher percentage of people working in the informal sector relative to the formal sector are poor”. And, more specifically, poverty is

experienced more severely by women than men, resulting in the feminization of poverty and less access to food, education and healthcare for women (Bhatt 2002). The feminization of poverty relates to the rise of female-headed households and increasing female participation in urban informal activities (Bridge 2001). It has also emerged in the context of the economic crises of the 1980s, SAPs and the subsequent unleashing of market forces globally. Furthermore livelihood strategies (including within the informal economy) are influenced by “gender disparities in rights, entitlements and capabilities, the gender differentiated impacts of neo-liberal restructuring and informalisation and feminisation of labour” (Chant 2003:1, Deaton and Dreze 2002). Overall, women have faced increasing vulnerability and marginalization.

1.3 Zimbabwean Crisis and Informal Sector Employment

In the case of urban Zimbabwe, there has been a massive growth in the informal sector over the past two decades, and this is closely tied to the ongoing economic and political crises. Employment in the formal sector (including civil service and manufacturing) has at times shown an annual drop in sheer numbers, while vending, small micro-enterprises and illegal trade operations have shown a consistent positive growth (Shinder 1998, Mhone 1995, Kamete 2004). Women are particularly noticeable in petty trading activities. In addition, Chirisa (2009:258) argues that “it is not that jobs are non-existent, but that the existing formal employment jobs are not commensurately remunerated”. Urban working people regularly struggle to pay rent, to buy basic food stuffs and to access health care. Many skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers (and their families) have resorted to engaging in informal economic activities in order to supplement their household income.

The first major crisis in Zimbabwe involved the implementation of a SAP (known locally as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, or ESAP) in October 1990. This saw the cutting out of state subsidies to low-income groups, widespread retrenchment, an escalating cost of living and lower real wages (Dube 2010). Tamukamoyo (2009:97) argues that the “informal economy came into its own” in the 1990s because of the negative impacts of ESAP, with backyard industries and petty trading sprouting everywhere as workers and families adopted a range of livelihood strategies. These effects were compounded by a series of critical events, including Zimbabwe’s participation in the Democratic Republic of Congo civil war, the unbudgeted payment of generous gratuities to war veterans in the late 1990s,

and the expropriation of land from white farmers (known as Fast Track Land Reform Programme) from the year 2000 (Shaw 2003, Mamdani 2008, Chigora and Dewa 2009).

Raftopoulos (2004:12) argues that the year 2000 is particularly important and that it is often characterized as a watershed year in Zimbabwe because it “constituted an important junction of political events”. Fast track reform arose in the light of major political conflict brewing throughout the 1990s and it is regularly blamed for economic decline, including the undermining of industrial capacity, skyrocketing inflation and massive food deficits. In this regard, Mukwedeya (2009) rightfully claims that the volatile and uncertain political economy characteristic of the current crisis has limited urban working people’s ability to engage in fruitful livelihood strategies. With an unemployment rate pegged at 80%, informal economic activities have taken centre stage in terms of urban livelihoods (Hlohla 2008, Tamukamoyo 2009).

The controversial Operation *Murambatsvina* of July 2005 – which literally means ‘clean up the trash’ – exacerbated already compromised livelihoods (Vambe 2008). A United Nations (UN) special report under envoy Dr Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka estimates that 700,000 people countrywide lost their homes or sources of livelihoods (including flea markets, tuck-shops, craft markets, vending stalls and urban agriculture) and that a further 2,4 million were indirectly affected in varying forms and degrees (Tibaijuka 2005:33, Bratton et al. 2006). A study by the Afrobarometer (2006) concluded that 2.7 million people were affected by the operation. Both the UN and Afrobarometer studies concluded that the livelihoods of urbanites engaged in informal economic activities were severely compromised.

This is particularly disturbing given that it was estimated in 2005 that the informal economy was generating 40% to 50% of Zimbabwe’s Gross Domestic Product and employing up to 60% of the economically active population (Maroleng 2005:4). The rationale behind Operation *Murambatsvina* is open to debate, but the Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum interpreted it as deliberate action to destroy urban livelihoods given strong oppositional support against the ruling party in urban centres (ZHRF 2006). The existing literature on the informal economy in Zimbabwe highlights the important role played by women in mainly trading activities and it indicates that women involved in informal economic activities have in particular been affected by Zimbabwe’s crises relating to ESAP, fast track and Operation *Murambatsvina* (Potts 2006, Mupedzswisa and Gumbo 1998).

1.4 Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical perspective that underpins this study on urban women livelihoods is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. This was originally applied to rural areas but has been more recently applied to urban working people (Rouse and Ali 2000, Frantz 2001). The concept of livelihoods has proven to be analytically useful since it helps to paint a picture of the ways in which people construct a living. It can be deployed to pinpoint and understand resources or capitals (such as economic, social and symbolic resources), and activities and strategies, which lead to the construction of household livelihoods, as well as the challenges which affect the sustainability of livelihoods in the face of economic troubles and severe household shocks (Carney 1998, Scoones 1998, UNDP 2001, Rakodi and Llyods-Jones 2002, Lyons and Snoxell 2005). It also highlights the role of formal, informal, organizational and institutional factors in enhancing or limiting sustainable livelihood outcomes. In this respect, Scoones (1998:12) argues that “an understanding of ... institutions, their underlying social relationships, and the power dynamics embedded in these, is ... vital”. Of significance to this study is that the approach has the capacity to be sensitive to power relations including those grounded in patriarchy. Hence, the livelihoods framework animates this thesis and is brought to bear on the lives and livelihoods of urban women traders at Magaba.

1.5 Research Methodology

In this section I outline the research methodology used for the study, including research objectives, data research and data analysis methods, and research challenges.

1.5.1 Research Significance and Research Objectives

The livelihoods literature is quite substantial globally and in relation to Africa. In the case of Zimbabwe, there are numerous rural livelihood studies but a relative dearth of urban-based studies. In the case of my research site (namely, Magaba in Harare) there is only one existing study (from the mid-1980s) and this pre-dates even ESAP (Brand 1986). My thesis therefore seeks to fill an important empirical lacuna in the Zimbabwean literature and feeds into more current literature on informal economic activities in Zimbabwe. The thesis also hopes to make an analytical contribution by its recognition and appreciation of the significance of both structure and agency in urban livelihoods and specifically with reference to the lives and livelihoods of informal women traders. Urban women traders (as ‘women’ and as ‘traders’) do carry a double burden, but they are not mere passive victims of the machinations of others and of over-bearing structured processes. They are also active agents who negotiate and manoeuvre their way through life on a constant daily basis in seeking to generate some level

of income and food security for their households; in a sense, then, they rise above their conditions of existence.

In this light, the *main objective* of the thesis is *to explore, identify, understand and analyze the current lives and livelihoods of urban women traders at Magaba in Harare (Zimbabwe)* in the context of economic and political crises. The secondary objectives include:

1. To understand the character of livelihood strategies of urban women traders;
2. To identify the various challenges or problems faced by them;
3. To examine the strategies adopted for coping with ongoing crises; and
4. To consider the significance of gendered relationships to women's livelihood activities.

1.5.2 Research Design

A research design is a plan or a blue print for conducting research (Babbie and Mouton (2001). This section provides the research design underpinning my study. It includes the target population, sampling procedure, instruments of data collection, analysis of data and challenges encountered during the period the research was conducted.

1.5.2.1 Instruments for Data Collection

Methodologically, this study was mainly qualitative in nature. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001) this kind of research “gives a more in-depth description and understanding of events or actions and this helps the researcher to gain insight into why and how these events or actions take place rather than just presenting a phenomenon”. However, my research utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection in order to complement each other and, in the end, to derive ‘thick descriptions’ of livelihood activities. Three techniques were used to pursue the objectives of this research: a closed-ended survey questionnaire was administered, in-depth interviews with women vendors were conducted and participant observation was pursued. The fieldwork was carried out in Shona, the language spoken by the traders. I am fluent in Shona.

Prior to the collection of data, all ethical considerations and protocols were taken into account. The confidentiality of information that was collected has been preserved and I reassured the participants that the information was only and strictly for academic purposes.

The Magaba market is rather fluid (with considerable inward and outward mobility) such that it was not possible to draw a random sample of a stable universe. Purposive non-random

sampling was employed to identify women participants for survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A survey questionnaire (see Appendix 1), as a quantitative research technique, was administered to forty nine women vendors by me. The central purpose of the survey questionnaire was to provide a broad extensive profile of the Magaba women traders, such that the questions addressed the following issues, amongst others: biographical information, socio-economic status, livelihood strategies, income generation, savings, assets and urban agriculture. All this was critical in trying to establish the fundamentals pertaining to the construction of livelihoods by the Magaba traders.

With regard to qualitative data, in-depth interviews (Appendix 2) with twenty-four women at Magaba were conducted. Giddens (2006) is of the opinion that in-depth informal interviews allow for greater flexibility in asking questions; therefore the researcher is able to investigate issues in greater detail (compared to survey questionnaires) and to probe for further information. While the survey provides breadth to the data, the interviews provide depth; hence, they complemented each other. The interviews offered me the opportunity to probe about the character of livelihood activities, the challenges traders faced, the coping strategies used and intra-household relations notably along gender lines. This method also enabled me to ask for clarifications in cases where lived experiences of traders were not clear.

In addition, simple observation at Magaba was employed during the field work. The purpose of this was to identify and understand the social behaviours of the women vendors, including their relations with each other and with customers. It also gave me the opportunity where necessary to ensure the reliability of information obtained by way of questionnaires and interviews.

1.5.2.2 Methods of Data Analysis

After the collection of data using the above-mentioned instruments, data was then analyzed. Data collected using the survey questionnaire was analyzed using *Statistical Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS v16). This is computer software that analyses data gathered through a survey instrument. Through the use of SPSS, data generated (such as frequencies, percentages and ranges) were used to analyze variables that included age of the respondents, educational qualifications, livelihood strategies, income per month and household sizes.

Data gathered through the in-depth interviews were translated and transcribed. The data was thematically analyzed in such a way that their inherent contextual character remains undistorted. Emerging themes from the voices and experiences of women vendors were organized to form the bulk of the empirically-based chapters in the thesis and these chapters are in fact structured around these themes. The themes were also checked to ensure that they speak to and respond to the key objective of the thesis and the secondary objectives.

1.5.3 Challenges

There were specific challenges encountered in the field work from February to April 2012. In February 2012, I started visiting Magaba to establish rapport with potential participants of my study. However, this needed bravery given the political climate that exists in Harare and the entire country. Establishing rapport was a 'mission impossible' as some of the women that I interacted with started to politicize my study. One woman laughed and said '*Hamusiri mutengesesi here?*' (Are you not a spy?). Because of such incidences, I decided not to take photographs. Such views also raised the prospect of distortion of any information collected.

To overcome this and reassure the traders, I produced my student card and the letter of introduction that I received from my department. This assisted in my access to the women traders. However, a further related challenge which I encountered was one of cooperation. Not everyone was prepared to be part of the survey or to be interviewed. At times I was intimidated by the women in seeking to convince them of the benefits for them of participating in this study. Some vendors asked for incentives for them to partake in the study. The initial stages of the fieldwork were riddled with no cooperation until I recruited some of the vendors to administer the survey questionnaires along with me.

In conducting in-depth interviews I used a digital tape recorder to preserve information. However, a number of vendors were not prepared to be tape-recorded hence I ended up writing notes to preserve the information they were voicing. One woman who refused to be recorded said the following:

I am not happy with you recording my voice because I do not know who you are and where this conversation will be played. Maybe you are CIO [Central Intelligence Organization] or a police officer. I will just talk to you but no recording; NO ways! (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Due to such non-compliance by certain vendors, there is some likelihood that some valuable information was not fully captured. However, everything possible was done to ensure that these challenges would not undermine the integrity and quality of the research.

1.6 Thesis Outline

Altogether there are seven chapters in this thesis. The following chapter (chapter two) focuses on the theoretical framework – the sustainable livelihoods framework – which underpins this study at Magaba. Chapter three discusses the Zimbabwean crisis and the development of the informal sector and urban livelihood strategies over the past twenty years, with a particular focus on women. The following three chapters specifically look at Magaba and the women traders; they are based on my fieldwork. Chapter four analyzes the socio-economic status of the Magaba women traders and their livelihood strategies and sources of income. Chapter five sets out the various challenges which the women traders face (both economic and political challenges) as well as their various coping strategies. Chapter six explores the household assets and livelihood outcomes of women at Magaba, and looks into the gendered intra-household relations of Magaba women. The final chapter summarises the thesis and links together the empirically-based chapters and the theoretical framework shaping the study.

CHAPTER TWO: SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that underpins this study, namely, the sustainable livelihoods theoretical framework with specific reference to the urban context. This provides the basis for understanding and analyzing the livelihoods of urban women at the Magaba market in Harare, Zimbabwe. The sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF), as it is known formally, was initially applied to rural areas but has been more recently applied to urban working people (Rouse and Ali 2000, Frantz 2001).

The concept of livelihoods has proven to be analytically useful since it paints a picture of the ways in which people construct a living, with sensitivity to both structure and agency. It is deployed to pinpoint, describe and understand resources, assets and capitals (such as economic, social and symbolic capital), as well as actions and challenges which affect the sustainability of livelihoods in the face of economic troubles and severe household shocks (Carney 1998, Scoones 1998, UNDP 2001, Rakodi and Lloyds-Jones 2002, Lyons and Snoxell 2005). The framework places people rather than resources, facilities or organizations at the center of its analysis and emphasizes that socio-economic development entails participatory and sustainable methodologies (Carney 1998:8). The SLF also acknowledges that poverty is not a permanent, stable or a static condition (Meikle, Ramasaut and Walker 2001). As a result, poor urban people constantly move in and out of poverty as they react to opportunities, shocks and stresses (Moser 1996, Chambers 1995).

The SLF allows an understanding of livelihood change as livelihood portfolios shift in response to the capacity of households to generate new strategies in response to needs and opportunities, and how these are influenced by the changing vulnerability context and transforming structures and processes (Farrington et al. 2004). To this end, the thesis specifically adopts the SLF detailed by Scoones (1998, 2000) to guide the empirical study. It focuses especially on capital assets in exploring how urban traders sustain themselves and what kind of livelihood strategies they pursue to lessen poverty. In doing so, the framework provides a holistic understanding of both intra- and inter-household relationships and their impact on livelihood activities. Livelihoods in urban spaces utilise, amongst other things, an array of networks, land, financial capital and technology to earn income and access food.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The next section (section two) traces the genesis of the sustainable livelihood framework. The following section (section three) of the chapter unpacks the various components of the SLF (including key capitals/assets, vulnerability context, institutional processes and organizational structures, and livelihood strategies). The following section (section four) highlights the debates surrounding SLF and gender. In that discussion, gender-biased activities at household level are uncovered (including social reproduction, subsistence production, and petty commodity production and – of least direct significance for this study – capitalist production. The last section (section five) addresses the different criticisms leveled against the SLF.

2.2 Genesis of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework

The birth of the notion of sustainable livelihoods can be traced back to the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development of 1987 as “an integrating concept dealing with the issues of population, resource, environment, and development, while corresponding with the need and priorities of the poor” (Chambers 1987:10). Later on, in 1992, a conference by the United Nations on Environment and Development gave further credence to the prospects of a livelihoods framework in asserting that poverty reduction can be achieved through sustainable livelihoods (Krantz 2001). The United Nations strongly emphasized poor people and their needs and the importance of citizen participation, and gave significance to self-reliance and sustainability. In this way, the approach focused on human well-being and how to achieve sustainability rather than economic growth (as increasingly propagated by neo-liberal discourses).

The SLF gradually became internationally renowned and trans-disciplinary as it could be made relevant to theory, research, policy and practice (Knutsson 2006:90). In this light, the SLF “became an analytical structure for coming to grips with the complexity of livelihoods, understanding influences on poverty and identifying where interventions can best be made” (Farrington et al. 2004:91). Later on, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Care and Oxfam, as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), adopted the SLF as a tool for their development programmes. The success of the SLF in winning the attention of key policymakers in donor institutions arose because it presented a fresh vision of a holistic and integrative approach with the capacity to analyze and understand the complexity of rural development (Chambers and Conway 1991, Solesbury 2003, UNDP 1999).

The SLF laid out an understanding of rural people-oriented development that focused on the lived experiences and realities of poor people. It also began to form a guiding principle for rural development practice through the 1980s and 1990s (Chambers 1995, Chambers and Conway 1992). The emergence of the sustainable livelihoods paradigm involved a paradigm shift in development lexicon which has conceptually drawn on changing views of poverty, the diversity of rural people's aspirations, the importance of assets in and for communities, and the constraints and opportunities provided by institutional structures and processes as embodied in state agencies and in donor and development agencies (Solesbury 2003:14). The remaining sections in this chapter unpack the SLF and its various concepts and elements.

2.3 Understanding the Sustainable Livelihood Framework

This section seeks to unpack the various components of the SLF. The section pays particular importance to the following: five different key livelihood assets, vulnerability context, institutional processes and organizational structures, and livelihood strategies (see Figure 2.1). However, it is important to understand the meaning of *livelihoods* and *sustainable livelihoods*.

Livelihoods, as outlined by Grown and Sebstad (1989:941), refer to:

The mix of individual and household survival strategies, developed over a given period of time that seeks to mobilize available resources and opportunities. Resources can be physical assets such as property, human assets such as time and skills, social assets, and collective assets. Opportunities include kin and friendship networks, institutional mechanisms, organizational and group membership, and partnership relations. The mix of livelihood strategies thus includes labour market involvement, savings, accumulation and investments; borrowing; innovation and adaptation of different technologies for production; social networking; changes in consumption patterns; and income, labour and asset pooling.

The particular emphasis given to specific aspects of livelihoods differ from scholar to scholar but the generally shared view of *sustainable livelihoods* is:

The capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term (Chambers and Conway 1991:6).

The SLF is built around the importance of assets as vital to the achievement of sustainable livelihoods. Assets refer to the resources which people use to carry out livelihood strategies. But assets “are not simply resources that people use to build livelihoods: they give them the capability to be and act” (Bebbington 1999:2029). The sustainable livelihoods approach “is an analytical tool to understand livelihoods and influences on poverty, while identifying points where interventions can best be made” (Carswell and Jones 2004:185). At a policy level, then, the aim is to increase the efficiency of development measures. Analytically, the framework provides a conceptual platform and research methodology to identify and analyze livelihoods by noting the important elements intrinsic to livelihoods, their linkages to asset-based opportunities as well as the problems encountered as people pursue livelihoods.

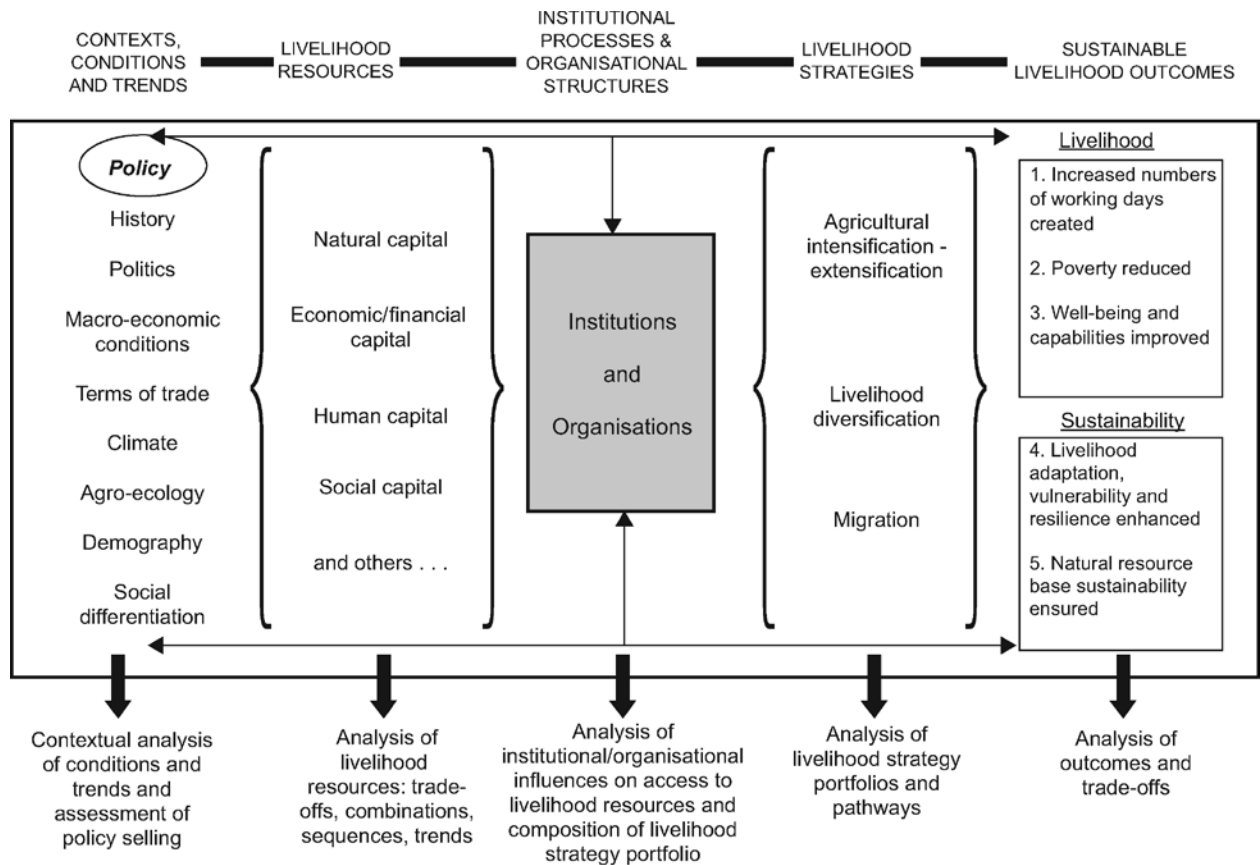
The structure of any SLF analysis is divided into the following: first of all, certain conditions which compose the vulnerability social context (for example, trends, shocks and seasonality); secondly, livelihood assets (resources) along with structures and processes (i.e. social relations, institutions and organizations) which facilitate or constrain livelihoods; thirdly, livelihood strategies themselves; and lastly livelihood outcomes (Figure 2.1). Understanding the connections between these elements will contribute to an understanding of urban livelihoods (specifically of women traders) in Harare.

The sustainable livelihoods framework, as specifically formulated by Ian Scoones (1998, 2000) is depicted diagrammatically below (Figure 2.1). The elements in the framework are related in a variety of ways (indicated by arrows in Figure 2.1), all of which entail dynamic flows. None of the arrows mean direct causality, although all imply a certain level of influence (DFID 1999). In the following discussion, I detail the key components of this version of the SLF.

Generally, many of the SLF studies about poverty reduction and rural and urban livelihood sustainability highlight that poverty reduction is concerned with improving poor people’s assets and enhancing the proper use of existing assets (Oblak 2008:42). Therefore the asset status of the poor gives “a fundamental understanding” of the choices open to them, including their likely survival strategies and their vulnerability. In this respect, the approach tries “to identify what the poor have rather than what they do not have” and, at a programmatic level, “to strengthen people’s own inventive solutions rather than substituting for, blocking or undermining them” (Moser 1998:1). Assets are building blocks which enable individuals or

households to achieve their desired outcomes (including health, income and reduced vulnerability). Assets therefore can be depicted as stocks of capital which can be used either directly or indirectly to survive (Ellis 2000:31).

Figure 2.1: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



Source: Scoones (1998:4, 2000).

Livelihood assets have been distinguished differently but the different categories used have the same meaning. In this thesis, the categorization of assets follows that of Scoones. Of importance to Scoones are the following five categories of assets: natural capital, physical capital, financial capital, human capital and social capital (Scoones 2000). These are discussed in turn, with a particular focus on urban livelihoods.

2.3.1 Natural Capital

Natural capital is a term used to refer to the natural resource base. It includes land, water, forests, air quality, erosion protection and degree of biodiversity (Kollmair and Juli 2002:7) and these are used to earn a living. This capital can be divided into two broad types, that is, renewable and nonrenewable resources. Renewable resources replenish themselves over time

(including fishery stocks, trees used for firewood and water levels in underground aquifers). Nonrenewable resources exist in limited supply and cannot be replaced once they have been extracted and used, including oils and metals (Ellis 2000:32). Different types of natural capital can be harnessed to support livelihoods. The cash economy is at the centre of urban livelihoods; however the urban poor use a range of natural resources to contribute to their livelihoods directly and for fungibility (i.e. substitution for expenditure) (Oblak 2008:11). In the urban context, urban agriculture is increasingly becoming a common venture to ensure food security among households.

Gender, in the context of patriarchy, also plays a significant role in natural capital particularly in relation to land use and agricultural outcomes. Women involved in agriculture execute much of the work required to produce crops, yet they are frequently barred from decision-making connected to agriculture and livelihoods. It is evident that women have less access to markets or to the use of the income gained from selling crops. Generally, in many societies, women's access to productive assets such as land, capital and credit facilities are restricted even if they are the ones who produce more. This marginalizes women and dis-empowers them.

Of importance is the interconnectedness between natural capital and vulnerability. Kollmair and Juli (2002:7) argue that many of the disastrous shocks which undercut livelihoods are natural processes that destroy natural capital, such as fires, floods and earthquakes. In summation, the proper use of any available natural resources (renewable and nonrenewable) contributes to sustainable livelihoods.

2.3.2 Physical Capital

Physical capital concerns the basic infrastructure and services needed to support livelihoods, such as affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation and clean affordable energy. These resources are often commodified, notably in urban spaces, through policies such as privatization and user fees (as occurred in Zimbabwe under neo-liberal restructuring in the 1990s). A critical question is whether every household has reasonable access to infrastructure and services despite varying socio-economic statuses and even political affiliation.

Physical assets are effectively created by economic production processes (Ellis 2000:33) and are designed for the common good. In urban centers, there is a strong reliance on physical capital to support livelihoods (Drakakis-Smith 2000). Urban and rural people do not have the same natural assets (including land), with urban people more fully dependent on physical capital such as housing, roads and other infrastructure. Housing is one important asset for poor urban households. It is used for shelter and reproductive purposes as well as for income-generating purposes. The income-generating purposes include renting out rooms or using the space as a workshop area (Moser 1998:13). Some poor urbanites who cannot afford rented houses opt for informal settlements where they live in fear in case officials destroy their informal structures. Ownership of housing is often essential to accessing other resources; for instance, having a fixed address may enable credit and formal employment opportunities (Guha Sapir 1996).

The value of housing as an important asset is its location. Houses which are closer to employment opportunities or markets will have better access to various activities to supplement income and reduce transport costs (Farrington et al. 2002:24). Farrington et al. (2002:24) further argue that distance can be a problem; for instance, the forced relocation of households in informal settlements can be disastrous on these resettled households especially when households are now further away from their established sources of livelihoods. In the urban areas, the availability of affordable transport is very essential to allow people's mobility from one place to another in order to pursue different livelihood strategies. Livelihood strategies, in the case of women traders in Magaba, are mainly concentrated in urban markets and movement between the place of residence and the market becomes critical.

The other physical asset that is of importance in urban areas is public infrastructure, which sometimes becomes a pull factor for rural people migrating to urban centers. Urban areas for example have improved water sources as well as ready access to water, including water connections to houses. This is in contrast to rural areas where water is scarce and people have to travel long distances to fetch water. However, many poor urbanites do not have access to public infrastructure, especially those who stay in illegal settlements. This is mainly because these informal settlements are not site-and-service stands and are not regularly serviced by local municipalities. Many public services also are not affordable due to structural adjustment programmes implemented by the World Bank, with user fees imposed for facilities like health and water; because of this, the wealthy have privileged access to physical assets (Farrington

et al. 2002:23). A range of household goods may be classified as moveable physical assets as they store value and may be sold in times of crisis to gain income (Chambers 1997).

2.3.3 Human Capital

Human capital refers to skills, knowledge and ability to work (Carney 1998). There is therefore a discernible link between human capital and financial capital (see below). For instance, access to employment and earnings (as elements of financial capital) is firmly dependent on adequate human capital. In turn, human capital is highly dependent on adequate nutrition, health care, safe environmental conditions and education.

People residing in urban areas have access to quality health care as compared to rural areas. In urban areas most people receive the best care possible for one's illness or condition. Crook (1996:150) argues that many of the poorest people in both urban and rural spaces make serious sacrifices to access treatment. This is so because health is so important; hence they are likely to make sacrifices for instance diverting money needed to purchase daily necessities to purchasing medication. While urban areas are marked by better health care, local environments and working conditions in poor urban areas are insanitary and unsafe and hence residents and workers are exposed to great health risks.

Education is another key determinant of human capital. Though education is accessible in urban areas, the issue of affordability is very crucial as poor households cannot afford better schools, and this leads to poor quality education and high levels of illiteracy. Cultural norms pertaining to girl-child education limit the enrolment of girls in both primary and secondary education resulting in high female illiteracy. This is more prevalent in rural areas which adhere much more to cultural norms. The lack of proper education consequently limits employment opportunities as employers seek out employees with better formal education. To that end, Rakodi (2000) argues that lack of human capital in the form of skills and education affects the ability to secure a livelihood that is well remunerated.

2.3.4 Financial Capital

There are two main sources of financial capital:

- Available stocks comprising cash, bank deposits or liquid assets such as livestock and furniture, and for which there are no liabilities attached.

- Regular inflows of money comprising labour income, pensions or other transfers from the state, plus remittances (which are dependent on others and need to be reliable) (Kollmair and Juli 2002)

Financial capital is chiefly derived by income from the sale of labour and this is often one of the most important assets for the urban poor and one which they tend to prioritize (Twigg and Bhatt 1998). Consequently, the inadequacy of financial capital for a household is problematic and reveals the extent of household poverty. Income is vital in the daily lives of urban households because of the commoditized character of urban spaces; urban people are heavily dependent on cash income compared to rural people who may have access to land for subsistence agriculture and a natural resource base in relation to – for instance – fisheries, fuel wood and hunting grounds or who may be paid in kind for their labour (Farrington et al. 2002:19).

The urban poor are also more heavily dependent on cash income than the rural poor because of their easy access to employment opportunities and market opportunities. Urbanites have a range of employment opportunities to choose from as compared to rural people. The urban areas present better opportunities for cash incomes but not all poor people have regular access to formal income opportunities. Generally, employment in the urban areas is mainly in the informal sector (Benjamin and Amis 1999). Livelihoods, in the case of Magaba in Harare, are mainly based on informal sector activities due to the fact that the formal employment sector has shrunk in Zimbabwe. The informal sector is often the only available option for urbanites to access employment and to earn an income. In times of economic crisis, especially in developing countries, urban people often engage in (or least seek to engage in) a multiplicity of paid work or other informal income-earning opportunities to enhance household livelihoods.

While labour capacity is a vital asset in urban areas compared to rural areas, labour markets in Zimbabwe like elsewhere are segmented including along gender lines. Because of their traditional domestic responsibilities, women tend to be marginalized from the formal sector or slot into this sector in low-income positions. In this context, they often turn to the informal sector. Women form the majority of the informal sector agents and they have accepted to live and work in this sector not normally because it is their choice or wish but because they do not have any chance of being employed in the formal sector. Informal sector activities that

women engage in include vending, foreign currency dealing and flea markets amongst others. These activities are central in raising financial capital in order to earn a living in the urban space. Without the informal sector a majority of women cannot earn a decent living because of the monetized nature of the urban economy that requires a constant supply of cash. Often, then, women – with household responsibilities – pursue informal sector work including as traders. Informal sector work has little returns but women traders seek to fulfill their household needs through depriving themselves of their own personal needs. Thus women tend to give value to collective well-being over their own as a result of ideologies of maternal altruism (Whitehead 1981), where women deny their self and give preference to satisfying the needs of other household members; for instance by making sure that food and clothing is available.

Besides the sale of labour and informal sector activities, urban people often have access to credit as a form of financial capital. However many households and individuals are unable to access credit through the formal financial sector or even through more expensive informal markets. This is mainly because of the exorbitant interest rates which are charged. Financial capital, in the form of access to cash, is closely linked to informal forms of money-saving and money-lending schemes which shape the livelihoods of households in poor urban communities. In Zimbabwe and elsewhere, women regularly engage in a form of money-lending called *ma-round* (rotational groups), entailing a rotation whereby particular members of the group, on a monthly basis, receive a substantial share of the group's funds. This system, called *stokvels* in South Africa, plays a considerable social role in bringing about a degree of community cooperation (Gwagwa 1998).

Broadly, women are discriminated against in acquiring financial capital through formal means (including formal employment, credit services and bank loans) in seeking to pursue livelihood strategies. More priority is given to men; thus there is significant inequality in terms of access to financial capital and, as a result, women are caught in a pool of poverty due to inadequate access. This deprivation regularly leads to limited diversification of livelihood activities and an increased dependency on one livelihood strategy for women, thus increasing the chances of vulnerability when stresses and shocks are experienced. Contrarily, increased financial capital for women entails diversification through participating in various livelihood strategies. Increased women's access to financial credit empowers them in intra-household relations when it comes to decision-making.

2.3.5 Social Capital

This section discusses the many ways in which social capital is conceptualized in the literature; a more critical perspective is highlighted later. The concept of social capital was developed by Pierre Bourdieu as a way of deepening sociological knowledge of how relations of difference, power and domination can be created and sustained and, more so, how social agents position themselves in these relations (Bourdieu 1977, 1986). Bourdieu's social capital is conceived as part of a system of social, economic and cultural structures (Foley and Edwards 1999). In this sense, social capital can be understood in terms of the distribution of resources and power relations and the reproduction of these "power relations are reflected in and reproduced by social networks" (Molyneux 2002:181). As a result, social capital and the broader political economy cannot be separated. Yet, a considerable proportion of the academic literature on social capital tends to romanticize the notion.

Bourdieu (1985:248) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition". Other scholars term social capital as networks of mutual support which exist within and between households, extended families and communities; people mobilize social capital to access resources such as loans, childcare, food, accommodation and information about employment and other opportunities (Moser 1998, Ellis 2000:35). Foley and Edwards (1999), following Bourdieu, claim that social capital is not just a series of networks but also includes the resources owned or possessed within networks. The voluminous literature defines social capital in numerous ways but there is substantial agreement that "social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership or other social structures" (Portes 1998:3). In this respect, social networks have been found to "engender trust and flexibility, reduce transaction costs, and facilitate integration into the global economy" (Meagher 2006:554). Meagher (2006:554) goes on to argue that (and this seems consistent with neo-liberal discourse) "where states and markets are weak, social networks offer an informal mechanism of economic co-ordination capable of filling gaps in formal institutional provision and regulatory capacity".

Evidence from Africa demonstrates though that these social networks have failed to cope with economic restructuring and globalization. In this context, Meagher identifies three broad perspectives on African social networks (Meagher 2006). The first perspective identifies

social capital as a useful way of enhancing socio-economic development if state discriminatory practices are limited. This approach maintains that the “the vast ethnic trading networks and dynamic informal sectors of the African economies ... provide livelihoods, housing and services in the face of crumbling official economies” (Meagher 2006:554). Farrington et al. (2000:24) hence argue that social capital is a valuable asset important to the urban poor especially in times of crisis. Because of this, economic and state regulations should provide a constructive environment in which “African entrepreneurial networks flourish” (Meagher 2006:555).

The second perspective argues that “Africans are not able to form sound social networks” and “African societies suffer from a lack of networks owing to cultural incapacities and the historical disruptions of colonialism and rapid urbanization” (Meagher 2005:222). Followers of this perspective argue that Africans do not lack networks *per se* but are deficient in proper networks. African social networks “undermine productive investment, contract enforcement and innovation necessary for productive economic development to occur” (Meagher 2006:223). The third perspective contends that African societies create unhelpful networks that promote “corruption and criminality, owing to their embeddedness in clientelist political institutions and dysfunctional cultural values” (Meagher 2006:223). Besides possibly promoting economic efficiency, African networks thereby are spaces of opportunism and institutional subversion. In this light, Bayart asserts that “the social capital of Africa appears to display a marked affinity with the spirit of criminality” (Bayart 1999:34).

It may be that the character of social networks and their impacts are open to historical and spatial variation. Generally, however, the formation of social groups in communities has been viewed as positive by bringing people together, and uniting and assisting them in times of need. As noted by Putnam (1993), social capital is used by people to lobby for services from the state as well as recognition of rights by the state. At the same time, social capital may be undermined by processes such as urbanization and migration. Pantoja (1999) argues that social capital is loosened by increased violence and competition for scarce resources, hence potentially widening the gap between the rich and the poor. In relation to times of uncertainty and fluidity, Andersson (2006) concluded that social capital has a solidarity function as shown in a study of Malawian immigrants in Johannesburg. The results revealed that new immigrants relied on kin and friends already settled in the city for moral support, accommodation and finding employment. Lyon and Snoxell (2005:1094) likewise argue that

social capital in the market place is increasingly important to informal traders' economic capital, at least as shown by their study of the role of urban social capital amongst informal traders in Kenya.

The study by Meagher (2006) in Nigeria's informal manufacturing sector addressed why social networks in Nigeria (and in Africa broadly) have failed to stimulate economic growth while similar social networks have promoted economic growth in other parts of the world. The study ruled that social networks have failed particularly because of the pressures of liberalization, differentiation, survival strategies and political opportunism. The social capital weaknesses "are due to state neglect and the instability of the wider institutional context in which these networks are embedded" (Meagher 2006: 579). In another study by De Herdt and Marysse (1997: 228), whose aim was to examine the role of solidarity networks during the crisis in Zaire which dates back to 1981, solidarity networks were primarily used as a coping strategy for survival in helping households to construct family-based enterprises.

2.3.5.1 Gendering Social Capital

Despite the diversity of views on social capital, there is often a distinctive silence about gender. This is important given that the focus of the thesis is specifically on women traders. This silence has provoked feminists to engage with the concept drawing on Bourdieu's assumptions (Molyneux 2002). Many feminists argue that social capital has shown "gender blindness" (Silvey and Elmhirst 2003:867) in that social capital is conceptualized as a capital of the poor when primarily it is a capital of poor women. Women are the main subjects of social capital maintenance but this has been generally ignored in the literature. And this is particularly true because social capital debates have not focused on intra-household relationships (Mayoux 2001:451-52). Social capital has been seen frequently as a household asset but there has been a failure to consider the forms of social capital that different members of the household possess and the ways in which male dominance over resources and power impinge on female household members (Bebbington 2007:157).

Silvey and Elmhirst (2003:30) therefore conclude that "gender ideologies ... lead to unwelcome claims being made on women's labour and remittances, and create certain types of constraints on women's mobility and behaviour". Male social capital is discriminatory and limits women's access to markets and to a range of assets and public institutional spheres; hence, social capital of women should always be understood in the context of male networks

(which are exclusionary). In emphasizing this, Mayoux (2001:440) correctly claims that “there has been a by-and-large systematic failure in social-capital writing to get at and problematize the underlying assumptions about gender subordination embedded in the rules and norms governing associations and relationships at all levels”.

Social capital can uphold inequality in large part because access to different types of networks is very unequally distributed. All individuals can exploit their connections as a means of advancing their interests, but some people’s connections are more valuable than others in upholding and dominating social relations (Field 2008). Marginalized groups, such as poor urban women, are disadvantaged by network poverty while dominant groups are in a powerful position as a result of their strong network assets. Thus “access to social capital depends on the social location of the specific individuals or groups attempting to appropriate it ... [T]he social location of the social capital itself affects its use value regardless of who appropriates it” (Edward and Foley 1997:677).

In this regard, Bourdieu described social capital as a means of acquiring wealth, power and privilege at the expense of others (Braun 2002), and thus powerful groups undercut the formation of social capital amongst less powerful groups and this perpetuates social inequalities (Schulman and Anderson 1999). Differences in access to financial, human and physical capital tend to feed into inequalities deriving from social capital; in other words, “tangible assets affect intangible assets” (Oblak 2008:45).

Clearly, from the discussion so far, capital (notably social capital) is problematic when understood in a romanticized manner. However, marginalized groups such as the urban poor have access to forms of capital (or assets) and may use these strategically to pursue sustainable livelihoods. The more assets people own or possess, the wider the opportunities and choices in forming different livelihood strategies and escaping poverty (Di Gregorio et al. 2004:14).

2.3.6 Vulnerability Context

It is insufficient though to discuss the availability of capital assets without a reflection on the processes that mediate access to these capitals. Vulnerability conditions and events (such as shocks, trends and seasonal variations), as well as structures (organizations) and processes (institutions) (Farrington et al. 1999:3) – which are discussed later – enhance or inhibit

sustainable livelihoods. As well, the ways in which assets are combined and transformed directly affects household poverty and vulnerability levels (Moser 1998). Livelihood strategies occur in a threatening and vulnerable context but this may entail forms of livelihood resilience, and it is critical to examine strategies as a means of coping with crises.

Vulnerability refers to the insecurity or well-being of individuals or communities in the face of changing environments in the form of sudden shocks, long term trends or seasonal cycles (Moser 1996, Rakodi and Jones 2002). The vulnerability context, which influences the access to and use of assets (Ellis 2000:37), entails political and socio-economic structures and processes of which livelihoods are in fact an integral component. Changing environments (including ecological, social, economic and political) can generate constraints as well as opportunities for livelihoods (Moser 1996). The vulnerability context is related both to the level and form of external threats to a household, individual or community, as well as their resilience in resisting and recovering from these external threats (Farrington et al. 2002). The ability of individuals and households to avoid or reduce vulnerability and to increase economic sustainability depends upon the availability of assets and also upon the ability to transform these assets into income, food or other basic necessities, by intensifying existing strategies, by developing completely new ones or by diversifying into other strategies (Moser 1996, 1998).

The character of the vulnerability context may be crudely identified by using the poverty lines based on the income of a household. For instance, in India, by using the poverty lines it is estimated that between 40% and 50% of slum households live below the poverty line and 11% immediately above it (Farrington et al. 2002). But other, sometimes more qualitative, elements also highlight the depth and breadth of the context. Moser and Holland (1997) therefore point to a range of tangible and non-tangible assets such as labour, human capital, productive forces, household relations and social capital. Poor men and women in urban areas do not face the same dilemmas but generally the sources of vulnerability are similar. Farrington et al. (2002) speak about more underlying elements of the vulnerability context, notably the social contexts of cities, the productive organisation of urban economies, and the urban environment and systems of governance

The actual vulnerability sources are generally said to fall into three broad categories. The first is shocks, which include natural shocks (such as droughts, floods and diseases), economic

shocks (including market crashes and high inflation) and socio-political shocks (for example, infrequent election cycles, and very low personal and property security). Secondly, there are trends incorporating population growth and density, international economic trends and market prices, and political-governance trends. Seasonality is the third shock, and relates to variations in prices, production, health and employment opportunities (DFID 1999). More specifically, shocks are events that occur suddenly, unpredictably and infrequently, while trends are usually continual and are more predictable. Their effects can be seen on the prospects for maintaining a portfolio of livelihood strategies, particularly for poor people who have less livelihood options. Seasonal shifts, entailing changes in prices, employment opportunities and food availability, are particularly problematic for the poor (Chambers and Conway 1991).

An analysis of the vulnerability context and processes focuses on the opportunities that are available (or are activated) to resist the implications of vulnerability and uncertainty; this involves a range of safety nets and activities meant to supplement existing strategies (Farrington et al. 2002:17). In this light, Di Gregorio et al. (2004) and DFID (1999) stress that poor people are particularly vulnerable because of asset deficits and cycles of poverty. It is therefore important to understand how people recover, avoid and withstand vulnerability.

The shocks, trends and seasonality affect both rural and urban areas, and sustainable livelihoods will be those livelihoods that can resist shocks, trends and seasonality. A household's portfolio of tangible assets including stores (food stocks, stores of value such as gold and jewellery) and resources as well as intangible assets (including claims and access) are important for survival and reduce vulnerability. At the same time, assets are themselves vulnerable; for instance, reserves of grain can be destroyed by fire, floods and pests. This can pose major threats to households which can result in increased vulnerability.

2.3.7 Institutional Processes and Organizational Structures

Livelihood strategies also need to be understood in the context of other elements of the framework which hinder or enhance livelihood outcomes. For this reason, the framework gives emphasis to analyzing the institutions and organizations that impinge (as both barriers and opportunities) on livelihood strategies. Sociologically, institutions are defined as “regularized practices (or patterns of behaviour) structured by rules and norms of society which have persistent and widespread use” (Giddens 1979 in Scoones 1998:12). Institutions

can be either formal or informal or a combination of both, and they are often changing and sometimes ambiguous. North asserts that “organizations are groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives” (North 1990 in Ellis 2000:38). Formal organizations include cooperatives, registered groups and community-based organizations while more informal organizations include labour exchange groups and rotating savings groups (Chambers 1997).

Power relations embedded in institutions are crucial. Institutions though seemingly fixed are open to change, and processes of social negotiations animated by power relations mean that institutional frameworks are not static entities or fully-bounded social systems (Scoones 2000). These institutional processes are “the rules of the game” while the organizational structures are the “players” (North 1990 in Ellis 2000:38). Overall, “institutions are the social cement which link stakeholders to access to capital of different kinds to the means of exercising power and so define the gateways through which they pass on the route to positive or negative [livelihood] adaptation” (Davies 1997:24). In light of the above, understanding institutional processes allow the identification of restrictions and opportunities (gateways) to successful livelihoods. Furthermore, such an understanding is therefore a key in designing interventions which improve sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Organizational structures (both private and public organizations) can be described as the hardware that can set and put into practice policy and legislation, deliver services, purchase, and trade and perform all manner of other functions that affect livelihoods (DFID 2000). Notable structures are governmental organizations as they “operate in cascading levels with various degrees of autonomy and a range of authority depending on the level of decentralization” (Oblak 2008:48). To this end, they form and implement policies and legislation which affect rural and urban livelihoods, including tenure regimes, labour systems, market networks and credits.

Institutions and organizations set the parameters within which access to livelihood assets are negotiated and as a result they affect the portfolios of livelihood strategies. Achieving sustainable livelihoods is not though a deterministic affair; there are openings, obstacles, negotiations and trade-offs at every point. Knowledge of relevant social relationships and structures, and their institutional and organizational forms, regularly indicates the existence of a complex, messy and shifting social matrix; and this mediates the processes of livelihood

maintenance and change (Leach et al. 1999). For instance, different informal and formal institutions and organizations operate at various levels and in various degrees, extending from the household and community levels to the national and even international levels. This affects people's capabilities to practice different livelihood strategies and this in turn affects livelihood outcomes.

Broad processes and structures impact on the livelihoods of urban men and women. In urban areas, people are linked to the structures that govern the city or town and this is in part through their dependency on service delivery as well as meso- and macro-level economic policies and programmes (Beall and Kanji 1999). Planning processes may in fact lead to further vulnerability of poor people. For instance, in Delhi (India), 63% of employment is in the informal sector dominated by poor men and women. However, most of the informal activities are unregulated and often are not put into consideration as far as planning and allocation of resources are concerned (Dhar Chakrabarti 2001).

Of particular significance in recent decades is neo-liberalism and structural adjustment. These macro-economic policies are a constraint and constant threat to sustainable livelihoods, notably in terms of formal employment. Also, the reduction of government spending on social services and the privatization of services under neo-liberalism marks a shift from citizen's rights to market rights (Johnson and Start 2001). While the stated purpose of implementing structural adjustment policies is redistribution and poverty reduction through economic growth, in the short-term the stresses and shocks caused by adjustment policies push individuals and households into deeper poverty. This is through, for instance, retrenchments, loss of basic subsidies, and imposition of user fees, all of which further exacerbate the vulnerability context.

An institutional and organizational setup particularly pertinent to this thesis and which influences livelihoods is patriarchy and gender (as intimated earlier). There are different rights and access to (and control of) assets along gender lines. Gender roles serve to exacerbate inequality and bring about power imbalances, including with respect to intra-household relations (Chambers 1997:7). Women and female children are valued less, thereby they are regularly barred from decision-making and are more likely to lose out in time of scarcity. The institutional processes and organizational structures are shaped by and reinforce gender relations.

Based on this and the previous section, it is clear that (in complex and diverse ways) institutional processes and organizational structures as well as vulnerability contexts shape the choices that are open to men and women in pursuing their livelihood strategies, on both a short-term and long-term basis. The following discussion of livelihoods strategies themselves must be seen in this light.

2.3.8 Livelihood Strategies

Livelihood strategies are deliberate activities that men and women embark on to build their livelihoods. The aim of any livelihood strategy is to provide households with the means for subsistence and survival and possibly to increase safety nets (Beall and Kanji 1999). Livelihood strategies include coping strategies designed to respond to shocks in the short term and adaptive strategies designed to improve circumstances in the long term (Singh and Gilman 1999).

Within the sustainable livelihood framework, there are three kinds of livelihood strategies that are normally identified. These are, at least with respect to rural livelihoods, agricultural intensification (or extensification), livelihood diversification and migration. These strategies have different dynamics and outcomes. In rural areas, livelihoods mainly involve agriculture (including crop production, livestock rearing, forestry and fisheries).

Agriculture intensification may occur through capital and technological investments and by way of an increase in labour inputs, or through extensification which includes more land under cultivation. Some of these processes are capital-led (often supported by external inputs and policies) or labour-led (mainly depending on a household's own labour and social resources).

Livelihood diversification refers to an attempt by people or households to discover new ways of increasing income and reducing vulnerability and (in the case of rural spaces) it includes both on-farm activities and off-farm activities (Carswell 1997). Diversification, as a form of security-seeking, may seek to deal with temporary hardships or a more permanent alteration of livelihood strategies (which is generally opted for when other livelihoods have failed to provide a living) (Hussein and Nelson 1998). Many poor urban households diversify their sources of incomes and engage in a number of activities such as formal waged employment, informal trading and other service activities, often performed by different family members in

different activities and different sectors of the economy. Diversification may have positive and negative effects. It reduces reliance on one source of livelihood thereby limiting vulnerability to different stresses and shocks. Contrarily, devoting considerable time in multiple activities reduces the chances of investing focused time to one activity and making it profitable. Generally people practice a range of strategies concurrently or in a series one after the other.

Migration entails moving away and seeking a livelihood elsewhere, which is either on a temporary or permanent basis. Migration issues have stirred debate among scholars. A study in Lesotho has revealed that migrant labour leads to pervasive rural economic insecurity; it also loosens household social ties which consequently results in family disintegration and a decrease in agriculture and other rural-based livelihood strategies (McDowell and de Haan 1997). At the same time, agriculture intensification is hindered by the absence of labour; yet, intensification may occur if remittances from migrants are received and are used to hire extra labour, and purchase seeds and fertilizers. Such remittances may also allow for livelihood diversification, if they provide a capital base for new initiatives.

Livelihood strategies are pursued in combination with different capitals. For instance, in order to achieve agricultural intensification, there is the need to access natural capital (including land and water), economic capital (including technology and credit) and social capital (including social networks that can convey messages about drought and labour-sharing arrangements). Accessing or deploying a range of capitals becomes particularly crucial for the diversification of different livelihood strategies.

Apart from the specific livelihood strategies already outlined above in line with Figure 2.1, a range of other strategies can be adopted to eradicate vulnerability. These strategies include income-enhancement, expenditure reduction, collective support and external representation by non-government organizations. Income-enhancing regularly takes place through an increase of women in informal activities to supplement household income. These other livelihood strategies are summarized below (in Table 2.1), showing the kind of strategies that are peculiar to both urban and rural areas.

Table 2.1: Other Livelihood Strategies Peculiar to both Urban and Rural Areas

Strategy	Mainly urban	Urban and rural
Income enhancing/ investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • domestic services – cleaning and childcare (esp. girls and women) • urban agriculture • renting out rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • home gardening • processing, hawking, vending • transporting goods • casual labour, piece work • specialised occupations (e.g. tinkering, food preparation, prostitution) • child labour • migration off seasonal work • begging and theft
Expenditure reducing/ sacrifice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scavenging • cutting transport costs • cutting of luxurious goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mortgaging and selling assets • selling children into bonded labour • changes in purchasing habits (e.g. frequent smaller quantities) • buying less and/or cheaper goods and services • discrimination within the household (e.g. giving less to less powerful or less favoured household members)
collective support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communal kitchens • communal childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mutual loans or savings groups • putting out children for care in extended family • remittances from household members working away

Source: (Chambers 1997, Moser 1998)

Livelihood strategies in response to shocks may be beneficial for a short time while also negatively affecting other members of the family and increasing vulnerability in the long run. For instance sending children to work rather than school (because of labour needs) is a major problem that would affect children in the long run and reduce human capital accordingly. In India this is clearly in evidence, with 4, 3% of boy-children and 7% of girl-children involved in labour (Guha Sapir 1996).

Livelihood strategies may be assessed at different levels, including individual, household, local, regional and national levels. However there are variations in terms of the livelihood effects at different scalar levels. For instance, at an individual level, it may seem justifiable to pursue a multiple of livelihood strategies, but these may have contradictory effects at other levels. A successful agricultural intensification strategy may provide chances for another person locally or nationally to engage in agricultural processing or a petty trading livelihood diversification strategy. However, agriculture intensification may undercut the strategies of others in the same local community by monopolizing important factors such as land and credit. Individuals and households can specialize in a number of livelihood strategies, for instance vending, renting out rooms and cross border trading, while at village level people can specialize in subsistence farming of one specific crop.

A mixture of activities that are practiced by different individuals in specific households is called a 'livelihood portfolio'. Portfolios are different in scope; some are exceptionally specific with a focus on one or a small range of livelihood activities while other portfolios are more varied. A number of diverse activities may occur unchanged over time but there is often temporal variation across years or seasons (Chambers 1997). Generally, different combinations of activities are pursued but changing conditions (such as in dependency ratio, health conditions and available capitals) can alter the combinations of livelihood strategies.

The degree to which people specialize in their activities is mainly contingent on the available resources and the risks that are associated with the activities. A number of alternatives have been designed to resist risks. These options include accumulating livelihood resources so that reserves are put in place to counter stresses and shocks; or livelihood strategies can be stretched over space and time so that a particular risk such as drought will not have an effect on all the activities. A mixture of activities reduces the risk of livelihood activities being affected in time of a shock. To reduce this risk people insure their properties, for instance insuring crops in case of hailstorms. Lastly resilience can be improved so that shocks and risks are felt less (Scoones 2000). For example, resilience can be promoted by increasing access to credit to diversify livelihoods, or increasing awareness of risks associated with running a business through vocational training centers. Furthermore, resilience can be enhanced through intensification of other livelihood strategies – for instance urban agriculture to increase food security.

It is clear that livelihood strategies yield livelihood outcomes. The outcomes, if beneficial, take many forms, but include heightened employment (Sen 1975), poverty reduction, increased socio-economic well-being, enhanced capabilities and livelihood sustainability (Scoones 2000). This can thereby reduce livelihood vulnerability such that households maintain a decent and dignified livelihood and possibly cope and recover from stress and shocks (Chambers and Conway 1991).

2.4 Gender and the SLF

This study focuses on women traders and hence the significance of the SLF for gender questions must be highlighted. In this regard, livelihood-building assets and capitals often have a gendered quality. Within each capital there may be ‘sub-capitals’ and these need to be distinguished in a gendered-sensitive manner to avoid overly-broad generalizations. For example, instead of generalizing about access to (and control of) natural capital, this capital can be divided into land and land-based natural resources (DFID 2000). By so doing, it highlights the access to (and control of) different capitals by men and women. For instance, access by women to land and livestock in rural areas is different to that of men mainly because of customary laws, and often there is a distinction between women’s crops and men’s crops. Further, women may rely more heavily on land-based natural resources.

The SLF is mainly used at household and community level, and decision-making processes at these levels and their gendered character become critical. For instance, even in cases where women engage in income-earning activities, men (notably husbands) regularly try to make the decisions pertinent to the expenditure of all household income. In the urban areas, in the formal economy, there is labour segmentation which impacts life at household level. According to Masika and Joeke (1996: 9), female work activities (which are normally less paid than male work) “are often related to perceived female characteristics such as patience, dexterity, caring, docility or to traditionally female activities within the household such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, tending the sick and personal services of various kinds”. In the spheres of economic production and social reproduction (located within the home), then, patriarchy structures the relations between men and women. This gender-based marginalization (in production) and confinement (to reproduction work) may lead women to engage – or find refuge – in livelihood activities in the informal sector which gives them a sense of dignity, responsibility and autonomy.

A range of (often gender-biased) activities are focused at the household level. They encompass social reproduction, subsistence production, petty commodity production and (of least direct significance for this study) capitalist production (Wield and Chataway 2001). Overall, sites of economic production and social reproduction are gendered in character and this has an impact on intra-household relations (including decision making).

Firstly, social reproduction (involving domestic and nurturing responsibilities) refers to the unpaid and unremunerated work primarily of women, which is based on what one is obliged to do. Mosoetsa (2005:35) questions whether domestic work entails 'labour or love' on the part of women, and this relates to arguments about the possible economic implications of unpaid labour provided by women in subsidising men's wages (Beechey 1987).

Secondly, subsistence production is again a form of unpaid and unremunerated work based on the principle of mutual obligation. The most immediate example of this kind of production is agriculture for sustenance of the household (Wield and Chataway 2001). This kind of production though is increasingly reported in urban areas as a livelihood strategy. There are gender divisions in this kind of unpaid work, as women are the major participants in subsistence production in both rural and urban contexts. Indeed, in urban areas, men regularly regard this as a marginal livelihood strategy.

Thirdly, petty commodity production is unpaid but it is often remunerated through the market. Many activities are encompassed in this form of production, such as the informal economy, self-employment and agricultural production (Wield and Chataway 2001). With industrial and economic restructuring, outsourcing and subcontracting is increasingly becoming significant and permanent full-time employment is being undercut (Peck 1996). High levels of unemployment have forced individuals and households to seek refuge in the informal economy and the activities in the informal economy are heterogeneous. The informal economy is also a gendered economy with more women taking up informal work but often in activities associated with the female gender. A study by Tamukamoyo (2009) in Zimbabwe and one by Mosoetsa (2005) in South Africa conclude that those who engage in the informal economy seek a survivalist form of life and often remain in poverty.

Lastly, capitalist production in the formal economy is relevant because of the effects of downsizing of economies for livelihood strategies. With reference to this study, Zimbabwe

have gone through a crisis of formal employment over the past two decades; because of this, social reproduction, subsistence production and petty commodity production have risen to prominence as livelihood activities.

2.5 Critique of the SLF

The sustainable livelihood framework has proven to be a successful analytical tool to understand the complexities of rural and urban poor livelihoods. It has certain strengths. Murray (2001:7) argues that, firstly, it understands changing combinations of modes of livelihoods in a dynamic and historical context; secondly, it explicitly advocates a creative tension between levels of analysis, including individual, household and community; thirdly, it acknowledges the need to transcend the boundaries between seemingly discrete sectors (such as urban and rural, and informal and formal); and, fourthly, it recognizes the necessity to investigate the relationship between different activities that constitute household livelihoods, which in turn require attention both to intra-household and extra-household social relations. However, the framework has its loopholes and is subject to criticism. I outline key criticisms below:

- a)* There are methodological difficulties. There is an agreement between scholars of the SLF that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which cannot be narrowed down to economic deprivation only (whether level of income, patterns of consumption or food insufficiency). But rarely is poverty operationalised in a clear and rigorous manner in the literature. It is imperative for the framework to have a clear understanding of what constitutes poverty in order for instance to assess livelihood outcomes (Krantz 2001, Agrawal and Gibson 1999), and this may require more participatory poverty assessment methodologies.
- b)* The social relations underpinning poverty are not always fully brought to the fore. Issues of inequality and power, which have their roots at national and international level, reproduce poverty at more local levels. The SLF places a strong emphasis on agency as embedded in livelihood strategies but the structural context needs greater attention. Agency, and the prospects of agency, is complicated and heavily compromised because of often informal structures of social dominance and power which influence ownership, control and possession of resources as well as livelihood outcomes (Carney 2002). In this respect, the power-based character of gender relations is often ignored. Women and men are often lumped together into the category of 'the poor' and subsumed within a general discourse of poor people.

Krantz (2001) argues that methodological approaches that are not gender-sensitive or do not focus specifically on women tend to misrepresent their livelihoods or silence their livelihoods. This problem often emanates from the fact that the framework privileges public events; and these focus on only certain types of knowledge which, by social definition, is generated by men and not by women (Mosse 1994). Private lives, notably of women, are downplayed. As Krantz (2001) notes, this relates to the concentration on the household as the basic unit of analysis rather than the individual. Most of the attention is on how different categories of households relate to different types of assets, to vulnerability contexts, to markets, organizations, policies and legislation. In other words, the livelihood framework directs its attention to the household as the decision-making unit (as if the unit, and not individuals in households make decisions) since it is at this level that various economic activities are combined in particular livelihood strategies. The risk is that intra-household inequalities and power differentials, along gender lines, go unnoticed. A more political economy-based analysis is required. Overall, then, power relations and social inequalities shape individual and household access to key resources which either enable or disable them to alleviate poverty and prevent social exclusion (Murray 2000, Whitehead 2002).

- c) Related to this is the concept of capitals, particularly social capital given the significance of this for the thesis. It is seriously criticized on the basis that it may lead to a consensual model of society which downplays questions of power, conflict, social domination and the systematic imperatives of contemporary capitalism (Fine 1999). As well, the concept is so all-embracing at times in what it incorporates, that it ends up having only minimal explanatory value.
- d) Though the framework is applied to urban and rural spaces, a dichotomy is sometimes drawn between rural and urban livelihoods in terms of assets available. The significance of wage labour is not exclusive to an urban context, as rural proletarians also exist. Further, it is evident that rural people depend largely or wholly on the remittances from wage labour (Francis 2000). Any differences that do exist are determined by the historical context of both rural and urban areas. There is also at times a failure to examine urban-rural linkages sufficiently to provide a holistic understanding of people's livelihoods (Beall and Kanji 1999).

In summary, then, the sustainable livelihoods approach correctly puts individuals and households at the centre of livelihood analyses, but this should not be done at the expense of the structural socio-economic and political context which shapes agency and choices. In this respect, Meikle (2002:37) asserts that “the relationships between the poor, local governments and other actors in the political context are critical to their well-being”. More broadly, a political economy approach needs to underpin the (often more micro-level) livelihoods framework.

2.6 Conclusion

As demonstrated, the chapter has unpacked the sustainable livelihood framework as a useful tool in understanding urban livelihoods. The chapter uncovered the genesis of the SLF and how it became internationally recognized for its focus on human well-being rather than economic growth. The chapter also discussed the different components of the SLF (including the five assets, vulnerability context, institutional processes and organizations structures, and livelihood strategies). Furthermore, this chapter has questioned the SLF bias around gender issues and raised some of the criticisms leveled against the framework.

Broadly, the SLF can be discussed on two different levels, as a set of principles to guide action to address and overcome poverty, and as an analytical framework that helps in understanding the complexities of poverty. This study utilizes the SLF as an analytical framework to discern what is important to the lives of urban women traders and the many factors which impinge on their livelihoods.

The following chapter documents the crisis marking contemporary Zimbabwean society, including tracing the rise and development of the informal sector and urban livelihood strategies notably from the inception of the structural adjustment programme in the early 1990s. This is critical for contextualizing the contemporary lives and livelihoods of the women traders at Magaba in Harare.

CHAPTER THREE: ZIMBABWEAN CRISIS, INFORMAL SECTOR AND URBAN LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

3.1 Introduction

Zimbabwe has been marked by a socio-economic and political crisis over the past decade. The formation and character of the crisis though is hotly contested among scholars, with some scholars arguing that it is due to internal or domestic processes (notably state mismanagement by the ruling party) (Bratton and Masunungure 2011, Bond and Manyanya 2003) and others arguing that it is externally generated by imperialist forces (Clemens and Moss 2005). The purpose of this chapter is not to adopt a particular position on the crisis, as this would detract from the focus of the thesis. Rather, I seek to outline the various components of the crisis, about which there is general consensus.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first three sections are dedicated to uncovering events that contributed to the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy and the last two sections unearth the informal sector activities by subsectors. The following section (section two) examines the economic and political crisis during the 1990s, looking in particular at the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). Following that section (section two) is section three; in this section I discuss the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) from the year 2000 and Operation Restore Order (2000-2006). Section four highlights the events that happened from 2007 to present day. This section marks Zimbabwe's fall into political instability, economic collapse and the formation of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Section five describes the contemporary livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe (including urban agriculture, remittances, petty trading activities, foreign currency dealings, cross border trading and smuggling).

3.2 Economic and Political Crisis During the 1990s

The post-2000 crisis cannot be wholly understood without focusing on its historical context. The focus is on the 1990s, but the genesis of the crisis has deeper roots in the 1980s. Problems from the colonial era (before 1980) were reproduced, albeit in different forms, in the early independence era. Some of the well-documented problems included urban household income shortfalls, rural poverty, the land question and massive income disparities along racial lines (Mandaza 1986:74, Moyo 2000:28, Kanyeze 2004:39, Muzondidya 2010:7).

Despite these problems, Zimbabwe's economy performed reasonably well in the 1990s and the country registered some progress in health, education, agriculture and public infrastructure. Indeed, Zimbabwe was among the "top four more industrialized countries in sub-Saharan Africa; it possessed a more diversified economy than most countries; and it had a better human resource base than most; and it had a middle-income status" (Sachikonye 2002:130). By the late 1980s however the country's economy began to contract. For instance, by 1989, huge budget deficits were already being experienced and balance of payment challenges were adding to the woes. It was at that time that the wind of neo-liberalism was sweeping across Africa, and soon Zimbabwe joined the league of liberalising economies in order to rescue the contracting economy. A Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), known as ESAP locally, was agreed upon with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Among the key elements of the restructuring package was the need to cut government spending along with privatisation, deregulation and liberalisation (Makina 2010:104, Bond 1998:381). Adopting neo-liberal policies meant that government would "shift from the highly interventionist approach towards a more market-driven economy" (Kanyenze 2004:277).

Simultaneously, the Zimbabwean government was, at least formally, pursuing a land reform programme, with the aim of redistributing five million hectares of land to about 110,000 families (Jowah 2009). An estimated number of 5,700 white farmers owned half of the fertile land in Zimbabwe and the rural black majority peasants were confined to communal areas (Moyo 1990:202). Despite the radical land rhetoric of the ruling ZANU-PF party (Moyo 1998:202), the government implemented market-led land reform based on the 'willing-buyer, willing-seller' model, as agreed to at the Lancaster House negotiations. Even this was toned down during the 1990s, with only minimal land redistributed, in a manner consistent with the ESAP agenda.

Among the ESAP projections to stimulate economic growth were an increase in the Gross Domestic Product at an annual rate of 5%, reduction in the budget deficit to 5% by the year 1995, lowering of inflation by 10%, and growth in exports at 5,4% annually (OPEV 1997, Bond 2007:167). Internationally, the negative terms of trade would be reversed and increasing foreign investment would facilitate revitalisation of the mining and manufacturing sectors thereby integrating Zimbabwe more fully into the global economy (Bond and Manyanya 2003:32). The outcomes for such projections were dismal. Bond (1998:331) states:

The GDP only reached 5% during 1994 and averaged only 1.2% from 1991-1995. The inflation averaged 30% and never reduced to the proposed 10%. The budget deficit was more than the 10% during the period of ESAP. Overall, the economy experienced a diminution and all the anticipated targets were missed by a large margin.

In addition, the civil service budget was cut drastically and 18,000 civil service positions were abolished, price controls of essential commodities were abandoned, labour markets were de-regulated and health care declined (Bond and Manyanya 2003:37). One worker commented: “Nothing has materialised out of ESAP. It has ... brought suffering to people” (quoted in Sachikonye 1999:108).

The relaxation of capital markets led to a large number of closures of local industries (Chipika et al. 2000:107), and a process of deindustrialisation was accompanied by massive retrenchments, reduction of incomes and increasing urban poverty. A study by Tichagwa and Maramba (1998) therefore reveals that, due to ESAP, prices of commodities increased while disposable income and consumption declined. As well, a 1995 poverty assessment study concluded that 62% of the populace could not meet basic needs and 46% were unable to access sufficient food. Because of this, the 1990s were characterised by growing labour discontent, involving strikes and mass stay-aways. Tamukamoyo (1999:102) thus reports that “the 1997 strike of private employees came on the heels of the 1996 public workers strike as the working class sought to voice their discontent with the impact of structural adjustment, not only on their lives but on their future prospects”.

Overall, abject poverty was evidenced by “increasing number of children, beggars on the street and petty trading dominated by women” (OPEV 1997:22). Indeed, there was significant growth in the diversification of livelihood strategies and the informal sector during the 1990s, notably amongst women (Chirisa 2004). The “informal economy came into its own” (Tamukamoyo 2009:97) during this period, and backyard industries and petty trading sprouted up everywhere. In 1980 the informal sector was small, approximating less than 10% of all employment (IDMC 2009). In 1986 and 1987 there was a significant rise (of 20%) in the labour force participating in the informal sector. By the year 2004, 40% of the labour force was said to be in informal economic activities (IDMC 2009). It is evident that the informal sector became central to the livelihoods of the majority responding to the effects of the economic restructuring. Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001:12) assert that as far back as 1984, the informal sector in Zimbabwe has accounted for over 64% of job creation compared

to the 25% of the formal sector. By the year 1996 the sector employed 1.56 million people compared to 1.26 million in the formal sector.

The informal economy (known locally as ‘the black market’) became central as a response to retrenchments and falling real wages. Mupedziswa and Gumbo (1998) rightfully claim that marginalised urban people in Zimbabwe resorted to informal economic activities (including petty trading in vegetables and fruits) as a way of dealing with the economic crisis unleashed by ESAP. A 1980s study of the research site for this thesis (namely, Magaba in Harare), and this study pre-dates ESAP (Brand 1986), identifies significant informal activities such as street trading in food and clothes, and home-based industries such as shoe-repairing. To supplement household incomes, women also began more vigorously to engage in cross-border trading (Brand, Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1995) to supply scarce goods in the growing informal sector. A study by Mhone (1995), conducted in three major cities of Zimbabwe (Harare, Bulawayo and Gweru), argues that informal sector work under ESAP helped to cushion poverty on the one hand, but on the other hand the increasing number of participants in the informal economy increased competition and reduced profit margins.

In an attempt to rescue the economy from collapse, the government of Zimbabwe in 1998 embarked on an economic recovery plan known as the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) which was unofficially named ‘ESAP II’. The programme was based on the macroeconomic policies set under ESAP but it emphasised black economic empowerment, indigenisation of the economy and land reform (Dhliwayo 2001:2). Nonetheless, ZIMPREST was unable to address the high budget deficit, increasing inflation, low foreign currency growth and weak balance of payments (Makina 2010:105, Chipanhura and Makwavarara 2000:16).

Another important event that deepened the crisis is ‘Black Friday’ dated 14 November 1997. On that day, the Zimbabwe dollar plunged from \$14 against the United States dollar to \$26. This led to a massive devaluation of stock market shares and to a stock market crash. Zimbabwe became an unfavourable country in which to invest and this triggered a further shortage of foreign currency. This crash was exacerbated by the Zimbabwean government’s payment of generous gratuities to more than 50,000 war veterans (or ex-liberation soldiers), an action which heightened opposition to the state by urban workers. Out of unbudgeted funds, the government paid the war veterans a large sum of \$50 000 each, plus monthly

pensions of \$2 000 – a huge sum of money by those days’ standards (Munda 2007). Black Friday undercut even more deeply the formal economy and the livelihoods of black urban Zimbabweans.

The crisis was worsened by the involvement of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) civil war. As Qobo (2009:11) notes, “Zimbabwe in 1998 committed an initial contingent of 6 000 soldiers to the war, the number increasing eventually to about 13 000 ... costing an estimated US\$ 1 million a day”. It is estimated that, between 1998 and 2000, the government spent \$200 million dollars (US). This was particularly unpopular because it was not agreed upon by parliament (Bond and Manyanya 2003) and, in the meantime, the economy was in “free fall” (Maclean 2002:522). The growth in Gross Domestic Product fell from 7,3% in 1996 to -1% in 1999, and inflation sky-rocketed from 58% to 80% by mid-2000 (Rotberg 2000:52).

The socio-economic hardships arising from these events led to further mobilisation by urban workers, including general strikes in 1997 and 1998 engineered by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). According to Raftopoulos (2005:10), the strikes “established the potential effectiveness of labour as a social movement signalling the escalating momentum for change in the country”. A coalition of urban civil society groups and workers’ unions resulted in the establishment of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September 1999 and this party quickly challenged the hegemony of the ruling party ZANU-PF. In fact a constitutional amendment, put to a referendum in February 2000, was defeated by oppositional forces and this set the backdrop for the nation-wide occupations of white commercial farms over the next eighteen months and the state’s fast track land reform programme.

3.3 Fast Track Land Reform and Operation Restore Order (2000-2006)

The land question, in terms of land redistribution, had remained unresolved for twenty years after independence in 1980 (Mlambo 2005). In the context of nation-wide land occupations which begin in early 2000, the government initiated in July 2000 the fast-track land reform under the code name of ‘Third *Chimurenga*’ (or war of liberation). Land became “the sole central signifier of national redress” (Raftopoulos (2005:7) for the supporters of fast track in addressing the remnants of the colonial regime. There are wide disagreements amongst scholars about the causes underpinning the land occupations and fast track (Bond and

Manyanya 2003:76, Moyo and Chambati, 2007:2), but this controversy is not significant for the thesis.

Under the fast track land programme, resettlement took place in two forms. First of all, there are A1 farms with small plots for subsistence farmers designed with the specific aim of addressing the needs of landless and land-short households through the decongestion of communal areas (Moyo 2004:22). Secondly, there are A2 commercial farms aimed at increasing the number of black indigenous commercial farmers, with many of these farms going to beneficiaries linked to the ruling party (Marongwe 2003a, Bernstein 2005, Sachikonye 2005). Insofar as the government has provided agricultural support under fast track, this has gone primarily to A2 farmers. In this regard, Raftopoulos (2001:426) noted early on that “massive financial, infrastructural and extension support” is “required by the new [A1] settlers to transform the settlements into sustainable productive resources” (Raftopoulos 2001:426), but this support was not forthcoming (Jowah 2009).

Significant agricultural production has taken place on a number of A2 farms and, generally, production levels on A1 farms are far superior to communal agricultural production. But, overall, national production has declined compared to levels before fast track (Mitlin and Chitekwe 2001:86). Tobacco, maize, beans, wheat and soya beans were some of the major crops which were affected and there was a sheer decline from 70% of production in major crops to 20% of production in major crops (Richardson 2007:471). This has seriously impacted on the national economy, including both downstream and upstream industries in the agro-industrial complex, but also mining, tourism and banking. This served to deepen the economic crisis.

There were significant closures and downsizing of manufacturing industries, in part because of serious foreign currency shortages for purchasing necessary imported inputs. For instance, agriculture which generated much of the foreign currency earnings decreased in its total exports from 39% in 2000 to 21% in 2006 (FAO/WFP 2007:8). Retrenchments and a spiralling unemployment rate in urban centres followed. A knock-on effect was a shortage of basic food and other commodities in shops, and rising levels of urban poverty and hunger. A poverty assessment study in 2003 concluded that “an estimated 72% of the population was living below the Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL) as compared to the 55% in 1995” (UNDP 2008:17). Food riots were recorded across the country triggered by the shortage of

commodities such as bread, cooking oil and sugar, which are all direct outputs of farming. The inflation rate skyrocketed such that prices of commodities, when available, changed almost daily.

This had serious implications for livelihood strategies. The informal economy increasingly became the provider of employment and income as urban residents took refuge in informal activities. In this sense, the informal sector became an “employment haven” (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 2001:12, Tekere 2001). This was spurred on by the scarcity of basic food commodities in supermarkets but the availability of these, at a price, ‘on the street’ (as sold by informal traders). In addition, there is evidence to suggest (Moyo 2010) that there were a number of urban-based beneficiaries of fast track land reform who used their plots near urban centres as a basis for engaging in informal trading of agricultural produce. Increasingly, informal trading and other informal economic activities took the form of bartering rather than the exchange of cash for commodities.

Despite the increasing significance of the informal economy in the first five years after fast track (from 2000 to 2005), the government of Zimbabwe did not intervene in a supportive fashion. This is evidenced from the failure of a number of macro-economic initiatives of the state to engage with the informal sector, including the 2003 National Economic Revival Plan, the 2004 Macroeconomic Policy Framework and the 2006 National Economic Development Priority Programme.

The state did quite the opposite in acting against the informal economy (and in a draconian fashion), notably through Operation *Murambatsvina* (Operation Restore Order or Operation Clear Away the Trash) in 2005 (Vambe 2008, Tibaijuka 2005). This operation is of particular significance because of the direct effects it had on informal economic activities. Like fast track, the operation is the subject of considerable debate within the literature about the rationale behind it; but, again, the consequences rather than the causes are more important for the thesis. Nevertheless, the government’s intent and intention was made clear by way of a state commission report of May 2005. It spoke about the need to

Enforce by-laws to stop all forms of illegal activities. These violations of the by-laws in areas of vending ... illegal structures ... illegal cultivation, among others have led to the deterioration of standards thus negatively affecting the image of the City [Harare]. ... Harare has lost its glow. We are determined to bring it back It is not a once-off

exercise but a sustained one that will see to the clean-up of Harare Operation Murambatsvina is going to be a massive exercise in the CBD and the suburbs which will see to the demolition of all illegal structures and removal of all activities at undesignated areas (*Saturday Herald* [Zimbabwe] 28 May 2005:5).

The government also claimed that the informal sector was facilitating criminality which robbed the state of revenue and foreign currency which was already scarce.

With limited or no warning, the government proceeded to literally demolish the physical, economic and social resources of the urban poor in Harare and beyond (Bracking 2005:341), thereby engaging in the sheer destruction of livelihoods and homes (including backyard shacks and industries) (Bratton and Masunungure 2006:24). In doing so, the government “was as good, or rather as bad, as its word” (Potts 2006:275). The United Nations (UN) Habitat, under the special envoy Anna Tibaijuka, estimated in July 2005 that about 650,000 to 700,000 people lost their livelihoods or homes, or both, and that 2.4 million were either directly or indirectly affected. She added that the urban poor are now “deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution, and have been rendered more vulnerable” (Tibaijuka 2005:7). Other studies provide lower and bigger estimates (Action Aid 2005, Afrobarometer 2006, and Tamukamoyo 2009). The people who were displaced moved in with their urban kin or to the rural areas (Potts 2006). But there is also a direct linkage between Zimbabwean asylum seekers in South Africa and the operation. In 2007, 17,667 Zimbabweans applied for asylum in South Africa as, ostensibly, political refugees (UNCHR 2007).

During the operation, arrests were made and nearly 20,000 vendors found themselves behind bars, with their wares either demolished or stolen by the police. Many of the traders affected had valid municipal licenses and therefore were not operating illegally. A number of well-established markets were targeted, including Unity Village and Fourth Street Market in Bulawayo, Green Market in Mutare (where traders had paid Z\$800,000 for shop licences), and in Harare the popular Avondale, Mbare and Magaba markets (the last being the focus of this thesis). In total, approximately US\$700 million worth of income was lost as a result of Operation Restore Order (ZHRF 2005). Municipal authorities also lost considerable revenue, because of license fees collected from informal sector activities (Tibaijuka 2005:7).

Though thousands of backyard shacks and informal economic activities were pervasive in urban centres, this was a manifestation of the failure of urban planning in Zimbabwe. Shacks

themselves were a source of livelihoods, as they were rented out or used for backyard industries (Tevera and Chimhowu 1998). Informal activities *per se* were a stark and continuous reminder of the decline of the formal economy and the failure to secure stable employment. In fact, many of the recent entrants into the informal sector were skilled and semi-skilled workers from the formal economy who had lost employment or were seeking to supplement their income. Ignatius Chombo the Minister of Local Government seemed to acknowledge the existence of a problem, but instead used it as justification for the operation: “The government insists that all the sweeps and demolitions have been to rid the country of the chaotic nature of an unregulated market and to clear up the blurred distinctions between informal and formal sectors of business. An economy cannot be run on an informal sector” (quoted in Frank 2009:5). But between 40% to 50% of the Gross Domestic Product was at the time being generated by the informal economy and about 60% of the formally unemployed population was employed in this sector (Maroleng 2005:4). An estimated 4 million Zimbabweans were “earning their livelihoods in the informal sector by 2005” (Makaye and Munhande 2008:315). Because of this, the informal economy was labelled as the “unofficial backbone of the economy and in a nation with no free health, housing or education, to remove the informal sector is to reduce Zimbabwe’s poorest to a state of abject poverty.” (Sokwanele 2005:1).

There is some evidence to suggest that supporters of the ruling party benefited from the operation. One worker exclaimed: “First Mugabe took the land, then our jobs, now our food. He wants to kill us. People say Mugabe is punishing us because we voted for the MDC” (*Guardian* (UK) 24 May 2005). And it is reported that ruling party supporters were issued with valid trading licenses subsequent to the destruction. Hence: “Already, vendors’ licences are being reissued in Harare – but only to those who have a valid ZANU-PF card” (Sokwanele 18 June 2005). The thousands of victims of the operation did not however become passive, and livelihood strategies in the informal economy did not wither away. Informal operators became adaptable and resilient, and “despite the attack on their livelihoods, the self-reliant occupants of this sector ... quickly tried to recover” (Bratton and Masunugure 2006:38). The discussion of Magaba in later chapters is testimony to this.

3.4 2007 to Present

By the year 2007, the economy seemed nearly crippled with all economic sectors showing severe signs of the crisis. The annual inflation rate rose to millions of percentage points,

while the country's domestic currency reached quadrillions and quintillions – it subsequently became a worthless national currency (Mlambo and Raftopoulos 2010:3). The government resorted to printing money and the inflation rate by June 2008 reached 231,000,000 percent and an unimaginable 89.7 sextillion percent in November 2008 (the second highest rate recorded historically anywhere). Below (see Table 3.1) are the macroeconomic indicators leading up to the near collapse of the economy: both Gross Domestic Product and employment growth declined noticeably between 2001 and 2006, entailing an absolute shrinkage of the economy.

Table 3.1: Zimbabwe's Macro Economic Indicators

Economic indicators	1980-1990	1991-2000	2001 - 2006
Average annual GDP growth (%)	4.30	0.90	-5.7
Employment growth (%)	1.90	0.40	-7.5
End of year pop (millions)	9.74	11.34	11.95
Formal employment (%of pop)	12.20	10.90	7.00

Source: Zimbabwe Central Statistical Office (2008)

The Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) was forced to re-adjust the Zimbabwean dollar from the year 2006 onwards because of severe inflationary pressure. In August 2006, under an operation named 'Sunrise I', three zeros were removed from the Zimbabwean currency. Two years later, under 'Sunrise II', the currency was again re-valued with ten zeros now slashed. In February 2009, a further twelve zeros were slashed under 'Sunrise III'. By this time, bearer cheques rather than proper currency notes were being printed and circulated. Bearer cheques were then officially suspended in favour of the United States Dollar and South African Rand. When the currency was suspended, the highest denomination was a 100 trillion bearer cheque worth a mere US\$30 on the black market in which informal money changers operated (Chagonda 2010:7). This process of dollarization stabilised commodity transactions, including within the informal economy, as exchanges could revert back to money-commodity transactions rather than barter exchanges.

During the peak of the crisis, in 2007 and 2008 (before dollarization), the informal sector continued to provide essential and scarce basic commodities (such as mealie-meal, sugar, cooking oil and soap); these commodities often entered the country via South Africa and Botswana by cross border traders. Teachers and other professionals became highly active in informal trading after the government of Zimbabwe negotiated with the South African Home Affairs Department to allow Zimbabwean civil servants to cross into South Africa without visas as one of their fringe benefits. In this sense, informal economic activities remained vibrant, at least compared to the collapsing formal sector. In fact, people stored and hoarded commodities (as they maintained their value) and resold them at exorbitant prices; cash at that time was continuously eroded by inflation on a daily basis and therefore was not a wise investment (Chagonda 2010:11).

The year 2008 marked a new era in Zimbabwean politics and society as the opposition parties forged an agreement with the ruling ZANU-PF party to form the Government of National Unity (GNU). It was hoped that the GNU would not only minimise the political conflict and turmoil in the country, but also would put the national economy on a sounder footing (Chigora and Guzura 2011). When the GNU took office, a Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme (STERP II) was agreed upon. It highlighted the following:

At the epicentre of the economic crisis, have been unprecedented levels of hyper-inflation, sustained period of negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rates, massive devaluation of the currency, low productive capacity, loss of jobs, food shortages, poverty, massive de-industrialisation and general despondency. It is, therefore, a fundamental task of the new Inclusive Government to address the above and to resuscitate and rehabilitate the economy (Ministry of Finance 2009:6).

The GNU is confronted with the massive task of turning around the Zimbabwean economy. However, the problems to be solved by STERP II are far more daunting than those which earlier macro-economic programmes such as ESAP and ZIMPREST had to face (Kamidza 2009). There have however been some successes (Ploch 2010). These include economic stabilisation with an economic growth rate of 8%, the erosion of hyper-inflation, increases in exports and improvements in the balance of payments. However, the unemployment rate is said to be at 90 percent. And the general populace are still experiencing inadequate social services and infrastructure, power cuts, retrenchments and shortages of safe and clean water supplies (Raftopoulos and Mlambo 2010:4).

With regard to specifically informal economic activities, and their increasing significance over the years as a basis for urban livelihoods, the stance to be adopted by the GNU remains unclear. In the meantime, as Luebker (2008: v) notes, urban Zimbabweans continue to show “ingenuity in creating jobs for themselves including carpentry, street vending, cross border and brink mouldering”. Informal activities remain critical as sources of employment, income and food security in urban centres in Zimbabwe.

3.5 Informal Sector Activities by Sub-Sector

The previous sections have provided a chronological overview of the informal sector in post-independence Zimbabwe, in the context of economic and political crises. This current section disaggregates the informal sector by identifying and examining a range of livelihood strategies pursued in contemporary Zimbabwe’s informal economy and their contribution to the sustenance of urban households. These activities involve petty trading directly or indirectly, which are the focus of the thesis, and other livelihood strategies. I begin with urban agriculture. But first it is important to highlight that urban livelihood strategies in Zimbabwe often have a pronounced rural dimension.

Although urban women and men in Zimbabwe consider urban areas as having certain economic benefits as compared to their rural areas, they have historically always tried to be in contact with their villages of origin. Urban households have always supported rural relations by sending monthly cash or groceries while they, in turn, have been increasingly supported by migrant relatives working in different parts of the world. Linkages between urban Zimbabweans and their rural counterparts have been strengthened though due to the scarcity of goods and resources in urban centers. Muzvidziwa (1997:108) argues that “continued utilization of rural-urban networks as a survival option is a pragmatic response to scarcity of resources including jobs”. One of the respondents in a study undertaken by Mukwedeya (2011:127) is quoted as saying:

We do not buy things like maize and peanut butter we get them from my mother because she is a farmer...[W]e send groceries, money and things like fertilizer because they do not have any other source of income in the rural areas.

Urban-rural networks therefore are quite significant as an on-going livelihood strategy for people who live in cities and town, though this is not prioritized in the following discussions.

3.5.1 Urban Agriculture

Mougeot (2006:103) defines urban agriculture “[a]s the production of food and non-food plant and tree crops and animal husbandry both within (intra) and fringing (peri) built urban areas for households’ consumption as well as for sale to the rapidly growing urban population”. In Harare, an estimated 70% of the population is said to be living beneath the poverty datum line (CSO 2011), and this no doubt is similar to other urban centers. In this context, urban agriculture in Zimbabwe becomes an important livelihood activity pursued to enhance food security and to guard against poverty by reducing expenditures on certain basic foodstuffs like green vegetables and chickens; notably, maize is grown to avoid buying, or lessening purchases of, the staple food mealie-meal (or crushed maize). At times, a particular crop grown is used as a substitute for a foodstuff normally purchased (such as the growing of sweet potatoes as an alternative to bread bought in stores). Particularly during the years of astronomical inflation, agriculture acted as a socio-economic safety net. In addition, with unemployment estimated over 80% (and basic foodstuffs becoming unaffordable even to households with members formally employed), urban agriculture at least assures a supply of foodstuffs though perhaps erratically. This is the case not only in high-density areas (where the urban poor reside) but in low-density middle class suburbs in Harare such as Greendale and Avondale.

The cultivation of crops in Harare and other urban centers in Zimbabwe has entailed access to land on the household’s own site of residence but also beyond this through largely informal (and often illegal) means, such as invasions, self-allocations and renting from other households who do not want to make full use of their land. In a survey by Mudimu (2001), most households engaged in agricultural activities in Harare had gained access to land through making a first claim on an open piece of nearby land. Certainly, the process of self-allocation of farming areas was aggravated by fast track where settlers went beyond the “open spaces in urban areas” to include farms in peri-urban areas (Marongwe 2003b). Urban agriculture though prevailed prior to fast track, and became a crucial livelihood option during the structural adjustment period in the 1990s in Zimbabwe (Mbiba 1994, Kutiwa, Banoon and Devuyt 2010).

Crops grown in urban centers are important for home consumption. One respondent from a mid-1990s study, in stressing the importance of agriculture for household consumption, indicated:

I am a lodger and I am also a domestic worker in Mandara (a high-income and low-density suburb). There is no way I can survive without urban agriculture. From my small plot I was able to harvest three bags of maize which saw me going through six months without having to buy mealie-meal (Matshalanga 1997 in Gumbo 2000: 6).

A recent study by Kutiwa et al. (2010) shows that urban Zimbabweans, in growing maize, do so for own-consumption purposes primarily and in fact rarely are able to store maize for future consumption. But, in some instances, households that practice agriculture in high-density suburbs in Harare (such as Mabvuku and Glen Norah) have harvested sufficient maize to last them the whole year.

When possible, crops grown are sold on local informal markets (Gumbo 2000) – as shown in Table 3.2 below. In fact, a significant number of households at the time of Gumbo’s study (in the late 1990s) used urban agriculture as a basis for petty trading.

Table 3:2 Uses of Crops Grown in the Household Gardens in Harare

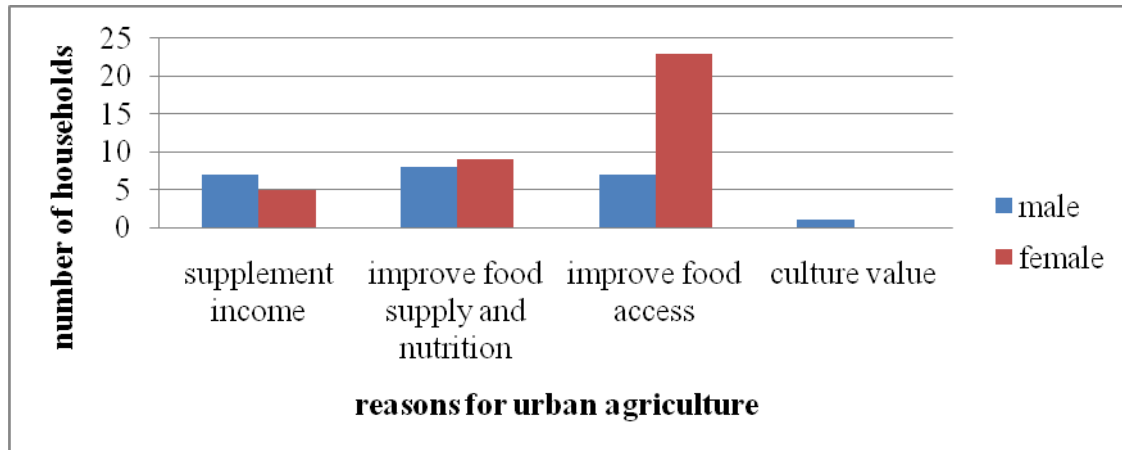
Crops grown	% of households who self-consume 80% or more of crop	% of households who sell 60% or more of crop
Rape	71	20
Maize	80	27
Tomatoes	58	58
Spinach	70	35
Sweet potatoes	78	14
Cabbage	49	60
Beans	89	25

Source: Gumbo (2000:9)

The more recent study by Kutiwa et al. (2010:89) indicates that over 60% of the maize and leafy vegetables produced are consumed within the household, while the remaining 40% is sold from home and at nearby market stalls. The same study also shows the different reasons for urban Zimbabweans engaging in urban cropping activities, as well as the central role that women play in agricultural activities. In this regard, Figure 3.1 shows differences between males and females who practice urban agriculture. The majority of female households explained that the most important reason for practicing urban farming was improvement in food access. The other reasons cited by respondents included improving household food supply and nutrition, supplementing income and complying with cultural values. The income received through sales, in supplementing other sources of household income, has at times

been used for non-food purchases, such as paying school fees. This is the case with traders selling roasted maize cobs at Chitubu, OK Shopping Centre and Specimen Shopping Centre in Glen Norah A, a high density suburb in Harare (Masiya and Mazuruse 2007).

Figure: 3.1. Reasons for Urban Agriculture



Source: Kutiwa et al (2010:90)

3.5.2 Remittances

Remittances can be defined as cash or in kind transfers by migrant workers to their countries of origin (World Bank 2008). Remittances may reduce urban poverty but, simultaneously, poverty continues to be the major driver of migration (Gupta et al 2007). The ongoing political and socio-economic challenges in Zimbabwe have seen the departure of millions of Zimbabweans to seek livelihoods outside the country, often illegally as undocumented economic refugees. It is estimated, for example, that there are between 2 to 2.5 million Zimbabweans residing in South Africa, and 500,000 and 400,000 living in the United Kingdom and Botswana respectively (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006). These migrants, whether permanent or temporary, regularly send remittances back home through both formal and informal channels. Formal channels involve commercial banks and other agents like Western Union, while informal channels include goods and money via in-coming buses, friends and traders. In-kind remittances are of central importance because of chronic shortages in basic commodities.

A study by Mukwedeya (2011) demonstrates that remittances from Zimbabweans in the diaspora contributed significantly to household sustenance in urban (and rural) areas. Remittances from South Africa were mainly in kind while those from further afield in the

diaspora were largely cash remittances. One of the respondents in a study undertaken by Mukwedeya (2011:119) explains: “Sometimes we get clothes ... She [the migrant] has always said that it is very expensive to send goods, you know shipping and stuff. She told us she has bought flat screens and the like but she says it’s too expensive to ship the items”. Most of the cash incomes from abroad were transformed into goods by receiving people through regular purchasing of clothes, groceries and household properties in South Africa. An article in the *Mail & Guardian* (14 January 2008) indicates that Zimbabwean shoppers largely contributed to the growth of retail shops in South Africa with purchases by Zimbabweans increasing from 8.7% to 18% of total sales in these shops over the period of 2007 to 2008 in Johannesburg.

The significance of remittances for urban Zimbabweans as a livelihood strategy for reducing poverty is difficult to measure. Nevertheless, it is argued that there is a livelihood gap between recipients and non-recipients of remittances, as “poor households who do not receive these are, of course in a critical state” (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006:32). The effectiveness of remittances as a livelihood strategy likely differs between households, but it can have a multiplier effect in allowing for the accumulation of assets and the diversification of livelihood strategies in urban Zimbabwe.

3.5.3 Petty Trading Activities

I now focus on the most important informal sector sub-sector (at least for this thesis), that is, petty trading activities. These activities are often done in conjunction with the strategies detailed above (urban agriculture and remittances) and with formal employment (if available), to ensure a broad-based livelihood portfolio. Petty trading activities are broad and multi-faceted and, in the following sub-sections, I discuss specifically dispersed street vending and centralized flea markets. Vending in urban Zimbabwe takes place at a range of sites, including street vending, shop-front vending, bus stop vending, flea markets, people’s markets, roadside stalls and designated vending sites (Kamete 2004). In the literature, it is not always clear which site or sites are being discussed, and the products on offer may vary between sites. I have chosen to focus specifically on street vending and flea markets to illustrate urban vending activities and their significance. In Zimbabwe, vendors account for over 10% of all informal sector activities.

3.5.3.1 Street Vending

By definition street traders are those who belong to the informal economy and who trade in the streets (Witt 2000). By and large street vending constitutes a considerable share of the urban informal sector in Zimbabwe and street vendors are an important part of the system of commodity distribution in urban areas (Manganga 2007). This is based on the fact that vendors provide convenient goods in quantities and at prices that are affordable especially for poor urbanites. The existence of street vendors trading in food enabled many households in urban Zimbabwe to make ends meet under difficult circumstances, notably where and when supermarkets were either empty or charging inflated prices.

This kind of vending constitutes a great number of informal traders who engage in survivalist operations, and they are normally self-employed (as both owner and operator). The harsh economic conditions have resulted in the burgeoning of many vendors along the streets in Harare; they enter vending out of necessity rather than voluntary choice. Vending entails selling a diverse range of products and services, as detailed below. At times, street vending in Zimbabwe has been deemed illegal or, when permits are required, vendors may refuse to apply for them. As a result, as a livelihood strategy, it often is characterized by playing hide-and-seek with law enforcement agents, who often seize the goods of vendors. The study by Brand (1986) at Magaba in Harare revealed that three kinds of activities were dominant at Magaba, namely, small-scale production, petty trading and maintenance and repairs. The study disclosed that respondents engaged in more than one kind of activity (diversification).

Hlohla (2008) observed that in the central district business (CBD) in Harare, there were over 1,014 vendors (male and female) of different ages. Products sold varied from one vendor to another. A majority of women were selling second hand clothes, sim cards for mobile phones, perfumes for men and women, pesticides for cockroaches and many other products. Men engaged in foreign currency dealings, selling leather belts, sunglasses, mobile phones and wrist watches. These products were mainly sourced from Gulf Complex and Ximex Mall in Harare and vendors would resale the products at different points within the CBD. The study also revealed that the majority of the vendors were subjected to police harassment because they were trading without permits and were causing congestion in the pavements.

Another study in Mutare (the capital of Manicaland Province) by Manyanhaire et al. (2007:179) identifies selling of vegetables and fruits as the main vending activities, including

tomatoes, mangoes, bananas, apples and plums, potatoes, spinach, cabbages, butternuts and maize. Most of these products are supplied by nearby farms, rather than grown (as part of urban agriculture) by the vendors themselves. A variety of other goods are also sold, such as tobacco, pots and tins made from scrap metal, building material, plumbing material, woven goods as well as groceries such as sugar, cooking oil and flour which are scarce on the formal market. As well, hawkers sell cooked and uncooked mealies, freezits (flavored ice sticks) and juice cards (cellular phone airtime) (Makaye and Munhande 2008:320). At times goods sold are produced by the vendors themselves, and hence there is a productive component to their activities in the form of home industries (Kamete 2004).

The commodities on offer are open to temporal variation, depending in part on the availability and prices of goods in the formal economy (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 2001, (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1998, Kamete 2004, Makaye and Munhande 2008, Gemini 1991). Table 3.3, based on the work by Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001) in Harare, present the different vending activities from the years 1993 to 1998.

Table 3.3: Informal Vending Activities 1993-1998

Type of trading activity	1992/93		1995		1998	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Fruit and vegetables	56	33.1	53	37.9	27	31.0
Clothes	6	3.6	10	7.1	5	5.7
Cross-border	26	5.4	21	15.0	17	19.5
Crafts	22	13.0	17	12.1	16	18.3
Cooked foods	16	9.5	8	5.7	6	6.9
Crochet work	12	7.1	4	2.9	4	4.9
Sweets, drinks, plastics	10	6.1	11	7.9	1	1.2
Dressmaking/ knitting	4	1.2	6	4.3	6	6.9
Other trading activities (boxes, tobacco, brooms, grain bags, paraffin stoves)	17	10.1	10	7.1	5	5.7
Total	169	100.0	140	100.0	87	100.0

Source: Mupedziswa and Gumbo (2001:30)

This table highlights (as noted above) the ongoing significance of fruits and vegetables, but also of crafts, as well as the increasing importance of cross-border trading (which is discussed in a later sub-section).

According to Manyanhaire et al. (2007), men finding themselves without formal employment often resort to vending to ensure the economic survival of their families. This is eroding the historical predominance of women vendors. But women still predominate, and engage in vending in the context of eroding wages of male breadwinners and the death of husbands from HIV/AIDS-related diseases. In addition, street vending appeals to women due to its flexibility, as women can merge street vending with domestic duties, including taking care of children. At times, due to the gendered dimension of vending, women have earned names like *vakadzivemadomas* (tomato women) and *vakadzivemusika* (market women). With respect to specifically home industries, men are involved in construction, carpentry, repairs and metal work. Women dominate in for example knitting, sewing and crochet work. Gemini (1991) notes that men claim to contribute well over 50% of household income from their activities, while women argue that they merely supplement this income.

In the case of Masvingo, food vending has been a major livelihood strategy among female headed-households (See Table 3.4). In terms of number of households, it was more important than formal work, and it contributed not only to household income but was also used for investment purposes (Muzvidziwa 2000). The involvement of women in the sex trade is noticeable, as Masvingo is located between Harare and the South African border and is a major stop for long-distance male truckers.

Table 3.4: Masvingo Sources of Income

Main source of income	Frequency	Percentage
Food vending	19	38
Cross border trading	13	26
Formal work	6	12
Prostitution/Sex work	4	8
Selling Carrier bags	3	6
Hairdressers	2	4
Other	3	6
Total	50	100

Source: Muzvidziwa (2000:70)

Through street vending, and other forms of vending, women have been able to continue sending their children to school, and to secure food and clothes and sometimes shelter and health care for their households (Muzvidziwa 2000:78).

For both men and women, street trading has taken place not only under difficult socio-economic conditions but in the face of intransigent – and sometimes downright repressive – local authorities. Operation Restore Order saw many flea markets being demolished and this resulted in the loss of an important livelihood given the employment and income being generated through these markets. Some flea markets totally collapsed while the resilient ones re-appeared after the operation. These challenges have arisen not only during Operation Restore Order but at times both before and after this nation-wide state operation. Quite often, street traders are not licensed by the local council and hence they exist illegally and unregulated by trading legislation and by-laws (Chirisa 2008, Hlohla 2008). In order to meet these challenges and counter these constraints, street vendors alter and refine their trading activities by for instance: starting operations early in the morning before municipal police officers commence duties and remaining on the streets when they knock off (‘an early rise and late departure’ strategy); using signals and cues to alert one another (the ‘antagonist communicative’ strategy); and displaying books in stock while hiding the stock nearby or in pockets to minimize confiscation (the ‘deceptive commodity and merchant hiding’ strategy) (Chirisa 2009:274).

3.5.3.2 Flea Markets

The history of flea markets can be traced back to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes when the urban informal sector arose dramatically. More specifically, the rise of flea markets was a result of the deleterious effects of the structural adjustment programme implemented in the 1990s (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1998). With the Zimbabwean economy plunging into a deeper crisis since the year 2000, flea markets further increased at an unbelievable rate. In the case of Harare, in the high density and low density suburbs, ‘shacks’ made from plastic were erected displaying clothes, electric appliances and other goods. Three categories of flea markets have been identified, that is, markets that serve the high income, middle income and low income groups. These flea markets are therefore located at different places to serve different target groups. Sometimes the traders at flea markets are employees of often formally employed workers. Examples of these in Harare are shown in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: Different Flea Markets with Different Target Groups

Flea market	Target group	Location
Sam Levy	High Income	Borrowdale
Union + Speke Avenue	Middle income	City Centre
Mupedzanhamo	Low income	Periphery of the city + high density suburbs

Source: Mupedziswa and Gumbo (1998).

Flea markets provide a variety of goods ranging from clothes to hair products to electronic gadgets (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1998). This concurs with a study by Tamukamoyo (2009) which showed that multiple goods were on sale, including toiletries for men and women, bathroom mats, new clothes and shoes, second hand clothes (*mazitye*), arts and crafts, and DVDs and video games. There is an agreement between the two studies that the explosion of flea markets was a result of cross border trading (discussed below). Tamukamoyo's study went further to reveal that foreign currency dealings took place at these flea markets, along with the sale of scarce food stuffs, illegal substances, pornography (visual and print) and petrol. No doubt, a number of illegal activities were disguised under the name of flea markets.

Given the shortage of commodities in Zimbabwe, flea markets became 'champions' in ensuring the availability of these commodities. Indeed they become almost an 'unofficial formal sector'. This argument is in line with Chimedza's claim that the "informalised or peripheral economy supplies everything efficiently almost without fail" (Chimedza 2008:89). Flea markets also became major 'fashion shops' in Zimbabwe in providing footwear and clothes to the illegal miners (*makorokoza*) from Mutare where diamonds were discovered.

3.5.4 Foreign Currency Dealing, Cross Border Trading and Smuggling

Foreign currency dealings, cross border trading and smuggling often have petty trading elements contained within them, but I have chosen to discuss them separately from mainstream vending (such as street vending and flea markets) because of their specificity to the contemporary Zimbabwean condition.

Foreign currency exchange is another livelihood strategy which many Zimbabwean women and men have used to sustain a living (Hlohla 2008). As Zimbabwe experienced serious

shortages of foreign currency (particularly before dollarisation), foreign exchange dealers as a whole had in their possession millions of South African Rands and United States Dollars. Foreign currency exchange in flea markets became common hence earning the name ‘Zimbabwe’s Mobile Bureaux de Change’ (*The Sunday Mail*, 9/12/2006). According to Tamukamoyo (2009:145) “some of the most powerful political figures in Zimbabwe were widely believed to be heading cartels dominating the trade in hard currency and diamonds”. Foreign currency exchange became rampant on the streets while the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe (RBZ) went dry of foreign currency (simply known as ‘forex’). In Harare, Roadport (the international bus terminal), Ximex Mall in the central business district and Duly’s Motor Complex (Corner of Fourth Street and Speke Avenue) were infamously known as the main areas of activity for forex dealings.

One of the outcomes of the Zimbabwean crisis was a pronounced upsurge in cross border trading. Women, who historically have been unable to be sufficiently absorbed into formal labour markets, became particularly suitable for this activity and there is a marked rise in their involvement during festive seasons (Tevera, and Zinyama 2002). Many people, as noted mainly women, moved across the borders (notably the South African border at Beitbridge) in a bid to supplement income through hoarding products which were scarce in the local Zimbabwean markets. It is difficult to capture the full numbers of people who engage in cross border trading as well as to determine the vast array of products they import, because often goods are imported illegally by failing to declare goods at the border post. Initially, informal cross border trading was associated with poor people travelling in low-fare buses; however, in the peak of the Zimbabwean crisis, the participants also included professional people such as teachers and nurses (Nyatanga, Mpofo and Tekere 2000).

In a study by Chagonda (2012), nine teachers were interviewed concerning their cross border trading activities, in which it was apparent that this trading became pivotal for the survival of households. One respondent quoted in Changonda’s study illustrates the desperation of many urban Zimbabwean households in seeking to enter informal vending activities:

I started engaging in cross-border trading in 2006 and it has helped my family a lot because the salary that I earn as a teacher is not enough to do anything with. The teaching that we have been doing for the past few years now, has just been a community service, because teachers have been working for nothing. So, because of the meager salary, I decided to become a cross-border trader, while I continued to

teach by the side. I have been going to South Africa, mostly to Musina, to buy goods like sugar, cooking oil, soap, rice and hair extensions, which I have been re-selling here in Zimbabwe (Chagonda 2012:90).

The informal cross border trading was influenced by a number of factors, including “the exchange rate, the ease of getting a visa, resources at disposal of the trader, the economic and political conditions prevailing in trader partner economies” (Tekere 2001:19). Some traders who could afford to do so travelled as far as Dubai if products they engaged in were easily marketable locally, for instance dresses and handbags. Irrespective of the origin of the imported goods, cross border trading fed into existing local vending activities, including street trading and flea markets. A local ‘black market’ in basic foodstuffs arose at the time of severe shortages and this increased food security at household level. Though cross border trading has created informal employment, it has simultaneously led to the closure of local shops, notably clothing shops, resulting in retrenchments. In addition, cross border trading developed linkages with foreign currency exchanges because traders regularly bring forex into Zimbabwe.

In effect cross border trading, insofar as it entails the movement of un-declared goods, is a form of smuggling with women being the main ‘culprits’ in this risky venture (Duri 2010:138). The Mutare border post along the Mozambique-Zimbabwe border has a long history of smuggling, but many smugglers use bush paths to smuggle products in (and out) of Zimbabwe. The main basic commodities which are smuggled into Mozambique include cereals, cerevita, sugar, sterilized milk, eggs, tobacco and cigarettes. On return, clothes, petrol, paraffin, diesel and other products are brought into Zimbabwe to be traded at an inflated price. There is a strong link between Operation *Murambatsvina* and the intensification of smuggling. The operation’s main aim was to restore order and cripple informal traders; however, it increased destitution and many people began to smuggle to replace income lost through the operation. It is estimated that in 2005 some 30 tonnes of sugar and maize estimated at US\$200 million were smuggled into Mozambique, with a similar value of cash and goods brought into Zimbabwe. The financial gains available to smugglers were further enhanced by the deliberate slashing of prices by the Zimbabwean government (along with the Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention initiated in June 2008) (Duri 2010:144). This led to a 50% cut in local prices and enabled people to hoard

commodities and to sell them as scarce commodities at high prices both locally and across borders.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a historical overview of the Zimbabwean crisis, the informal sector and urban livelihoods strategies. The Zimbabwean crisis in this chapter has been described under three distinct phases. The first phase is the economic and political crisis during the 1990s. During this era the government introduced the ESAP and ZIMPREST as a way to prevent economic collapse and to encourage economic growth. However, these failed to rescue the economy from crumbling and consequently a large number of employment opportunities were lost in the formal sector and this saw the upsurge of informal sector as the only alternative to facilitate livelihoods. The period 2000-2006 was marked by fast track land reform and Operation Restore Order. During this era, there was increased political polarization between ZANU-PF and MDC. Human rights violations, intimidations and brutal killings of rival party members became the order of the day. It is especially during this period that informal sector activities grew to epic proportions. With inflation rising and the Zimbabwean dollar becoming worthless, countless citizens had to survive through their ingenuity especially in the informal sector. Due to politicization of the urban space, the government's attitude to the urban populace became aggressive and this was mirrored through Operation Restore Order in July 2005. Livelihoods for possibly millions of Zimbabweans were compromised. The period 2007 onwards was characterized by total economic collapse and this was heightened by the intense political crisis which led to the formation of the Government of National Unity. Throughout the entire crisis from the 1990s up to now, the informal sector has played a pivotal role in sustaining urban livelihoods.

Skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled urbanites struggled to lead a decent life as inflation skyrocketed and prices of basic necessities went up and beyond the reach of ordinary urbanites. The informal sector became the largest employer and many people sustained their livelihoods from this sector. Prominent informal sector activities included urban agriculture, remittances received from the diaspora and petty trading activities (street vending, flea markets, foreign currency dealings, cross border trading and smuggling). These livelihood strategies played a significant role in increasing and supplementing household income, alleviating poverty and enhancing food security. However, while informal sector activities played a pivotal role in sustaining livelihoods, their growth is often constrained by a range of problems – as the

following chapters on Magaba demonstrate. The most important constrictions and bottlenecks include lack of credit, negative by-laws which often lead to the harassment of vendors, excessive competition, inadequate skills, seasonality and lack of storage facilities. Due to these problems, informal livelihood activities have not always been successful and at times they flounder; some have in fact collapsed and households have been further subjected to destitution. The following chapters examine Magaba women traders in the context provided by this and the previous chapter. The next chapter looks specifically at the livelihood activities and sources of income for these women.

CHAPTER FOUR: LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES AND SOURCES OF INCOME AT MAGABA

4.1 Introduction

This and the following chapters outline the research findings about the lives and livelihood strategies of women at Magaba in Harare within the context of socio-economic and political turmoil. The findings of this study were elicited through a questionnaire, in-depth interviews and direct observation. Zimbabwe is haunted. The challenges which it faces include, amongst others, rising urban poverty, massive unemployment and political upheaval as discussed in the previous chapter. The broader socio-economic and political situation in Zimbabwe has forced ordinary Zimbabweans to look for avenues of making a living either legally or illegally. Most unemployed women and low income earners have turned to the informal economy as their main source of livelihood.

The current chapter therefore seeks to understand how urban women sustain their families by focusing on their informal livelihood activities. The chapter is divided into five sections. The following section (section two) highlights the background of the research site. Section three focuses on the profiles of the women traders. Section four uncovers the nature of the vending activities, including between ‘white collar’ and ‘green collar’ vendors. Following this, section five discusses the sources of goods in which women trade. The last section highlights the other livelihood activities of these women (including remittances, urban agriculture, renting out rooms, urban-rural linkages and savings groups).

4.2 Background to Study Area

This section provides a background to the study site, namely, Magaba in Mbare, Harare. Mbare is a high-density suburb (township) in Harare Urban that was established in 1907 as an Urban Native Location located south east of the city centre (see Figure 4.1). It was built as a dormitory location for domestic servants and industrial workers. Mbare is known to have the country’s biggest market (known simply as *musika*) where people from the countryside and nearby farms bring their produce for sale. No map is known to the researcher that clearly shows the location of Magaba in Mbare, and there is a tendency to say that it is the furthest section of Mbare when one is approaching the city centre because it is located at the edge of town. Magaba is approximately 3.9 kilometers from Harare’s central business district.

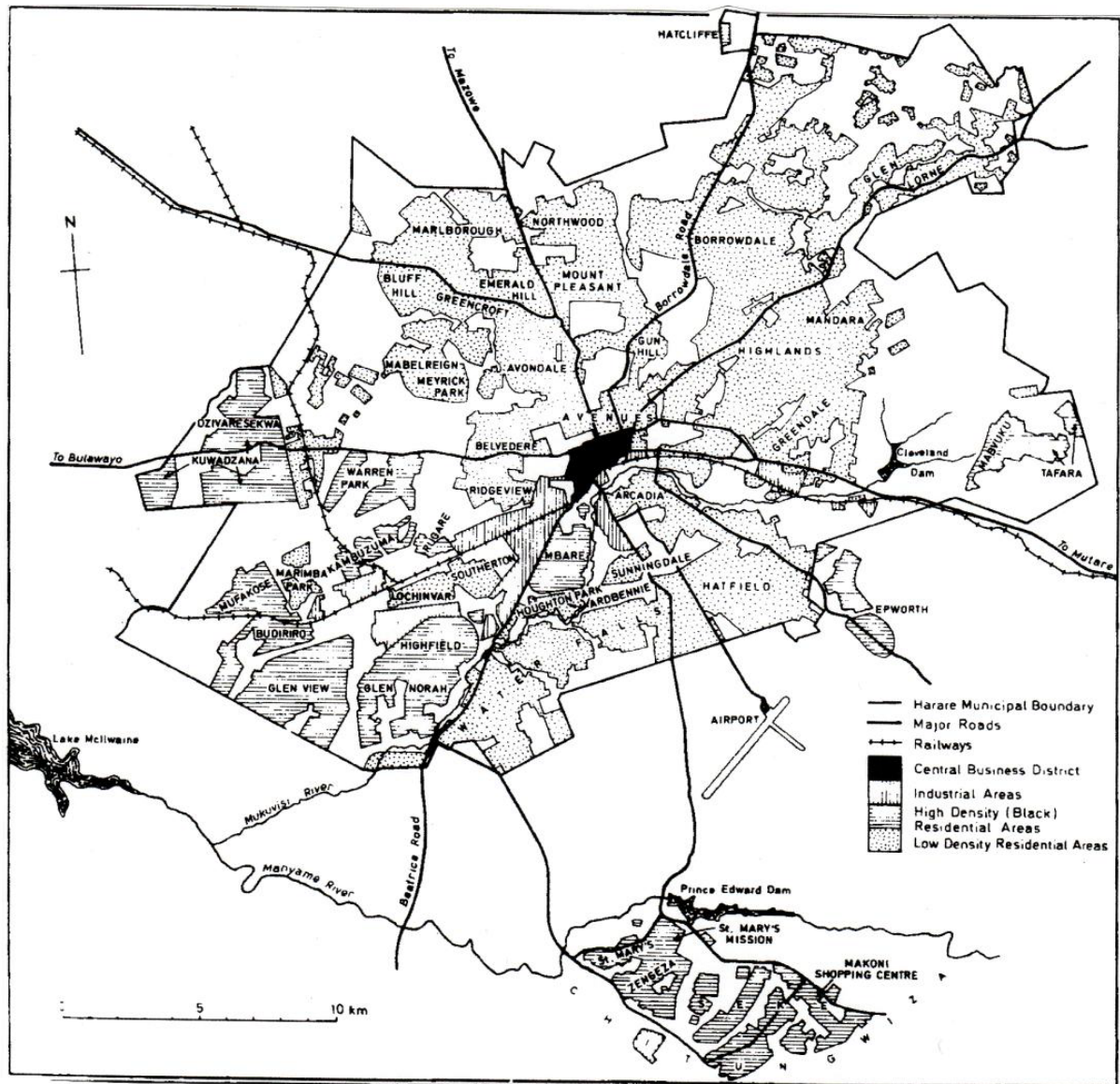
Magaba (meaning ‘empty tins’), as a geographical area within Mbare, was unofficially established in the 1950s by a small group of tin smiths who produced tin cans and other steel products to generate income. These tin smiths resided in nearby Nenyere hostel. Two important informal sector sites developed in Magaba as the surrounding population increased. Firstly, there was the establishment of Mupedzanhamo market in the 1960s (a verb meaning ‘ending all problems’). Mupedzanhamo is renowned for selling diverse products such as secondhand clothes, traditional medicine and plumbing materials. With the advent of the Zimbabwean crisis in recent years, it stocked goods which were scarce within the formal market. Secondly, Siya So market was formed (again in the 1960s) selling steel products including window frames, door frames and tin cans and engaging in motor repairs. In addition to these two informal sites, Magaba Shopping Centre was opened in 1967 and there are informal vendors trading in open spaces at the shopping centre. These three sites are not contiguous and together they constitute what is referred to as the Magaba market (in the Magaba area), and my thesis covers all these sites.

Magaba is one of the areas that were demolished by Operation *Murambatsvina* in July 2005. Although the operation ‘cleansed’ Magaba of informal economic activities, these activities have subsequently re-emerged and have even become more resilient (AAPS 2012). It seems that undercutting informal activities is a ‘mission impossible’ and Magaba remains as a heterogeneous hub of petty traders, both men and women.

4.3 Women Trader Profile

In recent years, vending has emerged in Zimbabwe as ‘the employer’ of last resort (and increasingly of first resort) in providing livelihoods and income for low-income urban Zimbabweans, especially women. In this context, Magaba women traders engage in a number of activities in a bid to survive and to manage the shocks and stresses of urban life in times of crisis. The following discussions profile the women traders, including outlining the characteristics of women traders in Magaba and the reasoning behind their involvement in the informal economy.

Figure 4.1: Location of Mbare in Harare



Source (Zinyama 1993:10)

4.3.1 Age, Education, Household Size, Marital Status and Income Generation

The majority (57.1%) of women traders surveyed at Magaba are between the ages of 31-35 years, while (28.8%) are between the ages of 25-30 years. Small number of traders (6.1%) range between the ages of 36-40 years, while (8.1%) are between the ages of 41-45 years. In terms of educational levels, the majority of respondents (57.1%) completed secondary school while 22.4% attended only primary school. Only 16.3% were illiterate and a mere 4.1% attained a tertiary qualification. Very few women traders at Magaba have high levels of education and this seems to be a broad historical tendency. Hence, the survey results on education are consistent with the earlier study of Magaba by Brand (1986:58) in the 1980s.

Married women constituted the highest proportion of traders at 49.0%. Single women (28.6%) ranked second highest while the respective figures for never married, divorced and widowed were 8.2%, 8.2% and 6.1%. The number of household members (and hence the number of dependents) for the surveyed women traders varies considerably, with household sizes ranging from one to seven people. The largest number of Magaba households (65.3%) has between three to five persons, and households of either one person or two people amount to 4.1% each. A significant number of households (26.6%) have large households of either six or seven people.

The typical women trader at Magaba hence is married (with her husband also engaged in income-generating activities – see below), with a secondary school education, in their early thirties and supporting (sometimes jointly) four dependents. Broadly speaking, this ‘typical’ vendor formed a crucial part of the economically-active urban population in Zimbabwe, though her chances of obtaining formal employment would be miniscule given the staggering rate of unemployment. The thesis though, in identifying general themes pertinent to all women vendors, is sensitive to differences in backgrounds and experiences amongst these traders.

The reasoning behind specifically married women’s involvement in vending in Magaba is illuminating as it focuses on a critical overarching theme which is reiterated throughout the thesis, namely, the prevalence and significance of urban poverty for vendors. This is the case even when the husband was formally employed, which is not always the case for married women vendors. The majority (51.7%) of the married women indicated that their spouses were employed in the formal sector, while 24.1% spoke about their spouses as unemployed. Spouses involved in the informal sector amounted to 13.8%, and smaller percentages were recorded for house-husband (3.4%), retired (3.4%) and other (3.4%). Insofar as their husband worked, in-depth interviews with married women indicated that vending was often a way of supplementing the income of their husbands (given that formal wages, in the context of skyrocketing inflation, could no longer sustain families for the whole month before the next pay day). Urban living standards had deteriorated dramatically such that some households were relocating to rural areas. Vending became critical therefore for household survival. One married respondent aged thirty five reported the following:

These days it is very difficult to live on one salary because you would need to pay school fees, rentals, and electricity and water bills, there are a lot of things that need

money and with salaries that people are getting...it is just a dollar but it's not enough
(In-depth interview, March 2012).

In reiterating this, another respondent aged forty declared:

Poverty has forced us to look for other means of increasing income levels. In the past I used to know the husband's salary will be enough to cover all expenses... now not even half way through [the month] sometimes we have to skip meals so that we get food for supper (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Though married respondents talk about being 'forced' into the informal economy, this move does entail a deliberate choice based on the recognition that the formal economy is no longer, in itself, a sufficient basis for urban livelihoods in contemporary Zimbabwe. For single, divorced and widowed women, vending is their main source of income (which would also be the case for married women without a male breadwinner). Given the absence of a male breadwinner, these women assumed full financial responsibility for the households. One of the unmarried respondents reported the following:

I do not have a husband...everyone in the house looks upon me for everything so I have to work hard to make ends meet with my family...if only I had a husband things could have been better (In-depth interview, March 2012).

The evidence collected during the survey shows that the majority (59.2%) of the women are not the main breadwinners of their households (or are not considered as such), while a significant minority (40.8%) of the women vendors are the main breadwinners. Although previous studies (for example, Mhone 1995) indicate that women's income is generally regarded as being supplementary to men's household income contribution, my study shows that women are playing an increasingly crucial role in household income generation, though still secondary income earners in the main.

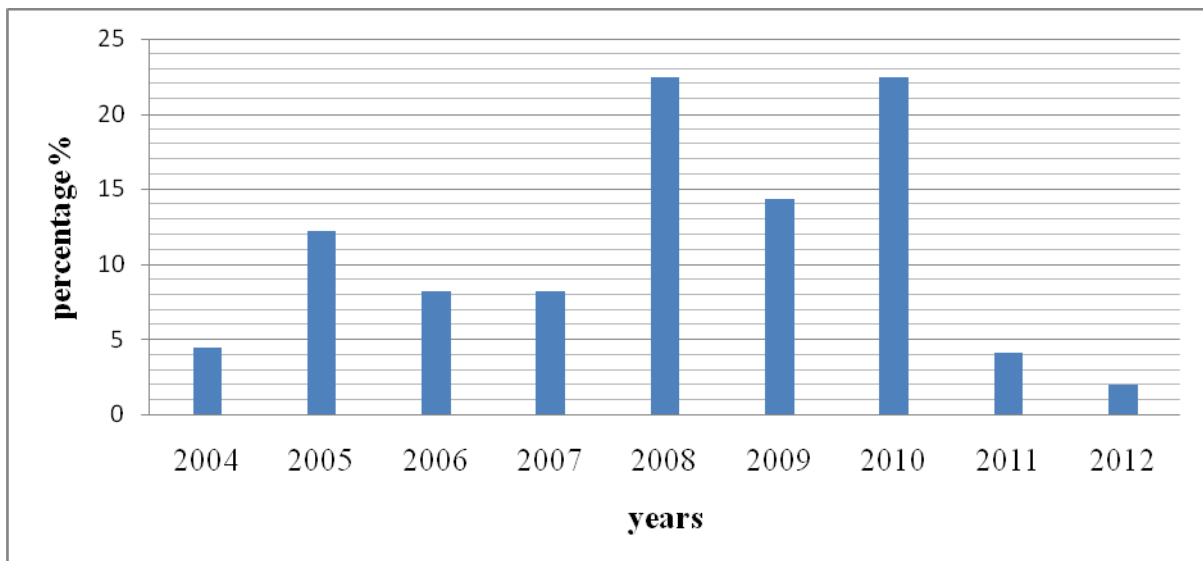
4.3.2 Commencement of Vending Activities

The majority of the sampled Magaba women undertook informal sector activities on a full-time basis, with the exception of two women who are currently working as a school teacher and social worker. Vending, for these women, involved supplementary income. A significant number of respondents had worked previous to becoming vendors and, insofar as they did, they had undertaken unskilled manual work with low remuneration: for instance, as a shop assistant, saleswoman, city council cleaner, cook, hairdresser and security guard. Most of the Magaba women (52.4%) who had worked prior to vending left their previous place of

employment (52.4%) because of retrenchment (reflecting the downsizing or closure of businesses, as discussed in the previous chapter). A more or less equal number were fired, retired or resigned; the last option (voluntary departure) is a manifestation of the dwindling purchasing power of wages earned within the formal economy in crisis-ridden Zimbabwe.

Field results indicate that the majority of sampled women entered into their informal vending activities in the years 2008 to 2010, with only a limited number becoming involved subsequent to 2010. A significant minority entered vending before 2008, starting in the year 2004. Hence, some Magaba vendors have persisted in this livelihood activity for nearly a decade (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Commencement Year of Livelihood Strategy



Source: Survey Questionnaire, March 2012

Just over 22% of the women entered in the year 2008, which is of some significance. The year 2008 marked the peak of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe, with the second highest rate of inflation ever recorded internationally, massive unemployment and heightened political antagonism during the parliamentary and presidential elections. Thus, the official figure for inflation was one million percent at the end of May 2008 and this ballooned to 21 million by the end of July; as of the end of 2008, it is argued that only 6% of the workforce was formally employed (MDTF 2008:6). A similar figure entered vending in 2010 soon after the dollarization of the economy; hence many urban women (22.4%) ventured into informal activities in pursuit of the ‘scarce dollar’.

The bulk (46.9%) of the women vendors borrowed money from their husband, relatives or friends to kick-start their informal business. Another 32.7% used their own capital to commence their operations and 20.4% used household money to start their business. None of the respondents took out a formal loan to start their business because they feared indebtedness and confiscation of goods after failing to repay. But start-up funds were normally insufficient, and this posed a serious challenge to the Magaba women traders in trying to establish their enterprise on a solid financial basis with a fluid cash flow. In commencing their activities, the vast majority of women (87.5%) did not apply for and pay municipal trading licenses to operate at Magaba. As a result, these vendors operate unofficially and experience periodic police action including confiscation of goods, harassment and clearing of illegal tents. Vendors pay 'routine offerings' more often to avoid confiscation of their goods.

4.4 Nature of Trading Activities

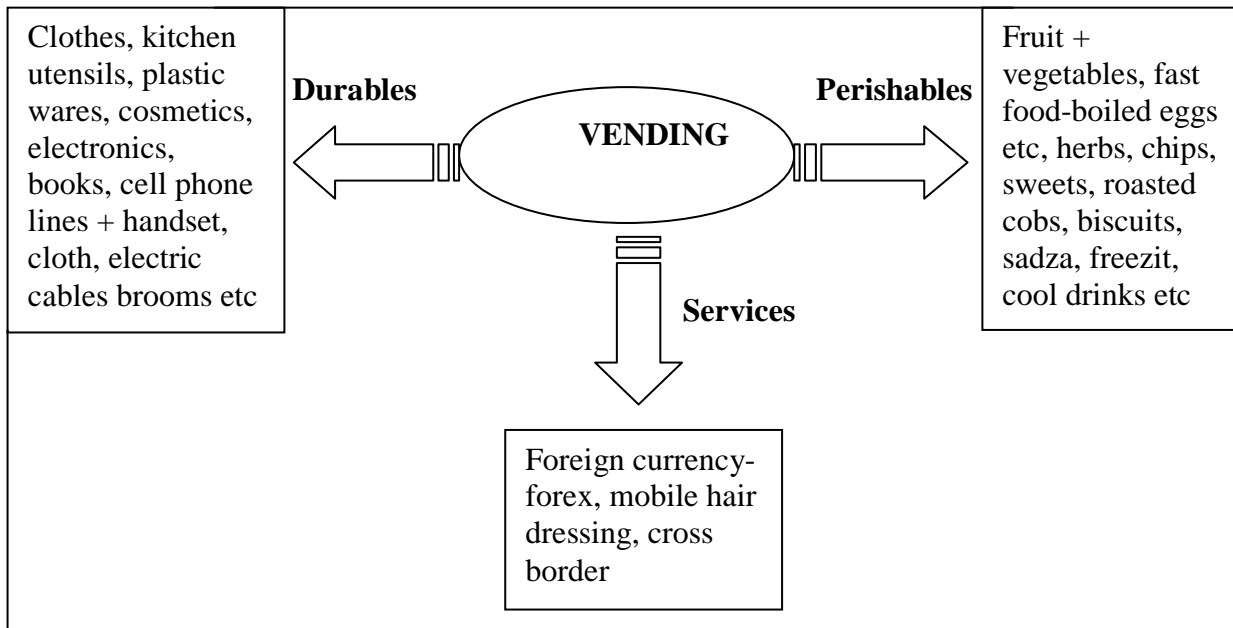
This section identifies and discusses the trading activities in which women at Magaba are engaged. In this regard, it is first important to stress that these women are owner-operators (i.e. they operate their own business alone); there were no cases in which the vendor employed another person at times when they were absent from trading activities. However, intra-household relations were significant in that household members would if need be stand-in for the vendor (without remuneration) to avoid loss of household income via vending.

In the past, women traders in Harare tended to focus their vending activities on fruits and vegetables, whether in the streets, at a bus terminus or elsewhere (see for instance MacPherson 1998). However my study brings to the fore that the majority of wares sold at Magaba are now mainly durable commodities. This change in the nature of trading activities, namely a broadening of the product-base in informal trading, is a reflection of the emergence of a range of parallel markets during the crisis in Zimbabwe and marks informal vending as an alternative commodity-source to formal supermarkets and retail outlets (as the official sources suffered from intermittent commodity shortages).

Magaba market occupies a very spacious area and is packed with vendors of all kinds. The main types of products found at Magaba include fruits, vegetables, mobile phone credits (juice cards or airtime), cigarettes, cosmetics and fast foods. Because of the heterogeneous

character of the items sold at the market, I have categorized vending operations into three broad categories: perishables, durables and services (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Types of Vending Activities found at Magaba



Note: the diagram is not representative of all the vending activities which take place at Magaba

Source: Source: Survey Questionnaire, March 2012

Dube and Chirisa (2012) categorize vendors in Harare (CBD) as falling into two broad units (white collar vendors and green collar vendors). My study also adopts this categorization. I classify women who are selling perishable goods (often vegetables) as green collar vendors while those who engage in selling durables and offering services are classified as white collar vendors. Specific traders at Magaba often altered their product or service line (and hence their source of income), in large part because of supply and demand factors. It was during the peak of the crisis (2008) – with the seemingly near collapse of the local mainstream manufacturing and retail industries – that women started to hoard durable goods from outside Zimbabwean borders and offer them for sale at Magaba. Because large numbers of Magaba traders engaged in this, competition was very stiff which consequently led to the lowering of profit margins.

Competition is in fact one of the key challenges facing Magaba women vendors. Besides competition between themselves, competition arises for two main reasons. First of all, as

intimated above, competition comes from the mainstream supermarkets and retail shops because Magaba vendors increasingly trade in mainstream commodities (such as durable products). Secondly, competition comes about because of the existence of weekend and month-end traders who do not vend on an ongoing basis at Magaba. These traders, who are often employed in the formal economy, trade at Magaba to supplement their regular income; in doing so, they impact negatively on the sales of the permanent traders.

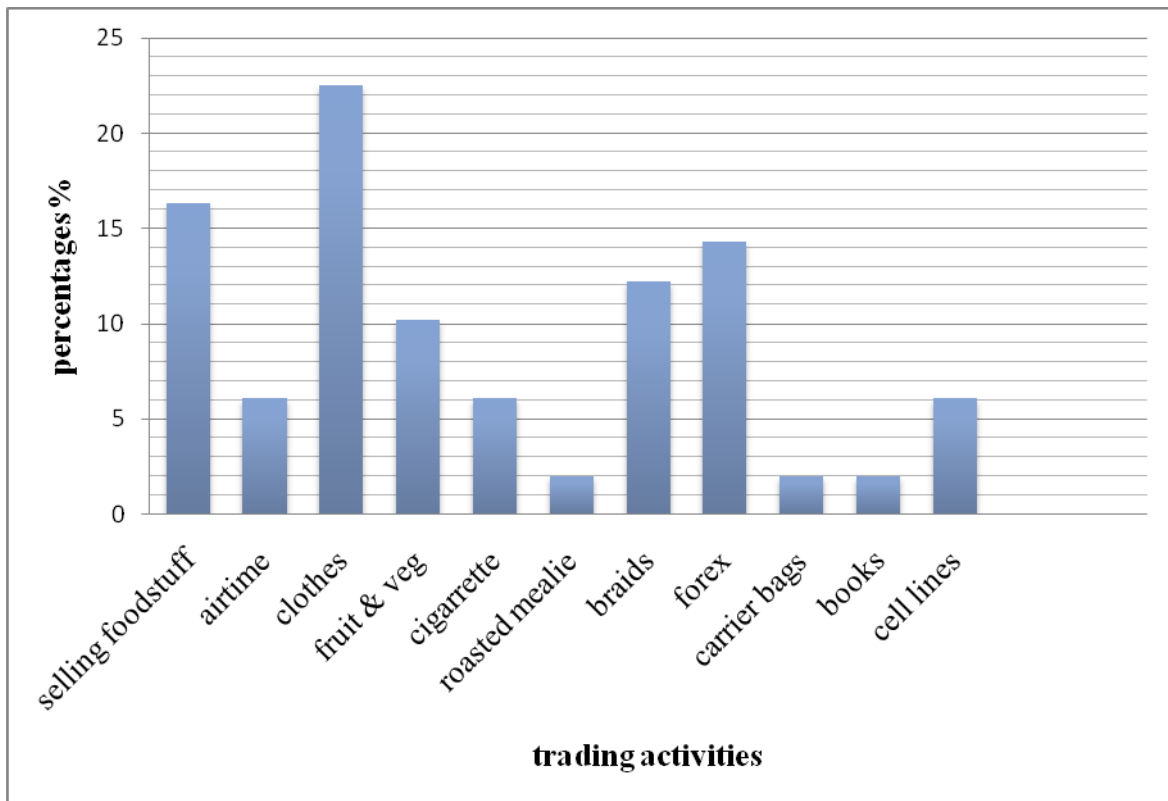
Figure 4.4 provides a more detailed breakdown of the trading activities amongst women at Magaba. Women traders regularly engage in more than one activity simultaneously. Out of the forty nine individuals interviewed through a survey questionnaire, results indicate that 8 respondents (16.3%) were selling foodstuffs such as sandwiches, cooked rice and boiled eggs (other than fruits and vegetables). Foodstuffs were seen as important because they attract workers who pass through town on a daily basis. The traders also claimed that foodstuffs entail low investments, quick turnover and constant cash earnings compared to other commodities; this cash met consumption needs (mainly food security in the household) as well as being converted into capital for investing in the next day's vending activity.

Over five percent of respondents (3 respondents or 6.1%) sold 'juice cards' (or airtime for cellular phones). This was popular as a vending activity because urban Zimbabweans are highly dependent upon mobile phones as a means of communication. Over twenty percent of traders (11 respondents or 22.5%) reported selling second-hand clothes (commonly known as *mazitye*) and this activity has prospered because retail clothing stores are very expensive given the fall in real wages (particularly for residents living in high-density areas such as Mbare). As a result, many urban poor have resorted to buying second-hand clothes, as exemplified by the numerous flea markets (along main roads and in the high density suburbs in Harare) selling clothes and shoes. The decline of the Zimbabwean clothing industry has also contributed to the rise in the importance of second-hand clothes. Foreign currency trading was another popular trading activity at Magaba (14.3%). This is mainly because a large number of Magaba traders frequently travelled across the borders of Zimbabwe (for example, to South Africa) to source different commodities.

Other activities of less significance included selling roasted mealies (or maize cobs) (2%), carrier bags (2%), books (2%), and cellular phone lines (6.1%). Mealies are not popular for vendors because of the time consumed in preparing roasted mealies for sale. Books are a low

priority because of the location of Magaba (at a distance from any school). Cell phone lines at one time became very expensive (during the years from 2005 to 2008, they sold for up to 700 South African Rand) and they are now abundantly available in telecommunication outlets and sold at less than US\$5 (or about 40 South African Rand).

Figure 4.4: Vending Activities



Source: Survey Questionnaire, March 2012

Magaba women traders tend to be quite ingenious and astute in terms of monitoring market forces (notably supply and demand imbalances), such that they shift between specific trading activities depending on market signals. This is evident in the case of movements away from what are now lower profile vending activities (such as cellular phone lines). Movement between trading activities was also affected by seasonality. Specific goods are only available during particular times of the year (notably, perishables) and some goods (such as specific lines of clothing) are more viable as sellable commodities during particular times of the year. In this regard, the women traders are highly sensitive to questions around their cash flow, rate of turnover and profit margins.

Many of the vendors claimed that selling durable goods has high returns compared to selling perishable goods. This was because the sheer amount of profit from durable products is more than the comparable amount for perishables; the amount for the latter is considered as mere petty cash or pocket money. Furthermore, white collar vendors assert that durables do not lose value or deteriorate, such that they can stock them until the demand is high (especially at the end of the month). One divorced respondent aged twenty eight reported the following:

It's different when you are selling profitable goods, I get more dollars when I sell aluminum pots, clothes and shoes...I can get more than US\$20 per day compared to selling biscuits for US\$1 for two packets...that money is for transport only, you can just sell biscuits at home (In-depth interview, March 2012).

On the other hand, green collar vendors argued that quick cash through selling perishables was viable as compared to durables. The main argument was that the Mbare public, which is generally living in poverty, cannot afford to procure food from supermarkets like TM and OK.

The profit margin varies considerably between traders. In examining income or earnings generated, I distinguished between low, medium and high income traders. Overall, 57.1% of traders generate medium to high returns (over \$150 US per month) while 42.8% generate low returns (up to \$150 US per month) (see Figure 4.5). It is difficult to slot white and green collar vending and the selling of services into specific income levels; however, as a general tendency (and as noted above), selling perishable goods has lower returns in terms of income and slots into the lowest income category. Selling durables (including second-hand clothes and cosmetics) and services (such as money changers) can be classified as medium to high returns in terms of income. Traders with lower income earnings tend to concentrate on perishables.

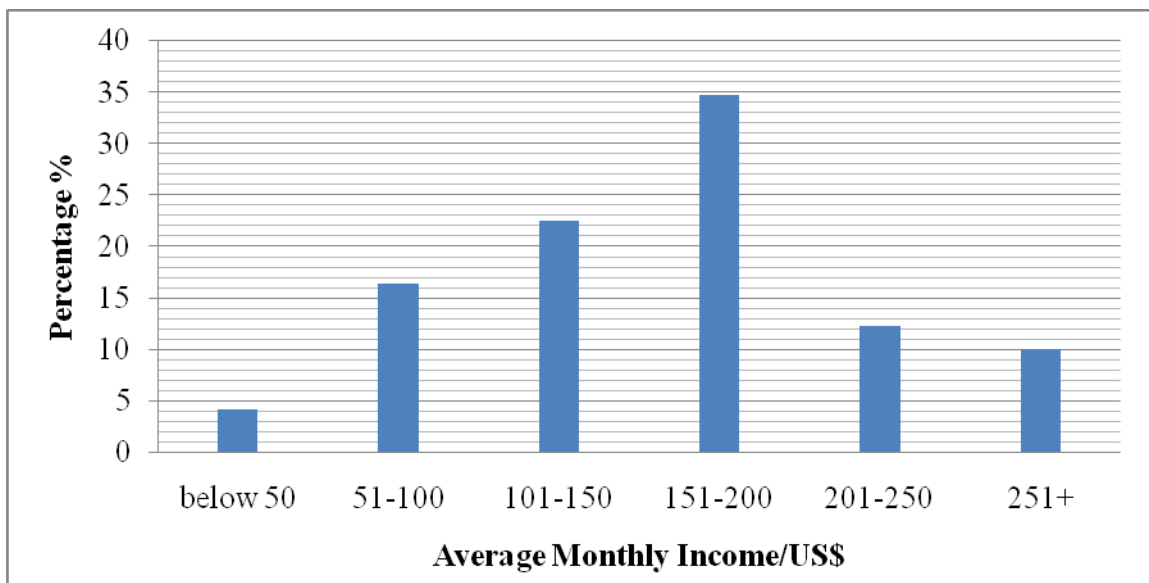
Income earned on a particular day (even earnings derived from sales of durables) is mainly used to meet immediate consumption needs, rather than for building an asset base for future economic prosperity. Given the rising cost of living in urban areas in Zimbabwe, the income earned by the vendors per month is not even adequate to meet basic household needs. This is reflected by the following comment from one trader aged thirty five who specialized in perishables:

I will tell you this, vending is just making money for consumption of one day and tomorrow I have to come and do the same thing...normally I get US\$10-15...it's too

little but I have no option where would I get money for water, electricity, school fees and all other things that require cash (In-depth interview, March 2012).

The income earned then is prioritized by vendors and their households for daily consumption needs. Insofar as the earnings by the woman trader is the main source of household income, or the only source, then the livelihood of the household on a longer-term basis becomes hugely problematic.

Figure 4.5: Income Level in US\$ p/m



Note: Below 50 to 150=low returns, 151 to 250+=medium and high returns

Source: Survey Questionnaire, March 2012

The women vendors spoke very critically of course of Operation *Murambatsvina* (in 2005). As noted previously, though most of the Magaba traders had set up their vending activities at Magaba subsequent to this government operation (and had no prior history of vending elsewhere), some current traders had engaged in trading activities previously (and elsewhere) and these activities were disrupted by the operation. They therefore claim that the operation seriously undermined the livelihoods of many traders (and their households) and led to less diversification of product and service lines. Prior to *Murambatsvina*, they claim that women pursued a wide range of activities, including running tuck shops, salons and flea markets at home and making use (for vending purposes) of available space at shopping centers and roadsides in their residential suburbs. Other women were not directly affected by the cleanup campaign at Magaba but (like the Magaba traders whose involvement at Magaba pre-dates

the operation) their vending activities were undermined because of the pervasiveness of the operation nation-wide. When respondents were asked about their feelings of the operation, one married respondent aged thirty three argued:

It is very unacceptable we lost our property, tuck shops, flea markets etc and from then on we can't even afford to buy property and we are really still affected...I cannot watch TV (it was destroyed) and I think in future such operations should be avoided. I can hardly think of the benefits of such an operation...It eroded our rights to human dignity, to shelter, to employment and the right to freely engage in business activities (In-depth interviews, March 2012).

Besides Operation *Murambatsvina*, harassment by municipal police is a constant threat to Magaba traders (as discussed in greater detail later). This is a broader problem for urban traders in Zimbabwe and it has occurred both before (Mombeshora 2004) and after *Murambatsvina*. Despite *Murambatsvina* and subsequent police operations, Magaba women traders argue that vending activities (as a livelihood strategy) is normalized compared to previous years. In part, this is because the dollarization of the economy has contributed towards stabilizing the trading environment and allowing for more regular, and less erratic, earnings.

4.5 Sources of Goods to Trade

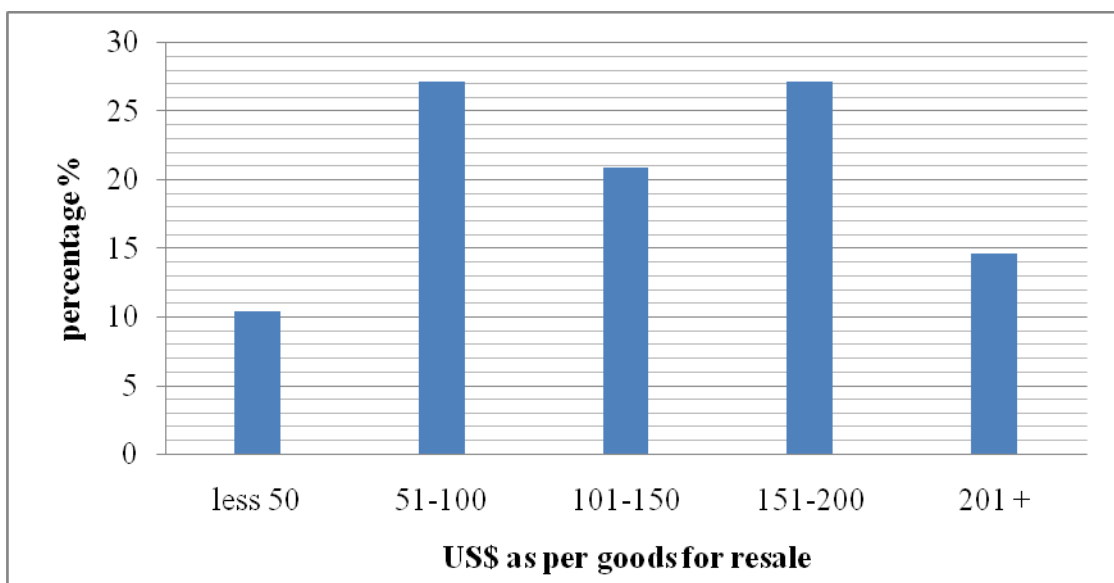
My Magaba study indicates that there are clear linkages between the informal and formal sectors of the Zimbabwean economy, including in relation to the source of goods sold through informal vending. The majority (51.1%) of the women petty traders at Magaba sourced products mainly from the formal sector in Zimbabwe (Machipisa and Mohammad Mussa to name merely two). Only 10.6% sourced their products from other informal traders; for instance, those selling human hair (braids) sourced this from a nearby supplier at a wholesale price (see Photo 4.1 below). Only 2.1% spoke about the goods as being self-provided.

A considerable number of women (36.2%) reported travelling across the Zimbabwean border to purchase goods in another country and then reselling these goods at Magaba. There were various reasons for sourcing goods from outside Zimbabwe. First of all, the charging of exorbitant prices by retail shops and companies in Zimbabwe which produced the same products sourced outside Zimbabwe. Secondly, traders sometimes sought to acquire brand-

name goods which customers preferred over the many Chinese products sold in Zimbabwe (these products are locally known as ‘zhing zhong’, which means ‘products below standard’). Lastly, the manufacturing sector in Zimbabwe has not yet regained its productive capacity such that certain products remain scarce on the local market. South Africa was the main country from which durable goods were sourced, but other countries included Zambia, Mozambique and Botswana.

Goods that were sourced from these countries included new clothes, shoes, electrical gadgets and basic commodities such as sugar, cooking oil and washing powder. Two important and popular markets in Johannesburg were mentioned, namely, China City and Dragon City. Buying durable goods in bulk was preferable as it lessened the number of journeys and hence traders saved on transport costs. Bus operators though charged exorbitant fares between Harare and Johannesburg, to the extent that sometimes the extra-luggage charge was higher than the bus fare for the passenger. These cross border traders also faced a number of challenges and extra fees, including customs tariff duty and long delays at the border post. Corrupt tendencies by some custom officials also reduced eventual profits. Below is the amount of money that women spent on goods purchased either inside or outside the country, for purposes of resale (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Expenditure Level in US\$ p/m



Source: Survey Questionnaire. March 2012

The expenditure level varies considerably between traders. In examining the expenditures, I discovered that 37.5% of the traders used US\$100 or less to purchase goods for resale; while 62.5% used more than US\$100 to purchase goods for resale. It is difficult to slot green and white collar expenditures into these expenditure levels. However, as a general tendency, purchasing of durables for resale by white collars vendors is more expensive than that of green collar vendors who specialize in perishables.

Photo 4.1: Wholesale for Braids



Photo-March 2012

The empirical evidence presented clearly underlines the significance of vending for Magaba women traders in the context of urban poverty. In this regard, a significant number of women vendors (49%) purported that their household's livelihood condition had improved since they started operating as vendors. The balance indicated that there had not been any significant improvement. At the same time, it is not only market-related livelihood activities which provide income to urban women at Magaba as there are also off-market livelihood activities; the following section considers these.

4.6 Off-Market Livelihood Activities and Income Sources

Urban women do not rely exclusively on vending as a livelihood strategy. Instead, beyond formal employment (discussed earlier), they (and their households) pursue diversified livelihood activities for purposes of household income and food security, or rely on

alternative cash and commodity streams. Testimonies from the urban women refer to the importance of remittances, urban agriculture, rentals, urban-rural linkages and cross-border activities.

4.6.1 Remittances: Cash and Commodities

The term remittance has different meanings but, broadly speaking, it refers to cash or in-kind transfers by workers who have left their area of origin on a short-term or long-term basis (World Bank 2007). This may simply entail the movement of cash and commodities within one country, such as remittances from urban to rural areas by migrant labourers. In addition, cross-country remittances are increasingly important. Zimbabwean nationals have left the country in their hundreds of thousands over the past decade, mainly as economic refugees, and they have remitted cash and commodities to Zimbabwe through a variety of channels (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006, Mupedziwa 2009).

Urban women at Mugaba have at times been recipients of these remittances. From the study it emerges that 14.2% of the sampled respondents received remittances from elsewhere in the country or from outside Zimbabwe, and from different people including family members. The main source of outside remittances for Magaba women traders was South Africa and primarily in the form of commodities (both perishable and durable); cash though is also remitted and used, for example, for educational expenses. Though some of the commodities remitted are currently readily available in Zimbabwe, they may be very expensive. As noted earlier, earnings by Magaba vendors may be as low as \$50US per month. In this regard, the testimony by one unmarried woman is very revealing:

I always come here [Magaba] at 9am in the morning and spend the whole day until the sunset...but sometimes it's not worth it when I get less than US\$10, at times I can even go home with US\$7; if I subtract transport I am left with US\$6 this is not enough. With this little I cannot afford most of the basic foods had it been not for my sister who works in South Africa. I always receive groceries every month; without her I could be struggling more (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Such sentiments clearly show that, despite their significance, earnings from vending activities are not necessarily able to sustain urban households.

Remittances from further afield in the diaspora were reported to be mostly cash remittances, considering the expenses incurred in trying to send commodities from afar; however, goods

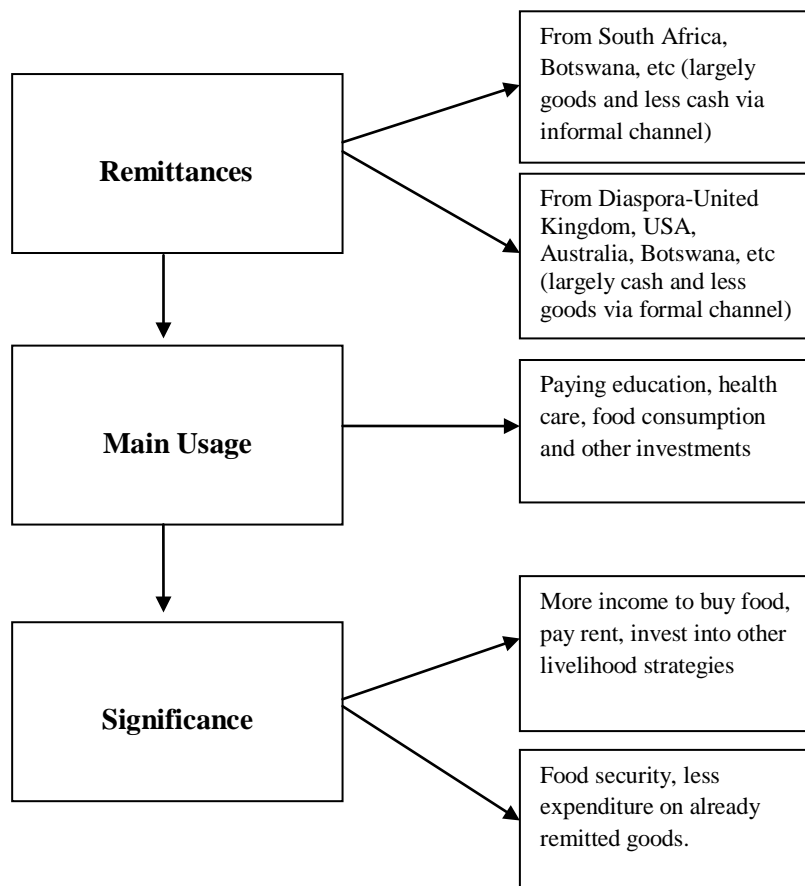
are also sent. One Magaba respondent aged twenty six indicated the great significance of this for her standard of living:

“I get US\$335 (after bank charges) from my sister who is working in United Kingdom as a nurse after every two months and sometimes she sends clothes, cell phones etc...I can make a living through the money she sends me;...it’s very helpful”

(In-depth interview, March 2012).

Cash transferred from far afield normally goes through the formal channels (like Western Union) regulated by the Zimbabwe Reserve Bank, while cash coming in from South Africa is done unofficially.

Figure 4.7: Remittances as used by Magaba women



Source: Survey Questionnaire, March 2012

In terms of usages of cash remittances by Magaba households (see Figure 4.7), the primary focus is monthly household sustenance such as accommodation, food consumption and security, education and health, and electricity and water bills (see also Sander and Maimbo

2003). However, some cash becomes an investment by being channeled directly into informal vending activities through the purchase of commodities for re-sale. Remittances do make a contribution to household sustainability by mitigating the effects of the crisis in Zimbabwe; however, they may be an unstable form of household sustenance because their ongoing transference is beyond the control of Magaba households and thus the latter depend quite heavily on the choices made by friends and family living, studying or working elsewhere.

4.6.2 Urban Agriculture

A significant number of urban households in Zimbabwe practice urban farming for food security purposes, despite the scarcity of land as natural capital in urban centers. This is done throughout the year but it is intensified during the rainy season from late November. This is manifested specifically amongst Magaba households. The survey indicates that the vast majority (84.1%) of women vendors practice urban agriculture.

The site for farming varies considerably. Only 21.1% of households undertook farming at the place of residence. Others practice it elsewhere, in part because there is often limited space available in high-density areas like Mbare for a plot and also because of the fear of local municipal authorities and police who at times intimidate urban farmers and destroy their crops. In this context, 23.7% of households engaged in agricultural practice alongside roads, 23.7% along railway lines, 18.4% on utilized residential stands, 7.9% on land allocated for urban agriculture and 5.3% on hillsides. In terms of accessing the land utilized for farming, a significant minority of households (42.1%) indicated that they were formally allocated this land, though the way or ways in which this occurred remains unclear. Besides these households, 23.7% inherited land historically used by parents and relatives, and 13.2% were given land by friends who had left due to the unbearable cost of living in the urban areas. Finally, 4.1% accessed land through invasion while 15.8% purchased land from the owner. Though these figures indicate the diverse ways in which land was accessed, the study was unable to verify these access patterns.

A variety of crops are grown by Magaba women traders. Women themselves provided the labour and are sometimes helped by household members. No women reported to be hiring outside labour. Of particular significance is the staple crop of maize (73.5% of households), but also important are onions (6.2%), tomatoes (8.2%), sweet potatoes (10.2%) and sugar cane (2%). These are similar findings to the study by Kutiwa et al. (2010) of urban

Zimbabwe. A factor that contributed to the focus on the growing of maize is the high cost of mealie meal in the supermarkets. In addition to the crops listed above, a majority of households seemed to grow leafy vegetables (such as *covo*, *tsunga* and *rugare*) for purposes of eating with sadza (cooked mealie meal); these vegetables were treated as a substitute for meat which is far too expensive in the butcheries for Magaba vendors to afford (with one kilogram costing about US\$4.50). Sweet potatoes (locally known as *mbambaira*) were also substituted for bread which costs US\$1 a loaf.

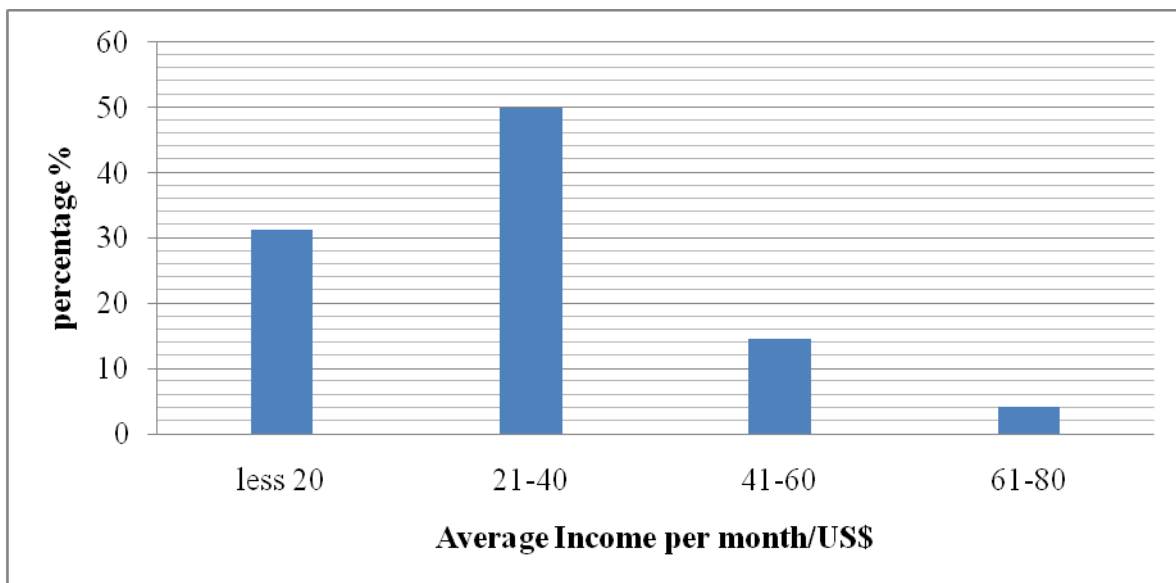
Urban farming is mainly for household consumption but there is also some income generation through agriculture. A slight majority (53.1%) of households indicated that they sold crops that they grew. A majority of the crops grown were sold in the places of residence while smaller quantities of the grown crops were sold at Magaba. This reveals the fact that some households were growing and selling crops. In general, these households tended to be engaged in farming on a larger scale than the other households. Most of the produce sold was leafy vegetables, especially during the rainy season when yields were higher. In addition, there was some barter trading occurring. For instance, one household would exchange sweet potatoes for a loaf of bread supplied by another household. My survey shows that a reasonable amount of income was being generated through the marketing of produce (Figure 4.8). Half of the households (50%) indicated that they earned US\$21-40 per month while 31.3% earned less than US\$20; 14.6% earned US\$41-60 and 4.2% earned US\$61-80. The income generated was used for urgent household needs, such as school fees and the purchase of school uniforms for children in the household.

Urban farming though is not without its problems. For example, 37.1% of households reported conflicts with neighbours or nearby residents mainly due to boundary demarcation disputes and theft. As well, crop slashing by local police as a deterrent measure has taken place, and interviewed women cried foul about this disheartening practice because it led to reductions in crop yields and often undercut any prospects for surplus sales. Although these and other challenges existed, the Magaba women vendors spoke out strongly about the importance of urban agriculture. In this respect, Magaba women vendors highlighted the significance of urban farming in facilitating access to basic foodstuffs (26.5%), in supplementing income through market sales (30.6%) and in improving food supply and nutrition. Also, by reducing expenditure on foodstuffs which are 'home-grown', income can be released and channeled into other household expenses such as rent and transport.

Respondents were proud of their farming practices which, amongst other things, allowed them to evade the erratic prices of goods in the supermarkets. One widow respondent therefore reported the following:

Bread is now available in shops but the price for bread is too high...Instead of wasting my money I will have mbambaira (sweet potatoes) for my breakfast which I easily grow for myself (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Figure 4.8: Income from Urban Farming in US\$ p/m



Source: T.J Chirau, Questionnaire. March 2012

4.6.3 Renting Out Rooms

Aside from remittances and urban agriculture, interviewees (particularly those who owned a house) derive some income from renting extra rooms to lodgers. In Harare high-density areas, the majority of people do not own houses and they depend upon landlords for accommodation. Shortages in accommodation have in fact influenced some house owners to make extensions to their houses in order to provide rental accommodation. Interviewees who owned houses exclaimed that, prior to Operation *Murambatsvina*, backyard accommodation (known as ‘boy-sky’) generated significant income for them but that this was dramatically stopped because the operation entailed the destruction of all illegal dwellings. Lodging though is still pervasive in Mbare and other high-density areas in Harare.

Six vendors, based on in-depth interviews, disclosed that their main source of income was derived from renting out rooms; hence, they ‘convert’ physical capital into a direct source of income. One married respondent indicated:

I am proud to own a house, this is very important to me if I do not get anything from selling second hand clothes I always find that I get money at the end of the month. Five of my rooms are rented out and each room costs US\$65 a month (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Ratidzo, another respondent, exclaimed:

It's a blessing that I inherited a house after my husband died; without that I could be struggling to provide food to my family...each room costs US\$70 per month (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Unlike vending, renting out rooms provides a stable and reliable income per month, and this income is used for educating children, paying monthly bills and food consumption; but it is also sometimes used to purchase goods sold by the house-owning vendor at Magaba. But most of the Magaba vendors do not own houses and they rely upon rental accommodation. With one room costing around US\$70 per month (and with most households including a number of dependents) this becomes a major monthly expense for Magaba traders.

4.6.4 Urban-Rural Linkages

Urban women at Magaba also utilize urban-rural linkages as a supporting mechanism for their households, and to cushion themselves against shocks and crises. This is more prevalent in the case of older women (who tend to uphold rural values) and with those who prioritize their historical and cultural roots. This result is consistent with the study by Muzvidziwa (1997:108) who noted that “continued utilization of rural-urban networks as a survival option was a pragmatic response to scarcity of resources, including jobs”. Without keeping the urban-rural linkages alive, the Magaba women openly proclaimed that decent livelihoods in Harare would be a mission impossible. Some respondents have access to land in rural areas. One woman inherited rural land and she claims that land forms a crucial basis for constructing livelihood strategies in Harare. She grew crops there, including maize and groundnuts (to make peanut butter after processing). A widow aged thirty eight had this to say:

I sell most of my produce. You see the peanut butter [I was shown a carrier bag full of bottles with peanut butter]; each goes for US\$1.50 and a bucket of maize goes for US\$7. (In-depth interview, March 2012)

In this specific case, then, urban-rural linkages feed directly into vending at Magaba.

Maintaining urban-rural linkages also contributed to barter trade within the village of origin. This was promoted through bringing into the village basic commodities such as cooking oil, bathing and washing soap, sugar and second-hand clothes. Most of these commodities were not available in rural supermarkets and retail outlets because of the bad roads and transport costs which hindered delivery. These commodities were exchanged for agricultural products (mainly maize) which were for household consumption or reselling at Magaba. In addition to bartering, Magaba vendors also used rural areas as alternative markets for their goods. In doing so, they charged exorbitant prices because of the scarcity of basic commodities in rural areas. At times they sold goods on credit and this attracted rural buyers. Vendors, despite their meager incomes, in addition sent remittances to their rural area of origin to support parents and other family members. In return the Magaba households received agricultural products from their rural families, especially during harvesting season, and this led to a reduction in household expenditures and acted as a safety net given the many risks of urban life. The findings of this study therefore go contrary to the conclusion by Schlyter (1990:188) that “it seemed impossible for women to maintain two places simultaneously as a survival mechanism, they were urban or they left and resided for a longer period in rural areas”.

4.6.5 Cross Border Activity

As raised previously, the continuity (and indeed the very existence) of the informal trading activities of Magaba and indeed other vendors relies quite extensively on the ongoing importation of goods by informal cross border traders. This is because of the scarcity of many commodities within Zimbabwe, the lack of diversity within product ranges and their comparatively high local prices when available (Banda 2010), compared to primarily South Africa. It is therefore important to reiterate the significance of cross border trading. This informal importation is done either by the Magaba traders themselves or by others (mainly women) who specialize in cross border trading. Cross border traders often travel on a weekly basis (over weekends) to ensure a regular supply of commodities at markets such as Magaba. Because of long border delays, new duty tariffs and corrupt officials, traders often feel compelled to bribe customs and immigration officers in order to proceed on their travels

without excessive hindrance and to reduce expenses (for example, paying the duty tariffs would likely lessen profit levels on the commodities once sold).

The majority of urban women traders who traded in durable goods relied on crossing the border to stock (and sometimes hoard) commodities for re-sale at Magaba; these commodities included clothing, electrical appliances, pots and linen. One unmarried respondent aged twenty eight reported the following:

I started going to South Africa in 2006 with my friend Mai Tanaka. In Johannesburg we have established our customers who buy seat covers and bed covers, while there we also do piece jobs within homes like doing laundry, ironing and any other domestic work to raise cash to buy stuff to resell and also food for our families (In-depth interview, March 2012).

In feeding directly into Magaba vending, cross border trading contributes significantly to household sustenance (Peberdy 2002). This quotation also indicates that, in undertaking cross border trading, Magaba women sometimes use the opportunity to engage in casual domestic work (including laundry and ironing) outside the country. This is commonly referred to as piece work (or *mabasa emaoko* in Shona).

While away on trading excursions (inside the country or outside the country) to purchase goods for re-sale, most women revealed that they delegated family members, relatives or friends to watch over their stall at Magaba: they received help on a voluntary basis from children (18.4%), relatives (12.2%), friends (20.4%) and husband (6.1%). Nearly 43% indicated that they do not delegate at all and that they always work alone. Delegation was done to prevent loss of sales while away from Harare. On return, a bar of soap, cooking oil or other goods are given to the assistant as a token of appreciation. Because of social reproduction and domestic work responsibilities, Magaba traders who are single mothers stressed that their stay across the border was limited in length because of concerns about the safety and comfort of their children.

At times, some Magaba traders would organize themselves as a group based on trust and reciprocity (or social capital broadly) to engage in the collective purchasing of goods in South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana and Zambia. More specifically, one trader would go to purchase goods on behalf of the group – this was done to minimize duplication of cross border visits and thus to curb transport costs, as well as to ensure imported goods for those

women who did not have legal documentation to cross country borders. For example, new clothes and shoes are sourced from South Africa, caterpillars or mopane worms (locally known as *madora*) from Botswana (this is sometimes substituted for meat or leafy vegetables) and second-hand clothes packed in large bags (locally known as *mabhero*) from Mozambique. However, this collective spirit is eroded and dissipates when it comes to the day-to-day practicalities of vending at Magaba, which is based on stiff competition even between traders who form part of the same group involved in collective purchasing.

4.6.6 Other Livelihood Strategies

It became apparent from the interviews that women traders who were unmarried had additional alternative sources of income specifically from boyfriends. Respondents made it clear that there was no need for having a boyfriend unless he provided financial assistance. This assistance included cash as well as groceries every month-end, and therefore this provided a reasonably stable source of income as long as the relationship continued.

Women vendors were also involved in *marounds* (rotational and savings groups) which depended on relationships of trust between group members. These savings groups however did not always include women traders at Magaba only but also other interested local women. Some women were involved in more than one group, as there are different kinds of groups – including those formed around Magaba market and those formed around place of residence or church. Each group member makes weekly or monthly contributions per week or month, either cash or in-kind (mainly groceries) contributions. Members would take turns drawing on the available cash and commodities. One respondent said they were contributing cash for the first half of the year and groceries for the second half of the year. Through group membership, women would then draw cash income in the first half of the year and groceries during the second half.

Pensions were also reported amongst widowed women; though not a substantial amount, pensions did at least guarantee a limited stable source of income. Without the pensions most widowed Magaba women claimed their situation would be miserable. Pension income was used for, amongst other expenses, accommodation rentals, school fees and groceries.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has offered an understanding and analysis of the various livelihood activities and sources of income for urban women traders at Magaba. Although the economic crisis in Zimbabwe has greatly affected women to their detriment, this study shows that Magaba women have risen to the occasion (so to speak) by seeking not only to continue trading but by diversifying their livelihood strategies. These include remittances, urban agriculture, renting out rooms, urban-rural linkages and savings groups. In order to stabilize their income levels, women diversify their activities as a fall back plan when one livelihood strategy is not performing well. Vending though remains significant for these traders and is their core livelihood activity, though it may not be the main source of household income in the case of households which have a member in formal employment. Different wares are traded at Magaba, involving green and white collar vendors, and the source of the goods sold is extremely diverse (with some goods emanating from outside the country). The livelihood activities of the Magaba women are imperative to their daily lives and may mean the difference between meeting immediate household needs or not. In this regard, most of the livelihood strategies (including vending itself) cater for immediate conception needs or facilitate access to basic services such as education for children.

However, a number of challenges, both economic and political, regularly or intermittently constrain livelihood activities and even have the potential of undermining them. The following chapter discusses the challenges which women face in constructing and maintaining their livelihood activities.

CHAPTER FIVE: LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES OF WOMEN TRADERS AT MAGABA

5.1 Introduction

Informal livelihood activities play an important role in providing safety nets for millions of unemployed people in Zimbabwe (including women who are the focus of the thesis). However, livelihood activities are not without challenges. This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter and its aim is to discuss the challenges that affect women's livelihood activities. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The following section (section two) explores the economic challenges including the following: credit, competition, transport, shelter and storage, seasonality, employment and health hazards. In the next section (section three) I discuss the politicization of urban space. In particular the section highlights the actions of police, customs officials and militia groups against the vendors. Numerous problems are encountered including harassment through demolition, confiscation of goods, being taken into custody (and at times imprisonment) as well as corruption tendencies from authorities. Following this, section four considers the overall attempts by women to overcome the economic and political challenges.

5.2 Economic Challenges

The aggressive macroeconomic milieu which has reigned in Zimbabwe during the last decade or so has greatly limited the capacity of the urban poor in Zimbabwe to sustain their livelihoods. In this regard, the central state and local municipalities have not been particularly supportive. In this section, in examining the economic challenges of women traders at Magaba, I look specifically at questions pertaining to credit loans, transport, shelter and storage, competition, employment, seasonality and disease outbreaks.

5.2.1 Credit Loans

The bulk of people in urban areas acknowledge the significance of access to credit in either cash or kind. Credit acts as a means of increasing household incomes through allowing for investments in income-generating activities and small business ventures. Despite this, the majority of poor households do not have access to credit from banks and other money lenders. Credit loan facilities are not new in Zimbabwe but, historically, most of these have been aimed at small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and not petty traders like women at Magaba. Banks and NGOs have been targeting women as a social category, but specifically poor and marginalized women have not benefited from these interventions (Mupedziswa and

Gumbo 2001). The majority of women who participate in petty trading do not benefit because they do not meet loan requirements, such as collateral security, set by banks and other money lenders (Mhone 1993). Women traders at Magaba therefore face this credit obstacle due to limited or no collateral. Further, they normally lack a guarantor with long-term and sufficient income to act as security for them, and their informal activities generate low and irregular returns deemed unacceptable to money lenders. In addition, the Government of Zimbabwe, through state and statutory bodies such as the Small Enterprises Development Corporation (SEDCO), the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Gender and Women Affairs, provide credit facilities. However, few traders at Magaba knew anything of significance with regard to these credit opportunities, and none had in fact benefited. In any case, due to the economy performing under a necessary threshold, these bodies had exceedingly limited funds for credit disbursement.

The lack of credit facilities to finance livelihoods contributed to the limited livelihood activities of Magaba women and to their limited accumulation of assets. Hence, this greatly impacted on the day-to-day operations of their livelihoods, particularly considering their ongoing cash flow problems. As such, traders sometimes ran out of cash to purchase goods for re-sale, and even some traders failed to pay for transport fares from their area of residence to the market where most of their livelihood activities were carried out. As intimated by one unmarried woman aged thirty:

There are many problems that we face. I would say one major problem is the lack of credit loans, as several times we have heard that the government is giving out loans and these have not reached us. Without credit loans we cannot improve our businesses; we would want to open small spaza shops and attract more customers. But without loans to start that remains a dream. The money we get is difficult to save and is too little; it covers transport and food on a daily basis but to embark on such ventures [spaza shops] is impossible (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Given the inadequacy of finances, livelihoods are threatened and compromised, such that on occasion trading activities come to a standstill.

The majority of traders knew of the existence of informal money lenders. But Magaba traders were afraid of borrowing money from these lenders. Interest rates on these loans are very high, and paying a loan back to these lenders was like tying a rope around one's neck.

Vendors indicated that they were specifically afraid of confiscation of their trading goods after failing to pay back the money. One woman aged thirty four indicated the following:

It's very difficult to get cash from the people who do chimbadzu [informal money lending] because when you fail to repay them they come and collect everything. One of my friends had her house emptied and if you fail to pay back and redeem your things they will auction them to get their money back. . That was a lesson on its own and I learnt not to acquire a loan. My job does not give me much, so I do not want a loan; let those who want loans get them (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Clearly, loans in-of-themselves are not inherently advantageous for Magaba traders.

In as much as vendors needed credit, loans were either not available to them or they feared the consequences associated with credit. Although credit loans are sometimes romanticized as a key poverty alleviation strategy, there is often silence on the consequences to the trader when the loan is not paid on time in full. In this way, loans may rather exacerbate poverty and vulnerability. Besides the lack of credit loans, vendors at Magaba experience ongoing transport problems.

5.2.2 Transport

Both formal and informal employment urbanites are affected by the public transport inadequacies and costs. Transport problems were identified as critical by those Magaba traders who travelled on a daily basis from different low density areas in Harare to Magaba, while those who reside at Magaba Flats, Matapi Flats, Tagarika Flats, Nenyere Flats, Matererini Flats and other places near the Magaba market were able walk to Magaba to trade their wares daily. During both the morning and evening times, public transport was scarce and this inconvenienced livelihood activities. The scarcity of transport is not attributed to the shortage of fuel (as it was in earlier years) but to the shortage of public vehicles and traffic jams as well as regular police operations to oust ramshackle transport operators from city roads. One married respondent from Highfield said the following:

I stay in Highfield and I have to wake up very early in the morning because by 7 o'clock combies will be scarce; most of them are stuck in town with no way out and operators hike the fare from R5 to US\$1 [about R10] and this happens again in the evening when I want to go home ... They charge as well for chichangani [carrier bag] at the same price. Sometimes you begin to see that you are just working for transport

only;... everything is increasing, food, clothes and housing truly it's getting out of hand (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Public transport, in terms of fluctuating costs even within a particular day, is therefore controlled by market forces of supply and demand.

In this respect, traders as a whole explicitly agreed that transport fares were constantly changing and being hiked, and they varied considerably between high density areas. Traders from the nearby areas of Mufakose, Glen Norah and Warren Park pay a fare of US\$1 during peak hours while those traders from areas further afield (like Chitungwiza) pay a fare of US\$2. To curb transport costs, the majority of traders (especially those living at some distance from Magaba market) resorted to pickup trucks (locally known as *pikidhas*) instead of public transport vehicles called *kombis* (commuter omnibus). In the mornings, cohorts of people are seen ignoring *kombis* while waiting for *pikidhas*, and the same occurs at nightfall. *Pikidhas*, according to traders, had comparatively cheap fares no matter what time of the day. Furthermore, traders were not obliged to pay for carrier bags as in the case of public transport. In addition, the respondents intimated that *kombis* are generally unsafe and are usually involved in accidents because of high speeds in rushing and competing for passengers.

Further probing into transport routes showed that, in the case of *kombis*, there was no direct link to Magaba market; therefore traders had to wait for and board two or more *kombies* to Magaba. Observable in both the morning and evening are traders walking from drop-off points to another *kombie* rank, with their carrier bags on their heads as well as *magweja* (boys who push carts) pushing scotch carts (locally known as *zvingoro*) in single file. One unmarried respondent indicated:

That's the cheapest thing to do; we just hire a cart from Market Square (Market Square is a bus terminus approximately 2 kilometers from Magaba) to Magaba because if you want to use a kombie they are expensive (In-depth interview, March 2012).

This sentiment is shared by the majority of women and it demonstrates women's ingenuity in response to the transport problem in seeking to minimize expenditures for their trading operations. Besides transport, shelter and storage were critical problems for women at Magaba.

5.2.3 Shelter and Storage

Given the physical set-up of the Magaba market, harsh weather conditions raise problems for the traders. Data gathered through the survey suggested that 39.6% were affected by such problems. Magaba is an outdoor market which lacks overarching shelter and, in addition, traders lack stands on which to display their goods and to keep them safe from exposure to the vagaries of weather. Vendors and their goods therefore are continuously exposed to dust, cold weather, exposure to sunlight, and rain. The available shields they have in the form of umbrellas are only appropriate for sunny weather and not for wet weather. Weather conditions had a number of specific effects on both the women and their commodities for sale.

First of all, wares were damaged especially during excessively hot days and the rainy season. This reduced the quality of the goods and resultantly led to the reduction of selling prices for each damaged item. In times of rains women have to run to nearby cover to avoid damage of their wares. Some vendors have started selling their wares under cover on pavements outside nearby stores and (because of this) they are in constant conflict with shop owners. Regarding the lack of proper shelter, one of the interviewees had this to say:

We need proper shelter like people at Mupedzanhano ... Council is not doing anything to accommodate us. Our products get wet during the rainy season and obviously when the customers want to buy they negotiate for reduction of prices and we lose profits. This is a problem we always face each and every rainy season. If we had proper shelter it was better. Most of the times we run to cover our products with tents and umbrellas because once they get wet they lose value and the price drops too (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Secondly, the bad weather contributed to health problems especially influenza. Because of this, some traders opted to remain at their home during incremental weather, thereby reducing their daily income. Thirdly, particularly because there is no overarching shelter for the market, the weather drives potential customers away. One respondent who sells second-hand clothes stated that “*when it is cold and raining there is no business*”.

Magaba is not an official designated area of operation as far as vending is concerned and vendors are not allowed to put up ad-hoc tents to shelter their products. Hence, the problems experienced by the traders are perennial.

Storage facilities are another challenge facing the Magaba traders. This is unlike for instance Mupedzanhamo and Avondale flea markets which are well regulated by the council and have storage facilities. Exorbitant prices charged by transport operators per carrier bag (as noted earlier) have forced vendors to look for storage facilities close to their area of trade. This problem cuts across a significant number of traders at Magaba especially those from Highfield, Dzvireshkwa and Warren Park. In this light, a large number of traders resorted to storing their goods at the nearby Magaba Flats. Goods though are not stored free of charge, as a fee is charged depending on the number of days goods are stored (US\$1 was charged for a night, from sunset to sunrise). Providing storage facilities has become an important source of livelihood for occupants of these (and other) flats. Further probing into storage facilities revealed that it was associated with theft. This was mainly because no form of receipt was issued when leaving goods. Nonetheless, storing goods at the flats is a risk which women traders are prepared to accept because of the otherwise significant transport fees for their carrier bags.

In addition to shelter and storage (and the physical set-up of the market more broadly), there is no ablution facility at the market. Vendors and their customers (and passers-by) relieve themselves at a nearby cemetery. Women vendors expressed discomfort in using the cemetery for this purpose and had advocated for some time for the provision of toilets, if only movable cabin toilets.

5.3.4 Competition

A significant challenge for the women traders is the question of competition. Even since the formation of the Government of National Unity, there has been no meaningful improvement in the Zimbabwean economy and the informal trading sector is swamped by new and old entrants. Most of the informal trading places in Harare are characterized, it seems quite literally at times, by the law of the jungle. Women traders at Magaba expressed, in one way or another, the emergence of market saturation – in fact of over-saturation – which has contributed to the lowering of profits and profit margins. Competition at Magaba was marked by constant fluctuation as, during my field work, I noticed changes to the number of traders on-site on a daily basis; and this also leads to significant irregularity and variation in daily sales. One Magaba interviewee aged thirty noted:

There are so many people coming to Magaba as you can find everything here. But if you are selling similar goods you hardly get cash because customers have a variety to

choose from unless you have regular customers. And if you are selling quality goods, customers will flock to you and you make good money. Most of the people who can afford to do so are now running to supermarkets because all the goods are back in the shelves ... [which is] a situation different from the previous years (In-depth Interview March 2012).

Regular traders complain about suffering severe competition from irregular traders, mainly those people who trade at Magaba market as a complementary source of income.

Month end and weekends are normally the most viable time because customers (at least those who are employed) have buying power after receiving their monthly or weekly salary or wage. This rapid influx into markets after pay-day is caused mainly by the low incomes earned from formal employment and the immediate consumption needs of low income households. Generally, prices for goods at Magaba are lowered by traders when demand decreases, which in turn lowers profit margins during the expected slower days of the month. The ever-increasing competition has also contributed to increased working hours by traders to maximize sales; according to the Magaba survey, 63.3% of traders have increased their working time for this reason. Despite this intense competition, and the stress that it invariably put on women traders given the livelihoods demands of their households, women traders regularly shared information with other traders about where they sourced their goods for resale and at what cost price. This was mainly done among traders with well-established high levels of trust between them.

Competition does not only emanate from within the informal trading sector. As previously mentioned, in recent years there has been some recovery of the formal retail sector in terms of availability and cost of basic commodities in Zimbabwe. Prices in supermarkets and shops are still high compared to the informal sector, though, with high and medium income urbanites frequenting these retail outlets while lower income groups still purchase commodities in the informal sector. The point however is, in the past, shelves in the formal retail sector were empty and commodities were scarce up until 2007 and 2008, and upper and middle income groups until that time often purchased goods in the informal sector. This no longer is taking place, at least on its previous scale, and hence informal traders like at Magaba have lost a significant customer base to a formal economy seeking to get back up on its feet.

5.2.5 Employment

Informal trading for most women at Magaba is their main source of income and, as indicated, it is not necessarily a reliable and sufficient income source. Any prospect of formal employment, despite the low salaries and wages currently earned, may be a more viable option for at least some of these women. But the prospects of this employment are exceedingly limited considering an unemployment rate of 80%. The Government of National Unity, regrettably, has not improved matters as all main economic indicators demonstrate. Employment policies and programmes have had only limited effects. For instance, black empowerment under the leadership of Saviour Kasukuwere (Minister of Youth, Development, Indigenization and Empowerment) has failed to transform the lives of the urban poor. In this regard, one married interviewee highlighted the following:

We were thinking things will get better since 2009 but there is no change; people are still suffering, there are no jobs at all, some companies are retrenching workers and people are surviving in the black [informal] market. We need jobs because black market money is not predictable; one month I get more and the other month I get less. Companies at least pay per month although it is not much; but you are guaranteed that you will at least get something at the end of the month. Without jobs which pay well our lives will be hard because we need better income to sustain our families (In-depth Interview March 2012).

Another vendor aged twenty five shared the same view:

I didn't get a proper job after I finished my school and worse I am an orphan and I am the first born. I have to take care of my siblings but because there are no jobs in the country I can't just sit and starve at our home. The money that I get here is very little, I hardly struggle to pay for fees, rates and groceries; other months I have to rely on my relatives. If I could get a job life could be different ... It's hard ... It's hard....life it's difficult (In-depth Interview March 2012).

In addition, these respondents reported that formal employment was better because it comes with fringe benefits.

A stable income earned per month was what vendors as a whole desired through formal employment. But, because of the absence of employment opportunities, most vendors were satisfied that their informal trading activities gave their households at least some form of financial certainty. Other vendors spoke of their involvement in informal trading in more voluntaristic terms in the light of low levels of remuneration in the formal economy.

One respondent aged thirty eight argued the following:

You know that I have been there in the industries and I was getting very little at the end of each month. I could not even properly take care of my family... I do not want to go back again in the industries. Now [through informal trading] at least I can make more money because I do not just rely on selling mazitye [second hand clothes] but I also do other things and I am getting more money compared to the one I was getting at Lyons [the place of formal employment] ... I would wait for money I can make now in two weeks...so why would I waste my time to go to work than making money in the black market. It's better to work in the black market than industries (In-depth Interview March 2012).

Many Zimbabweans working in the informal sector have been conditioned to believe that sustainable livelihoods are only possible in and through this sector. This is not a denunciation of formal employment *per se*, but reflects the fact that formal employment is currently marked by very low levels of remuneration which inhibit payment of basic necessities like rent, education and health care. This in part leads to informal sector proliferation.

5.2.6 Seasonality

Beyond the many economic challenges noted already (including the fluctuations in sales within a particular month), Magaba traders face seasonal peaks and troughs in sales and this leads to ebbs and flows in livelihood activities. Seasonality affects traders differently (or possibly not at all), depending on the wares in which they are trading, as the sales of certain products dropped or rose during different seasons. One young trader aged twenty seven who sells freezits, cold drinks and homemade ice cream reported the following:

You know when it is cold people do not buy freezits, or anything that is cold or liquid. This is a problem that we have and the business will be very low; at times you change to sell other things like tea with a slice of bread with eggs but there are already people who have established that market so you cannot expect to get much money from that (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Another trader aged thirty seven who sells farm produce noted:

When it is summer, my business flourishes because a lot of people will be buying fruits (mangoes, peaches, avocados) and also green maize cobs and round nuts ... This is the time I get most of my profits (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Some of the traders revealed that they are not directly affected by seasonality because they have a number of income sources besides the one at Magaba, including traders who also relied on remittances and renting-out of rooms.

Traders, who lack diversification, either within their trading activities in terms of commodity inflexibility or outside trading completely, are mostly affected by seasonality. Furthermore, vendors selling durables (such as clothes and braids) expressed different opinions with regard to the existence and effects of seasonality. But most claimed that, during the festive seasons (for instance Easter and Christmas holidays); they experienced high demands while other parts of the year were off-season in this regard.

5.2.7 Disease Outbreak

Health hazards are also a serious challenge and this is largely attributed by the traders to the failure of the city council in Harare to provide and maintain sanitation. Further, the collapse of the health system in Zimbabwe has contributed to failure by the central government to respond effectively in the case of a disease pandemic. In this respect, a cholera outbreak occurred in 2008 and a typhoid outbreak in 2011 and 2012, which impacted on the lives of Magaba traders. The latter outbreak occurred immediately prior to my field work in March 2012. Poor service delivery by Harare city council has led to critical sanitation problems, and regular water cuts and shortages have forced urbanites to scramble for water from unprotected water bodies.

Traders living in particular in Kuwadzana, Mabvuku, Glen Norah and Mbare said they are always on the run in search of scarce clean water and that they are continuously haunted by diarrheal diseases. The city council in fact blames vendors, who are trying to make a living through selling, for the spread of such diseases because of unhygienic trading conditions. Vendors I interviewed greatly appreciated that their operations generated much refuse, such as those who are selling cooked food, fruits and drinks from plastic containers. These require proper disposal to avoid compromising the health of the Magaba community. Generally speaking, though, the council has failed to collect the waste generated from the Magaba market or to pursue proper local sewerage management and this contributes to the proliferation of diseases. One respondent living in the Mbare high density residential area however condemns the state's discourse:

We are tired of being harassed and abused by the police because they are blaming vendors for the spread of the typhoid; there is no way we can cause that, the Council is to blame as residents go for days without water and when water is available it is not clean ... It's better for them to put their house in order and treat water properly to avoid losing lives. Now we live in fear of death; just a stomach ache causes panic and we rush to the nearby clinic to seek medication thinking its typhoid, dysentery or cholera. It is hell living in Mbare. There is no adequate supply of water but we pay our bills (In-depth Interview March 2012).

The crackdown of vendors by the police for apparent health violations has led to reduced income especially for those who sell vegetables, fruits and all cooked foods.

These crackdowns though also affected formal supermarkets. In the light of the typhoid outbreak, Harare city health services Director Dr. Prosper Chonzi announced that “the supermarkets and vendors have since been barred from selling fresh, raw and cooked foods” (quoted in *Disaster News* 26 July, 2012:1). However respondents argued that they always seek to evade the city authorities and police because of the importance of ongoing trading activities for their livelihoods. But many traders themselves are directly affected by the outbreaks, including typhoid, and this meant reduced days trading and reduced income. Furthermore they would have to get medication from private doctors (who charged US\$20 per consultation) but financially they could not afford to do so.

Based on this section, it is clear that a range of economic challenges impinge on the livelihood strategies of women at Magaba. At the same time, the increasing politicization of urban spaces in Zimbabwe – including Harare – has contributed to the undermining of urban livelihoods. The following section explores the practices and activities of the state in controlling and shaping the livelihoods of poor people, specifically women traders at Magaba, in Harare.

5.3 Politicization of Urban Space

The political polarization between ZANU-PF and MDC is in large part to blame for the politicization of Harare which remains a hotly-contested urban space. Needless to say, the current politicization has shifted goalposts with regard to day-to-day governance. City authorities represented by law-enforcement agents including Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) and Municipal Police (MP) have been highly involved in harassing the public

including informal sector operators. State militia also brutalizes the urban populace who are seen to be in opposition to ZANU-PF. In addition, those traders engaged in cross border activities have to deal with customs officials.

5.3.1 Harassment by Police

The ZRP and MP are involved in joint or solo operations in urban areas against traders and others, despite the fact that officially the MP are responsible for enforcing municipal by-laws. Some urban residents believe that these operations are politically motivated in seeking to regain power over an urban populace which tends to support the opposition MDC (International Crisis Group 2005). Others believe that the informal sector has congested the city and hence police operations are genuinely motivated to enforce law and order. In this context, the pros and cons of Operation *Murambatsvina* was the subject of intense debate in urban Zimbabwe. The MDC critique of this and other smaller operations is that they are “designed to destroy the party’s urban support base, relocate the people to the rural areas where they would be under the sway of ruling party-aligned chiefs, and forestall popular protests by the poor as the food crisis deepened” (Maroleng 2005: 3). Related to this, a local newspaper, *The Zimbabwe Independent* (29, September 2006) reported that vendors from opposition strongholds in Mbare, and Highfields were threatened with withdrawal of vending permits if they missed President Mugabe’s homecoming at the Harare International Airport after one of his foreign visits.

Periodic action against Harare vendors takes place because of the failure on the part of traders to secure a municipal license. But, at Magaba, those vendors with legal licenses to trade are at times harassed too by the police; in their case, this is because they are failing to trade at an officially-designated place. Some of these designated places are not strategically positioned in terms of attracting customers and were considered unprofitable areas by Magaba traders (licensed or otherwise). Generally, vendors knew that paying a license was a prerequisite for trading, but acquiring a license was seen not only as costly but also as a time-consuming and bureaucratic process. Women traders at Magaba were not opposed to the payment of a license. They simply claimed that the hawker’s license is too expensive (US\$20 per month) and that the profit they generate per day is barely enough to cater for immediate and basic household needs; paying the license is economic-suicide and thus they opt to trade illegally.

Some writers on Zimbabwe argue that harassment (and even the threat of harassment) by police is a critical obstacle to the realization of fruitful livelihood strategies (Mombeshora 2004, Chirisa 2007, Muzvidziwa 2000). In the case of Magaba, some interviewees indicated that they can be raided up to four times during one day by different police officers. According to my survey, 39.6% of current Magaba traders argue that police raids interfere significantly with their livelihoods at Magaba. Vendors were disheartened by the police operations. Inside the police stations, vendors reported that they were brutalized and tortured with baton sticks. One married trader spoke about her experiences in this regard:

The riot police is ruthless, they arrest us, throw our young babies into their pikidhasi [pickup trucks]; my baby and I once sustained a injury but where am I to report; ... nowhere because it is the police that is doing it.... We are tired of running, they just need to stop ... We are not treated as people (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Women traders seem to live in unceasing fear of being subjected to harassment and excessive force when arrested by police. This also includes the loss of dignity. In this regard, some traders indicated that they experienced sexual harassment and abusive and humiliating language from the police. Some women vendors claim that there is a gender bias in the arrests because, overall, women are mostly arrested; they claim that this occurs because women – unlike men – rarely offer any form of resistance to their arrest. Some of the respondents label the MP as a toothless bulldog as they fail to arrest men and target women. For whatever reason, and they have many, when the police arrive the women vendors at Magaba run for cover to evade arrest.

The concerns of the women traders were reiterated by another married trader:

The police are a problem, they confiscate our goods and sometimes if you are caught they go with you to the police station and you have to pay a fine and paying a fine is no guarantee that you will get the confiscated goods back. Sometimes when they take your goods they can surrender them to the police station or they take them to their houses. Once you lose your goods to the police there is no room to recover them unless you pay them chebasa [bribe]; otherwise you will lose profit for days. It is better sometimes to give them a bribe than losing everything that one has. Otherwise the family will have to starve for days (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Women traders at Magaba experienced the loss of their goods, payment of fines and of course loss of business and income. Many traders highlighted that the goods confiscated by the

police, especially clothes and foodstuffs, were not surrendered at the police station by the officers concerned as they took the goods straight to their houses. Furthermore, after paying fines (normally U\$5) at the station, no attempt is made by the police to return the impounded wares. Vendors complained that it was difficult to retrieve their goods from the police simply because they are not issued receipts when goods are impounded. The failure to retrieve their goods greatly affected traders' immediate trading activities particularly if the goods in storage elsewhere are depleted.

Besides the party political conflict (between ZANU-PF and MDC), the politicization of urban space also exists because of resistance to town planning by-laws which hamper vending. Opposing arguments exemplify the relations between vendors and the police, and vendors are resisting by fighting fire with fire to stop police arrests; this resistance has led to some serious clashes. *The Herald* (January 12, 2012), a state-supporting newspaper in Zimbabwe reported in early 2012 the following:

Police and vendors fought running battles forcing shops in the First Street Mall and Nelson Mandela to close, the stone throwing vendors smashed windowpanes of police post. The police had visited the area following the assault of a member of force by the vendors. Police Chief Superintendent Oliver Mandipaka confirmed that there are some political activists masquerading as vendors who have become so confrontational each time the police want to enforce the law. The police were armed with teargas, canisters and rifles while patrolling, violence erupted after vendors' resisted arrest and pelted the police with stones.

As the quotation highlights, the police (as with the state more broadly) constantly assert that vendor opposition to local by-laws has party-political motivations behind it.

Besides trading operations directly, the local police in Harare threaten urban-based farmers under the slogan 'NO CULTIVATION'. It is believed that the majority of people living in high-density areas in Harare engage in urban agriculture (including women traders at Magaba, as highlighted earlier), and they often do so illegally on un-used pieces of land. Harare regulatory instruments do not allow cultivation on open urban spaces and, towards the start of the rainy season in October, banners reading 'NO CULTIVATION' are placed in all areas which are known to be prone to urban cultivation (see Photo 5.1). Nevertheless, these signs are regularly ignored and municipal by-laws resisted, as witnessed by the maize crop behind the sign in the photo.

Photo 5.1: NO CULTIVATION



Source: Masiya and Mazuruse (2007)

Urban agriculture makes a significant contribution to many urban livelihoods in Zimbabwe in terms of food supplementation and security. Women traders at Magaba cry foul, as they claim that there is abundant vacant land throughout Harare which has not been developed over many years by city authorities yet urbanites are barred from transforming this unused land into productive land. One widow, who relies chiefly on urban agriculture by cultivating maize, said the following:

We're not allowed to farm in the open spaces but if the land is not used we just farm the land. I still remember two years ago the municipal police slashed my maize and that year I harvested nothing and I had to rely on buying mealie meal, a thing which I had not done a for long time. Sometimes the police wait until harvest time then they can set fire to maize. Police give silly reasons [for destroying maize crops] like fields are hide outs for thieves (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Crop slashing by the ZRP and MP is institutionalized. The accounts by Magaba women demonstrate that the cultivation of municipal land without authorization is not done out of ignorance of existing by-laws or because of some will (party-political or otherwise) to disobey urban by-laws, but it is done out of sheer economic necessity with full knowledge of the risks involved. Given the possible benefits derived from urban agriculture, it is commonsensical for Magaba women to cultivate the land despite the potential penalties and losses.

5.3.2 Militia Terrorizing Vendors

Besides the police and their attacks on informal traders and urban farming, militia groups linked to ZANU-PF have been actively involved in politicizing urban spaces by disciplining the supposedly unruly populace. In this sub-section I focus specifically on a group called *Chipangano*. Members of ZANU-PF's youth wing (under the banner of *Chipangano*) have been terrorising urbanites including informal sector workers. These youth are renowned for violence, intimidation, looting and disrupting livelihoods of the urban people who earn a living through their ingenuity and creativity (albeit often illegally). For instance, this militia group obstructed the construction of a \$5US million Bill and Melinda Gates-financed housing project in Mbare and prevented a proposed \$1US million scheme for the construction of a filling station and a food court (*Standard* 29 January- February 4 2012). Additionally the group has been involved in a dispute with Easipark (a South African parking firm) marshals responsible for parking space, claiming that *Upfumi Kuvadiki*¹ allows them to control earnings emanating from the parking space.

Markets such as Magaba, Mupedzanhamo and Mbare Musika have been the sites for *Chipangano* activity. In the case of Magaba, these activities are of great importance as they impede the livelihood activities of vendors. The majority of Magaba vendors spoke openly about this group, saying that the group is a law-unto-itself; traders are in constant fear of the group especially during and after elections. When the group visits the general area, trading comes to a complete halt not only at Magaba but at nearby markets and formal trading enterprises. Everyone is forced to attend rallies at the open grounds close to Rufaro Stadium in Mbare. In-depth discussions with vendors also brought to the fore current anxieties and fears because of impending national elections including for the state presidency. Aside from election times, vendors also mentioned that when a national hero dies they are forced by *Chipangano* to attend the funeral service at Stodart Hall in Mbare and the burial too at the national shrine or Hero's Acre. Such activities posed a challenge to livelihood strategies for the traders due to the fact that income is lost during the time when vendors are forced to discontinue trading. One respondent indicated:

Who doesn't know thugs from Chipango when they come here they leave everyone in shock they can turn down the tables and destroy stalls. I still recall a number of

¹ *Upfumi kuvadiki* means wealth to the young people, and entails a campaign for black empowerment movement led by Saviour Kasukuwere.

incidents. In 2008 they came chanting revolutionary songs brutalizing vendors asking for party cards and who they were going to vote for in the harmonized elections. Just last month [3 March] they came forcing everyone to join the anti-sanction march and we have to abandon our business and march with them. Everyone is afraid of Chipangano (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

The group has committed many acts of violence against traders without any repercussions.

5.3.3 Customs

If police and militia activity were not enough, there has been a concerted effort to control and undercut the activities of cross border traders who are a major source of goods for informal traders in urban Harare. The Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZimRA) has been at the forefront of this endeavor through increasing duties on imported goods and at times confiscating certain goods.

As highlighted earlier, cross border traders have played a crucial role in the availability of otherwise scarce goods in Zimbabwe (Chani 2008). ZimRA has disrupted the flow of goods into the country through these traders and has in fact made cross border trading less and less profitable thereby minimizing its extent. Beitbridge border post into South Africa is one of the busiest border posts and is well-known for strictness by customs officials as well as corruption among these officials. According to the interviewees in my study, ZimRA customs officials accept bribes from Chinese and Indian retailers importing goods while sometimes intentionally delaying or even blocking clearance by small-scale African local traders.

In this light, the Magaba women also pay bribes to ensure that they are not searched by officials, arguing that this lowers costs as customs duty is not paid. Women are not apprehensive or nervous about these transactions, as they are part of everyday business. Cross border traders arrange for the payment of the bribe at the border post by the transporter, on behalf of the passengers. One of the respondents explained the process:

I hate that place [the border post] because you can spend more than eight hours just waiting for clearance while foreigners just come spend one hour and they are gone... I wonder what kind of system they use. Bus operators collect money while you are still far away from the border to quicken up clearance process; without that you rot at the border... We just have to do that otherwise they tighten screws and confiscate our goods (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Delays are not a new phenomenon at the border post, plus they worsen during the festival holidays (Christmas and Easter times). It may take up to twelve hours just to have your passport stamped at the border. Often people wait for hours without the queue moving even an inch. Lengthy queues are now the order of the day, both leaving Zimbabwe and returning, and they seem to be getting longer. One unmarried cross border trader reported:

These days it is worse; it is a habit by the ZimRA guys that cross border traders should spend more than five hours before we are cleared. This affects us sometimes when you have plans in Johannesburg. When you get to Johannesburg it will be already late in the night. And we have to spend money on accommodation and food (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

During festive seasons chaos is rampant at the border and the police try to enforce discipline by insulting traders. This concurs with the study by Karolia (2009) who argues that travelers from Zimbabwe to South Africa are often subjected to police brutality at the Beitbridge border post. Interviewees in my study confirmed that this is not unique to the Zimbabwean side but also exists on the South Africa side of the border where the police use *sjamboks* (or whips) to control the crowds. Some traders indicate that they have lost their belongings as they run for cover when police insult and harass people.

ZimRA recently introduced steep tariffs which leave no room for profit. On that note, ZIMDEV (15 January 2012) reports:

Importers of blankets, footwear, refrigerators, stoves and other electrical gadgets now pay 40% of the purchasing price plus a flat rate of US\$5 per unit as duty. Government is also now charging between 10% and 25% duty on basic commodities such as maize meal, cooking oil, potato chips, baked beans and mixed fruit jam. The consignment of goods is also charged according to the weight of the goods, each kilo being charged at \$3.

This is a heavy blow for cross border traders, as one divorced Magaba woman highlighted:

The duty is just too much. You cannot make profits because most of the money remains with ZimRA and when we sell the goods at local markets we negotiate pricing and at the end of the day we get very little. Coming back from South Africa to stock the goods now becomes difficult. The government should consider the fact that our lives and that of our families depend on cross border trading, but now that they are

charging us exorbitantly how are we supposed to make a living (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

Magaba traders were deeply disgruntled by the introduction of the new tariff system and emphasized the importance of cross border trading as a life-line for trading activities at Magaba. Many traders have had their wares confiscated in the event that they failed to pay the required duty, and hence the reversion to the payment of bribes to escape custom duties. When this is not feasible, smuggling of goods into the country (in one way or another, preventing detection of goods at the border post) becomes the order of the day.

Cross border women traders have been deeply stigmatized. Media reports have always characterized them as prostitutes, notably because of relationships established with long haulage truck drivers. It is reported that women engage in sexual transactions with these drivers; by doing so they avoid transport costs and they are able to carry bulk goods which they could not do via buses. Magaba women, because of this stigma, revealed that their spouses are no longer comfortable with cross border trading as a livelihood strategy; though they claim that allegations of sexual transactions are baseless. Nevertheless, along with increased duties and general harassment at border posts, cross border trading has been made more difficult because of this.

In this and the previous section, I have explored the various challenges (economic and political) which Magaba women face and which hinder or disrupt their livelihood activities. However, these women are not passive victims of the machination or of structural constraints, as they respond to these challenges through a number of coping mechanisms and this highlights their agency and ingenuity. The following section highlights these mechanisms.

5.4 Coping Mechanisms

In light of the economic and political challenges that vendors at Magaba face in trying to achieve fruitful livelihood strategies, they have adopted coping mechanisms (of which five are discussed below). The findings of this study therefore reveal that vendors are not submissive victims.

5.4.1 Addressing Politicization

Women vendors adopt a range of strategies in confronting the political challenges (or politicization), given that they operate outside of municipal by-laws and regulations and are subject to police harassment (Chirisa 2007, Hlohla 2008). Firstly, they utilize an ‘early rise and late night’ strategy. In this regard, 24.5% of the sampled women vendors reported to be utilizing this strategy (see Table 5.1). For instance, vendors rise early in the morning to start operations before the police officers start their operations against vendors. To further avoid arrests and harassment by the authorities, they engage in nocturnal vending. This simply means that vendors may at times start operating in the early evening when the police have gone off duty. Respondents claimed that evening time is also conducive because workers will be going home and passing near the market, and they can market their wares without fear of arrest. This practice of nocturnization cut across all the vendors (green and white collar vendors). The findings of this study are similar to the findings of Chirisa (2007) which uncovered that, after police officers report off-duty, vendors lay their wares out openly along the pavements of the Central Business District in Harare.

Secondly, because police operations are mainly characterized by confiscation of goods, many vendors at Magaba have started to use a ‘deceptive commodity and merchant hiding’ strategy (Chirisa 2009). Instead of displaying all the goods that are traded, vendors have maximized the use of a hiding strategy; 26.6% of the women vendors utilized this strategy. Vendors reported that each item of the goods they trade in is not displayed in order to avoid losing all their goods (rather than simply the few items on display) when the police arrive. For instance vendors selling clothes will just display one or two items and automatically customers will be aware that the vendor sells clothes. This strategy has enabled vendors to more easily run away when the police arrive and has resulted in the confiscation and loss of fewer goods.

Thirdly, women vendors at Magaba have started using signals to alert each other to run for cover when the police suddenly appear. Whistling has become the major signal to alert other vendors; 18.4 % of the sampled women reported to be using this strategy.

Table 5.1: Coping Mechanisms against Politicization

Coping mechanism	Frequency	Percentage %
Early rise and late keep strategy	12	24.5
Using signals to alert each other	9	18.4
Deceptive commodity and merchant hiding strategy	13	26.5
Bribery	13	26.5
Change of operating place	2	4.1
Total	49	100

Source: Survey Questionnaire, March 2012

Fourthly a significant number (26.5%) reported to be bribing police when they were caught to avoid arrest, payment of fines and confiscation of goods. Bribery is presumably based on some sort of cost-benefit analysis on the part of the traders. In fact, they claim that it is better to lose a small amount of money (the bribe) than to lose all their goods or at least those on display. Lastly, as indicated earlier in this chapter, traders involved in urban farming continue to pursue their agricultural activities illegally; they refuse to abide by the council's 'no cultivation' slogan and programme.

These creative responses (and indeed resistance) to the political challenges tend to occur directly within the market sphere. Responses to the economic challenges, which I now set out, are mainly found within the domestic household sphere.

5.4.2 Addressing Economic Challenges

The insufficient income earned currently by Magaba women traders has led to adjustments in household management primarily by searching for new avenues of saving the little income that is earned (that is, by reducing expenditure). For instance, my study revealed that most households are now limiting their household expenditure to strictly the basics (basic foodstuffs, rent and education primarily). This includes purchasing the cheapest foodstuffs available. Also, fewer meals per day (and smaller portions per person) were frequently reported by the respondents. The same meal (namely *sadza*, or boiled mealie meal, and boiled vegetables) is repeated over and over again. Furthermore, to cut on transport costs, walking to the Magaba market place (where livelihoods were carried out) was reported by those who resided reasonably close to the Magaba market. Additionally, women looked for cheaper

houses in the high density areas to reduce rental costs, with some families now living in one room divided into two with a curtain. Sending children to less expensive schools especially in the rural areas was another attempt to overcome the challenge of inadequate income.

Magaba women, as noted previously, generally do not have access to credit for a variety of reasons. However they now at times borrow money from relatives, friends and neighbours. In cushioning the insufficiency of income the majority of vendors have also resorted to savings groups (or *ma-round*). This type of social network, which exists beyond the immediate circle of women traders at Magaba and entails more neighbourhood-based groups, enables access to cash or in-kind foodstuffs on a reasonably regular basis in the context of the growing uncertainties of informal trading operations. This does not increase overall household income but does allow for large lump sums at frequent intervals. Aside from the *ma-rounds*, women vendors have tried to diversify their sources of livelihood income even further (beyond the diversification described earlier in the thesis) by for instance having trading stalls scattered at different locations selling different goods and engaging in part-time employment as domestic workers. In some incidences, children have been asked by their parents to abscond from classes on certain occasions to seek casual work to supplement household income. Quick cash was also acquired through the selling of assets and this was done normally at unreasonably low prices because of the urgent situation. One cross border woman revealed the following:

Sometimes you do not have any choice because when you do not have any money and you need money urgently you just have to dispose your property. I still remember I had to sell my two door fridge to get money for collecting a passport. Knowing the importance of having a passport I was left with no choice but it worked to my advantage. Right now I can go to Mozambique and hoard clothes. (In-depth Interview, March 2012).

5.5 Conclusion

The findings of this chapter indicate that constructing livelihoods at Magaba is not any easy road but one marked by significant challenges. On the one hand, there are economic challenges, such as competition, shelter and storage problems and seasonality. These have negatively impacted on the day-to-day running of trading activities at Magaba. On the other hand, politicization of the urban space is another huge challenge. Criminalization of vending activities in Harare has contributed to severe suffering of many vendors in the hands of the

police. Hence women have lost their goods and at times have fines without repossessing the goods. In this regard, harassment by police and militia undermine the productivity of livelihoods at best and are inhuman at worst. As a result, households continue to be trapped in vicious cycles of poverty and vulnerability with which they are barely able to cope. In the concluding chapter to the thesis, these challenges will be related back to the sustainable livelihoods framework.

CHAPTER SIX: HOUSEHOLD ASSETS, LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES AND INTRA-HOUSEHOLD RELATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter explored a set of challenges encountered by women at Magaba. These economic and political challenges influence the income-generating activities of these urban women traders. This current chapter seeks to understand and analyze the different capital assets to which urban women have access (and control over) in constructing livelihoods as well as the livelihood outcomes which emerge through their livelihood activities. Asset endowments are deemed to play a central function in allowing a household to make a means of survival or to maintain its material well-being at differing levels above survival (Ellis 2000). The chapter, because of the gender focus of the thesis, also considers the domestic sphere (notably intra-household relations) to determine how this sphere shapes the lives and livelihoods of urban women traders at Magaba.

This chapter has three main sections. The following section (section two) examines the household assets used by the urban traders in pursuit of various livelihood strategies, namely, natural, financial, human, social and physical capital. Each capital is addressed separately though they are interrelated. Section three discusses the livelihood outcomes of women at Magaba. In this section the salient themes include increased income, improved lifestyles, improved food security, reduced vulnerability and adaptable and resilient livelihoods. The last section (section four) of this chapter focuses on intra-household dimensions along gender lines. The socio-economic and political downturn in urban Zimbabwe has contributed to a shift in intra-household and gender relations in most urban households.

6.2 Household Assets

To reiterate, a livelihood asset or capital is “a stock of financial, human, social, physical and natural capital resources acquired, developed and improved and transferred across generations. It generates flows of consumption as well as additional stock” (Ford Foundation 2004:9). In this respect, Ellis (2000:31) argues that assets are “the basic building blocks upon which households are able to undertake production, engage in labour markets, and participate in reciprocal exchange with other households” (Ellis 2000:31). The different assets – which are critical to household sustainability – are not discrete and separate resources available to households but are interrelated in a variety of ways (DFID 1999). The amount and type of

assets, and their interconnections, are critical to household sustainability particularly given the vulnerabilities and shocks which households regularly face. Retention of assets during times of crises normally facilitates the resilience of households over time and allows them to weather the storm so to speak. In this context, I look at the livelihood assets of women at Magaba and how these contributed to the generation and maintenance of meaningful livelihoods.

6.2.1 Natural Capital

Natural capital is the most limited of all capitals in urban areas and refers to the natural resources available, possessed or deployed in the construction of livelihoods (Scoones 2000: 7). According to interviewees at Magaba, natural capital in the specific form of arable fields, gardening and poultry was significant for the survival of households. However, because of by-laws in Harare, women vendors unanimously noted that they have no legal right to use public lands for agriculture or for cutting down trees for fuel. City ‘fathers’ frequently warn against abuse of natural capital but these restrictions have fallen on deaf ears and Magaba women continue to use public lands despite the many risks.

The downward spiral of the Zimbabwean economy in recent years has contributed to a number of challenges including food insecurity among most urban households. To curtail such challenges, urbanites intensified the utilization of natural capital through urban agriculture, as both a source of income and for food production (and thus home consumption) thereby reducing household expenditures on food. This was the case with 84.1% of Magaba women surveyed, involving small pieces of land for growing maize and sweet potatoes. Maize constitutes about 90% of the meals in Magaba households, for porridge and sadza. Among the respondents who were residing in Magaba, Mbare, Glen Norah C and Sunningdale, they also farmed in the wetlands of Mukuvisi River. The arable fields were watered mostly with natural water during rainy seasons.

Women traders pointed out that yields from their arable fields were largely affected by the lack of inputs. Theft and conflict with city authorities is also significant in fields far from the place of residence, but harvests in these fields were greater than on other lands closer to their places of residences where land was scarce and more tightly controlled by the municipality. One widow expressed frustration in this regard:

Land is very limited my friend because there are so many houses being built. I lost my land when they allocated my small piece of land [kamunda] to these in-fill houses and I had to look for another vacant land. In that year I did not grow anything; I had to buy maize for sadza and my expenses were so many (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Another respondent though accentuated the importance of natural capital (land), saying:

For a single mother who is poor like me land is vital to work on and create livelihoods. I am very strong when it comes to working in the fields because I was raised in a rural village but one major challenge is that the land is not enough to work on and sustain my family. Some people rent land but for me I am not prepared to share the crops with the owner of that land (In-depth interview, March 2012).

The interviewee expressed the inadequacy of land; nevertheless the significance of land in urban spaces cannot be overlooked as it has contributed to food security at household and individual levels.

With regard to actual returns or yields, land (in a good year) enabled Magaba farmers to harvest between six to ten bags of maize, which was capable of providing food for six to eight months depending on household size. This becomes critical when basic foodstuffs (notably maize) are otherwise unavailable or scarce, which was often the case during the years 2007 to 2009, when increasing food prices for basic commodities were far beyond the reach of poor urbanites living in high density areas as Magaba women do. By and large interviewees agreed that, without the land used for agriculture, their household would have fallen deeper into poverty. There is good reason to believe, based on my Magaba study, that urban agriculture is becoming increasingly important in urban Zimbabwe.

Gardening also takes place and it seems to be proliferating in recent years despite earlier claims that it has limited viability (Rakodi 1999). It takes place on small pieces of land in the backyards of residences or on nearby unattended lots and roadsides, and is used primarily for home consumption though any surplus is sold. Gardening has a number of advantages compared to field cultivation including accessibility and ease of maintenance (including use of manure) and guarding against theft. It is also practiced over the entire year unlike the arable fields which kick start with the advent of the rainy season. A number of leafy vegetables are grown for consuming with sadza (such as *covo* and *tsunga*), as well as cabbage, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, onions and carrots. In addition, maize is grown in home gardens to eat as green maize. Magaba gardeners preferred to use cow dung and chicken

droppings as fertilizer because they are less expensive than inorganic fertilizer, and no external hiring of labour is necessary because gardening relies exclusively on household labour. Gardening activities though have been made problematic by unreliable water supply and unaffordable water charges (particularly during the dry season when municipal water is used). Water rationing has led to two or three days a week without water over extended periods. However, like field crop cultivation, gardening was seen by Magaba traders as enhancing food security at household level.

Two women who were owners of the houses they resided in indicated that they were keeping poultry (broilers and traditional African chickens called 'road-runners'). Urban by-laws limit the number of chickens which are to be kept at homesteads; however, there are no regular surveillance of this so people ignore the regulations and keep large numbers of fowl. The two women were not able to estimate the number of poultry they were keeping. Keeping fowls served a number of purposes. Chicken droppings were used as manure in the gardens and, at times, they were sold to neighbours at cost of US\$1 a bucket. Broiler chickens, for meat, were raised mainly for selling to gain extra income (at a price of US\$5-8 depending on the size). The road-runner chickens were mainly for eggs for home consumption and selling in times of need.

6.2.2 Physical Capital

Physical capital includes the basic infrastructure and producer goods needed to sustain livelihoods such as affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation and clean affordable energy (Kollmair and Juli 2002:7). Physical assets are commoditized and, because of this, urbanites access these assets or resources at a fee. At times these resources (notably water and electricity) are unavailable because of unaffordability. The type of access to physical capital enhances or undercuts urban livelihoods, as is shown below.

Access to transport enables movement of urbanites to places of work and residence (linked to financial capital) and for social networking (linked to social capital) (Ellis 2000:33), as illustrated in the case of Magaba. Roads in Harare are tarred although they have been deteriorating over the years due to limited or no maintenance. One married respondent emphasized the importance of physical capital (namely, transport) by saying the following:

I sell vegetables. I used to hoard vegetables from Mbare Musika, Gazaland and so on. But because of the road access I can go to Beatrice (Mutasa farm) [south of Harare] and collect vegetables at a cheaper price. This in turn lowers my buying price as well as increasing my profits when I sell the vegetables. This is better than buying from local markets with inflated prices (In-depth interview, March 2012).

No women vendor had her own private vehicle and all vendors therefore relied heavily on public transport or rented vehicles for transporting themselves and their goods for sale. My discussion in the previous chapter highlighted though the many problems women traders experience with transport, particularly in relation to affordability and how this increases their input costs and lowers profit margins.

Housing, if owned, is an important asset which can ease poverty. Housing is the centre of household activity and is crucial to social reproduction as well as, at times, to food security and income-generation even if not owned (for example, through vegetable gardens and room rentals). Housing delivery in Harare has failed to cope up with the rising demand; further, building costs have sky-rocketed such that the majority of people have nowhere to call their 'own home'. Most of the houses built in high density areas are of low quality built from inferior building materials. The majority (87.8%) of the women vendors does not own a house but depend on rental accommodation in high density areas or peri-urban areas. Six women (12.2%) vendors own houses in different high density areas after acquiring them through inheritance. Among these six women vendors, two women own the houses themselves while husbands of the remaining four own the houses.

Some women vendors have joined housing cooperatives (like Tongogara at White Cliff Farm) but these cooperatives have faced various viability challenges including political interference. Other women vendors (and their husbands) depend upon rental accommodation (87.8%) but they indicated that renting many rooms was beyond their capacity (with one room costing US\$60-80 per month in high density areas). In some instances it was reported that children slept in kitchens or sitting rooms. In extreme cases, where rooms and space were particularly scarce, children were forced to go and sleep at the houses of relatives or friends. One respondent reported that a single room is partitioned by a curtain so that parents sleep on one side and children on the other side. The insecurity of housing for Magaba vendors, particularly for those who rent accommodation (and hence pay rent monthly), places

enormous pressure and strain on them in terms of the generation of adequate income from their trading activities.

In recent years, urban households in Zimbabwe have experienced serious service delivery problems at their places of residence (or houses). Water supply in particular has become very erratic and unpredictable. Local newspapers have constantly reported on the failure of Harare City Council to provide not only regular supplies of water but clean and safe water. There have been cholera and typhoid outbreaks in Harare over the past five years. NGOs like World Vision have distributed water tablets to purify the water when necessary. The majority of the sampled women vendors were disheartened by the shortage and quality of water. Women have to literally hunt for water and sometimes crisscross local roads in desperate search for it. Again, NGOs have intervened by drilling boreholes in high density areas in Harare, which also lessens the costs of water for low income households. But the location of these boreholes favours some households and not others. An example is in Kuwadzana where one borehole is situated at Kuwadzana Shopping Centre and it services people residing in Kuwadzana 5, 6 and 7; some residents walk up to 1.5 kilometers to fetch water. Like rural areas in Zimbabwe, women in urban areas continue to bear the domestic responsibility of ensuring access to water for their households. These full-time vendors, who already have at times increased their working hours to maximize sales, bear the brunt of water problems including the sheer time and energy involved in fetching it if need be.

The supply of electricity is critical to economic growth (GoZ 1996:5). With regard to electricity provision to houses in contemporary Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe Electricity Distribution Company has faced serious financial constraints in terms of maintenance of the distribution network and the importation of sufficient electricity to supply residential areas (and industries). All urban residential areas (from high density to low density areas) have been subjected to what is termed 'load shedding' (that is, interrupted supplies of electricity on a regular basis). Women traders at Magaba explained that they go for days without electricity but at the end of month their tariffs are very high. Most of the women have significant arrears in payments which have resulted in disconnection of electricity supply. One respondent had this to say:

Electricity charges are very high these days. I do not know why because we rarely have electricity in our homes but at the end of every month the charges are very high; yet we can only have electricity three hours a day...ZESA [the electricity parastatal] should

make correct meter charges otherwise people one day people will boycott paying the bills (In-depth interview, March 2012).

Magaba traders, like other urban residents, have turned to alternative sources of energy including paraffin, gas and firewood. Such sources of energy however are becoming increasingly expensive and the time expended in purchasing and using them is an inconvenience for the already-burdened women traders.

Social infrastructure and services are very crucial in pursuing urban livelihoods. Certain social services, such as public health facilities, are widely scattered in Harare's residential areas and they are stretched in terms of the breadth of their spatial coverage. Health care centers (both hospitals and clinics), because of the collapsing health care system in the country, also lack sufficiently qualified and experienced health care workers. The better equipped and staffed centers are privately-owned and they service the middle and low density urban areas. For this reason, private health centers like Baines, Avenues, East View and Wilkins (in Harare) are unaffordable to high density residents like the Magaba traders. In most high density areas (such as Dzivaresekwa and Glen Norah) there is normally one City Council-run polyclinic servicing a large population. Even for these municipal-run health centers, processes of commodification have taken place, notably in the form of user fees. Respondents repeatedly complained about the health system:

We have a lot of clinics and hospitals but they are not affordable, and those which are affordable lack nurses and medication. They are poor, especially government hospitals; patients are dying on benches before being attended. In private hospitals they don't attend you if you do not have money. They are after money and not people's lives (In-depth interview, March 2012)

Such words signify disillusionment with the state of the health sector in the country, with low income groups like the Magaba traders experiencing the brunt of the systemic collapse. The Magaba women, at the same time, bear the main responsibility for household care including health care of household members (notably of their children). Similar deep concerns about education for their children were expressed by the Magaba women as they sought to prioritize the educational future of their children and struggled to pay school fees.

6.2.3 Financial Capital

Financial capital is absolutely critical because it refers to the financial resources which underpin the very existence of any household. It regularly takes the form of income derived

from the deployment or sale of labour power (Twigg and Bhatt 1998), which is used for the accumulation of physical assets for the household and for the consumption of goods and services. This pursuit of financial capital often leads to the diversification of livelihood strategies as a central component of a sustainable household (Carney 1998), which is clearly evident in my study of Magaba women traders. Different categories of cash income were identified in this study. These, as discussed earlier, include petty trading, remittances, renting out rooms, urban agriculture and cross border trading. Despite the fact that most of these sources of income are unreliable, Magaba women have been able to pull diverse resources together under stressful and burdensome conditions to keep their 'heads above water'. One woman noted this in relation to the difficulties in obtaining employment in the formal sector:

Nowadays jobs are difficult to get and I can't remain at home and do nothing. Finally, I decided to join vending here at Magaba. I now earn money to fulfill my family needs and I think vending is better than staying at home and starving (In-depth interview, March 2012).

This interviewee clearly indicates that financial capital through vending is a viable option in the face of the economic crisis facing urban households and their livelihoods.

Vending as a source of income is critical because the monetized character of urban space requires every individual or household to have sufficient income to achieve a decent and dignified living and to avoid sinking deeper into poverty. Although not conclusive, it does seem that the stabilization of prices of commodities in Zimbabwe since the emergence of dollarization has in turn stabilized – insofar as it can be stabilized – vending income, though Magaba vendors have simultaneously lost many of their middle and upper class customers to supermarkets and stores no longer characterized by the absence or scarcity of basic commodities. The financial capital generated through vending, for most Magaba women vendors, clearly remains limited and, for this reason, they seek to supplement their income through other sources or to manage their income in such a way to have lump sums available periodically (through informal money rotating groups such as *ma-rounds* and burial societies). Savings are not possible such that income accumulated for future investments has been sidelined. The Magaba women, unlike their husbands if married, plough all their income back into their households to cater for immediate household necessities, with a particular concern for food, clothing, education and health of their children.

6.2.4 Social Capital

Besides the resources discussed already, social capital involving reciprocity and trust is important to Magaba women in constructing and maintaining their urban livelihoods. Time and time again, the women have relied on other traders, kinship, relatives and friends during every-day and more troublesome episodes in their lives. This is in addition to any forms of reciprocity which exist within the household. Some (and only some) wives and husbands act collectively in pooling their financial capital (income notably) and in making joint decisions about expenditure and consumption patterns; and sometimes households work as a team in the provision of labour for urban agriculture or in helping out at the Magaba market. But there are many inter-household relations of reciprocity or at least social networks, often very informal, which the Magaba women establish or join which are mutually beneficial. For instance, the Magaba traders share information on sourcing goods for resale and suitable pricing of commodities, and they become part of savings clubs with other traders and their neighbours. Hence, these networks tend to be focused on the sustainability of financial capital as the bedrock of household existence, a point concluded also by Narayan and Pritchett (1999) in their study of Tanzania.

Women vendors also cited though that social capital had non-instrumentalist dimensions and was sometimes based on unadulterated affection and emotional support. They therefore simply shared their feelings and emotions when faced with crises (such as the death of a loved one) or related difficult experiences they encountered in pursuing household livelihood activities. Though the following quotation does refer to material gains from such connections, it is clear that relationships between women traders, despite their competitive basis, have an emotive element to them:

When my husband was hospitalized I did not have any option, not one of his relatives was willing to support me but I turned to my friends (vendors) for help and they collected money to help me get medication for my husband. Some could buy me food to give him during hospital visits (morning, afternoon and evening visits) (In-depth interview, March 2012).

The cut-throat character of informal trading at Magaba is in some ways left behind at Magaba and vendors were able to transcend their otherwise competitive relationship by expressing empathy and support for each other. In this light Meagher (2006:554) maintains, as noted earlier, that “where states and markets are weak, social networks offer an informal mechanism of economic co-ordination capable of filling gaps in formal institutional provision

and regulatory capacity”. While this may be true, the argument needs further qualification by indicating “where states and markets are weak *and where women are involved*, social networks *exist and offer*”. While social capital is not restricted to women, it is clear that it has gendered dimensions. In the case of the Magaba vendors, wives are the ‘managers’ and sustainers of households and there is a common recognition of this by all women. In times of need, they come together in important forms of mutual reciprocity and support. This is not to argue that there is no competition and conflict between Magaba women; it is simply to suggest that the relationship between these women is not one-dimensional but contingent on changing circumstances.

6.2.5 Human Capital

Human capital entails the skills, knowledge and ability to work (Farrington et al. 2002). The women vendors sampled at Magaba generally relied on their own labour capacity and that of other household members and, overall, this labour is unskilled and semi-skilled with low educational levels. As a result, prospects for the Magaba women entering into the formal economy are limited and largely restricted to low paying employment opportunities insofar as these existed. In this sense, trading in the informal economy becomes a necessity in terms of generating and contributing income to their respective households. Because of the absence of formal training and skills, they have relied on tacit entrepreneurial skills learned over time in and through their trading activities. This has been supplemented by farming skills which have in large part been retained by urban residents in high density urban areas, if only because of regular movement between their urban residence and their rural places or origin where agriculture continues to form the backbone of local economic activities.

In addition, they have demonstrated considerable ingenuity, creativity and flexibility in maximizing returns from their vending at Magaba and in seeking – often successfully – to diversify their livelihood activities. Women, without limited human capital, have therefore been able to contribute significantly to household income generation. At the same time, in recognizing the limited capacity of informal trading operations to lift their households out of poverty, they have prioritized the formal education (and building of human capital) of their children as an investment for the future and thus spend considerable earnings from vending towards their education. They do this however with the full knowledge that education at the primary and secondary levels in public schools occurs in the absence of quality resources and

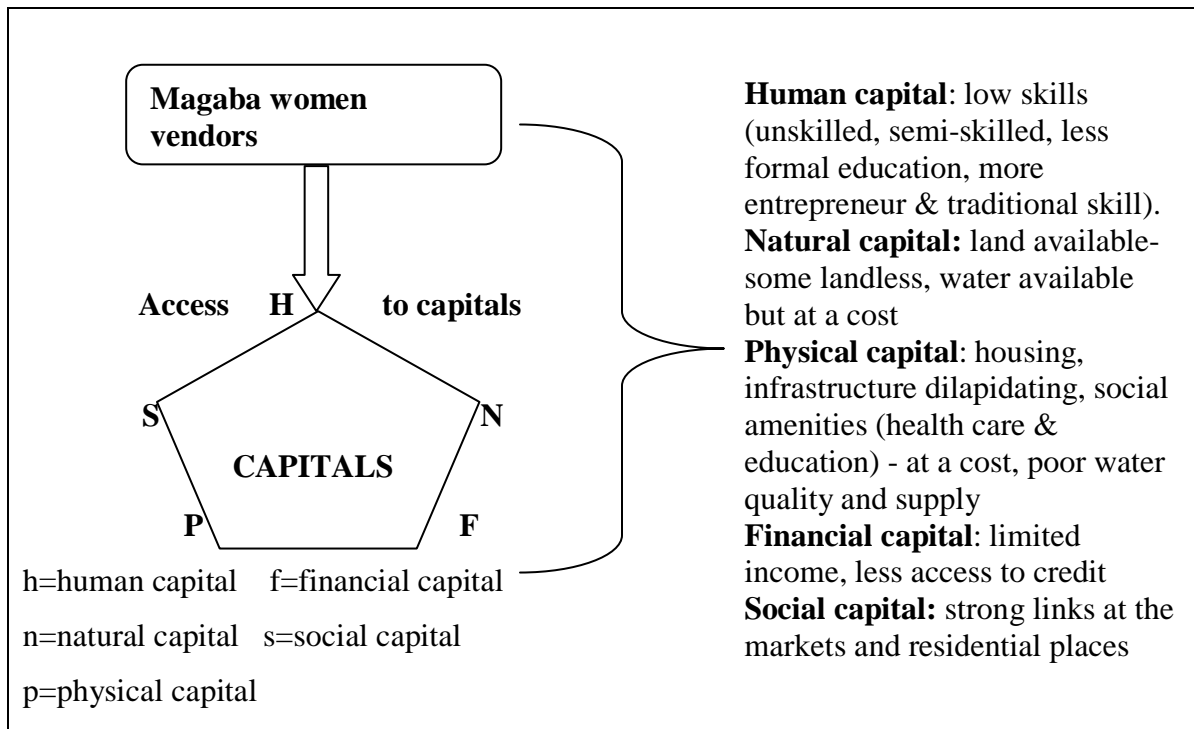
often teachers, and that these schools produce students whose prospects for employment in the formal sector may not go beyond low-income occupations.

6.2.6 Interaction between Capitals

This section has provided a summary of the current capitals or resources of Magaba women vendors and their households. Though each resource has been presented separately it is clear from the discussion that, in the day-to-day lives of Magaba women, the capitals are inter-linked and inter-related. The successful building and maintenance of livelihoods depends on the full utilization of each resource as it exists and on combining the different assets in such a manner that each resource is maximized given the constraints of the socio-economic and political context.

In the case of the Magaba women, some examples of the interrelationships are briefly provided. Access to financial capital goes a long way in building human capital. Adequate levels of financial capital are pursued by the women vendors in striving to maximize the educational achievements of their children and thereby give them competitive advantage in future formal employment opportunities. Financial capital and natural capital are also closely linked. Financial capital helps households to intensify urban farming through purchasing agricultural inputs (when available). In turn, natural capital is a store of financial capital in the sense that surplus crops may be sold to generate household income. Physical capital, or the inadequacies of physical capital, impact on financial capital. Physical resources may generate income (through the rental of rooms) or may inhibit profit margins for vending activities (such as through unaffordable transport fees). Social capital, for instance through the sharing of trading information between vendors, may enhance profit margins (and hence financial capital) or it may simply energize the vendors (after a long day or during stressful times) and ensure that (as human capital), they have the will and capacity to go to the market the following day or to continue with their trading activities despite the many hardships. The nexus between different capitals thus is essential such that assets or capitals “are not simply resources that people use to build livelihoods: they give them the capability to be and act” (Bebbington 1999: 2029). I depict this interplay between capitals, with specific reference to Magaba women traders, in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Capitals (Magaba Women Vendors)



Note: These capitals are not representative of all the sampled women.

Source: Source: Survey Questionnaire, March 2012

6.3 Livelihood Outcomes

The previous section has described the livelihood assets which are available to women at Magaba and which condition, animate, shape and constitute their livelihood strategies and activities. It is through these livelihood practices that specific livelihood outcomes arise and are re-shaped. Livelihood outcomes are the end results or achievements emerging from a variety of livelihood practices (or livelihood portfolio), though these end results are not static and are subject to change through ongoing practices. The livelihood outcomes of women vendors at Magaba are discussed below in terms of income, food security and resilience.

The foremost outcome is an increase in household income although there were mixed feelings among the respondents concerning the importance of the increase. Some of the women argued that household income has improved significantly because of their vending activities and that this has entailed a measurable impact on household sustainability; others spoke less glowingly of any relationship between vending activities and household sustainability. The results of my study seem to indicate though that, compared to previous years when for instance inflation was out of control, income levels through trading have improved as a general tendency. Thus, according to my survey questionnaire, 79.6% of

respondents spoke about higher incomes relative to household expenditures. One married woman therefore claimed:

The trading environment has improved from the last years. Now I am able to keep the money for future use unlike previous years. My profits have increased and I want to continue to work hard to get more money. Generally I cannot complain because I am able to provide my family at least with food to survive (In-depth interview, March 2012).

The interviewee further added that the increase in income has contributed to important investments in the education of her children. The income generated through trading by households is not sufficient enough to cover all basic necessities, but this income (as indicated by the majority of women) is said to have facilitated, and increasingly so, the sustenance and future stability of the household. In many cases, the more stable households were those with a combination of informal activities (vending by the wife) and formal employment (by the husband). The improved income levels have occurred in conjunction with increasing diversification of livelihood activities and, combined, these trends have enhanced household security – though the income security of all households remain fragile in the context of the broader economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe.

The income generation of Magaba traders has improved the standard of living of their households although there is significant variation between households in this regard. This is manifested in a number of ways. Of particular significance is food security which, in contemporary Zimbabwe, is a daily challenge. Though there was some evidence of altering food consumption patterns to minimize costs, Magaba households as a whole seem to be food secure in part because of urban agriculture (access to field crops and vegetable gardens), an endeavor which has been shown from many studies in Zimbabwe and elsewhere as critical to food security for urban households (Maxwell and Zziwa 1992, Maxwell, Levin and Csete 1998). These studies indicate that food production by urban households can contribute between 40% and 60% of household food needs. The respective figure for Magaba households remains unclear, but it seems to be substantial. Besides urban agriculture, income generated by vending activities makes a contribution to food security by way of the purchase of basic food commodities. Vending income, as discussed earlier, is subject to considerable variation within a particular month and between months as it follows the ebb and flow of the purchasing power of customers. This irregularity in income impacts on the extent and character of food security, which highlights the significance of stored maize and a regular

supply of garden vegetables in minimizing income shocks and stresses and ensuring a food supply.

The livelihood strategies of Magaba women are subjected to regular, often extreme, shocks and their daily existence is marked by major challenges and outright hardships. But they have displayed significant endurance and perseverance in building and maintaining livelihoods centered on their households. They have coped well with the many stresses and have adapted to changing circumstances in ingenious and thoughtful manners. In summary, they have shown significant forms of resilience in a context of extreme vulnerability. In doing so, and as both vendors and women, they have risen above their social circumstances to pursue a livelihood portfolio which offers some level and form of dignity for their households. Perhaps the most extreme example of this is Operation *Murambatsvina*, when informal trading operations were wiped out – not only did these operations re-emerge but they re-emerged with more resilience. As shown, this resilience does not simply entail an individualist household-based effort but also has a pronounced collective element when and where Magaba women traders (again, as both traders and women) join hands in seeking the common good for all households.

6.4 Intra-Household and Gender Relations

Meeting the ongoing political and economic challenges through different response mechanisms is not done in a social vacuum by Magaba women traders. Besides being traders they are also women with domestic (and social reproduction) responsibilities; and their status as women relate to questions about intra-household and gender relations. Thus, any interaction between social reproduction work (within the domestic household sphere) and economic productive work (through trading) is in some way mediated by the prevailing intra-household and gender relations. With regard to the domestic sphere, it is ubiquitous that there are rules, regulations and practices in every household which govern the allocation and distribution of resources to meet daily needs of its members (Kabeer 1994), and these processes have a pronounced gender and patriarchal dimension. Though regrettably not a central part of my fieldwork, this section seeks to examine the significance of gendered relationships (in households) to women's livelihood activities, at a time when women's contributions to household livelihoods (in the form of income generation) have increased in recent years. However there was significant differences between the households of Magaba women traders in terms of relative income contributions of men and women and this may

have some bearing on intra-household relations along gender lines (including highly conflictual relations), though my fieldwork is inconclusive in this regard.

The socio-economic and political downturn in urban Zimbabwe has contributed to a shift in intra-household and gender relations in most urban households. The Zimbabwean crisis has contributed immensely to the loss of formal employment (through for example retrenchments) and as a result the traditional patriarchal status and role of men (the male worker) as being the main breadwinner has diminished greatly (Mupedziswa and Gumbo 1998). This has posed a challenge to the *status quo* of manhood in many households in terms of the man's position as father figure and in providing essentials for the maintenance and sustainability of *his* household. In this regard, work has always played a major role in defining masculinity (Morell 2001), such that the loss of employment for men raises key questions about their masculinity. In the meantime, women's contribution to household sustenance has unquestionably increased, leading to a situation where – in certain instances – female income generation becomes critical or even dominant. In other words, there exists a shift in male and female contributions to household sustainability in terms of income generation.

From the in-depth interviews I conducted with households where the Magaba women trader is married, it became clear that most husbands no longer afford to provide for their families compared to previous times; as a result women chip in. Without women's contributions to household budgets, most families would likely be subjected to abject poverty. Some husbands and wives jointly pool their income sources and discuss the household budget (income and expenditure) together as a collective venture, but these are rare instances. One married respondent though indicated how this operated

We sit down after getting our monthly income; we divide the money that goes to groceries, rent and other things. But you know money in the black market is not fixed so we buy our stuff all depending on the earnings of a particular month. I am so lucky without his contributions life could be very much difficult (In-depth Interview March 2012).

In such rare cases, the wife and husband share joint responsibility for both success and failure in household sustainability.

Another married woman (whose husband works) has the following to say, and this is far more representative of gender relations within Magaba households:

At the end of every month he gives me [some] money and he doesn't care whether it is enough or not. If I wasn't working what could have happened to the family... [We would] starve. I have to hustle to find extra money to take us throughout the remaining days of the month. He spends most of his time not at home probably drinking and he complains that he does not have money (In depth Interview March 2012).

This quotation implies that where the man is the main earner, this did not automatically mean that he is constantly the main contributor to household sustenance – as women have to scratch for other sources of income throughout the month to ensure basic household consumption needs are met. In this particular case, despite earning a salary, the husband assumes that the wife remains fully responsible for the domestic sphere (or he has delegated her that responsibility at least tacitly) and he seemingly wipes his hands clean of all responsibility; after all, as a man, his place is ‘not at home’ (the private domestic sphere) but within the male-dominated public sphere, or so the patriarchal story goes. This is reflected in the words of one married respondent:

My family is big; ... everyone turns to me whenever they face problems. I am responsible for education, food, clothing ...I can say ... I spend sleepiness nights trying to think where I can get money to support my family. The father always say have you talked to your mother ... I do not have money (In-depth Interview March 2012).

Women traders as women tend to spend their trading and other income on basic household necessities (like food, clothing and education) with an overriding concern on their part for the welfare of household members (notably children) and not on themselves. They sacrifice daily and dearly for their households. Husbands tend to be less concerned about the household as a whole such that, in most cases, men tend to withhold some of their earnings. In fact, Magaba women revealed that, because of cultural factors, husbands do not want to be questioned on the amount of their income and how they spend it.

Overall, the dynamics of intra-household relations of Magaba households strongly suggest that women are obliged to provide for the survival of household members. This of course is by necessity the case with the female-headed households but it is also the case for the other

(male-headed) households. In other words, these 'other' households exist as male-headed households, at least *de jure*; at a *de facto* level, women of course are the household managers (delegated by their husbands). While patriarchy remains solidly grounded in the typical urban Magaba household, the increasing role played by women in household income contribution does seem to be chipping away at the edges of patriarchy as women use their economic muscle to negotiate for altered gender relations.

Gender plays a critical role in decision-making about the allocation of household resources. From the sampled group of women at Magaba, it is apparent that decision-making in households headed by males is largely in the hands of men. Final-decision making is vested in the hands of the husband with limited decision-making left for the wife. This particularly happened in households which are still preserving the traditional customs of the man being the head in all spheres of life. One married woman noted in this regard:

In the village I grew up in I was taught that the man is the head of everything and the wife has to be subordinate to the husband. My husband decides on everything although sometimes he consults with me. In case of me making the decision in the house when he is not around, I will have to call him to approve that decision (In-depth interview March 2012).

The woman further added that decision-making in terms of market activities (what to buy, prices for resale and where to sell) was her prerogative since the spouse did not have the adequate knowledge of the informal markets. This seemed to be the case in most male-headed households.

But certainly the greater involvement of women in household sustainability has led to some challenges to patriarchy if the extent of gender-based conflict is a rough indicator. Greater involvement of women in decision-making, though still limited, has posed threats to manhood such that Magaba households seem to be an arena of contestation. At times, as well, the ongoing economic crisis in Zimbabwe and the pressures this places on households has contributed to decay in the relationships between spouses. Conflict is triggered amongst Magaba households by the uses of money (for either personal or household expenses), shortages of money and lastly in instances where women earn more than their husband and the latter feels threatened. The women traders feel that men often squander household income by for instance drinking alcohol. There was congruency among the Magaba women interviewed that men tended to abuse alcohol and spend most of their time in unproductive

activities from a household perspective. The flourishing of shabeens in most high density areas has exacerbated alcohol abuse.

Despite the strained relations in households, women continue to assume responsibility for the house. However the lack of income and resources for pursuing this is a major obstacle. One respondent reported the following:

After he resigned everyone looks upon me for the provision of food, clothes and money. He wakes up in the morning and spends the whole day doing nothing; instead he should join me in the black market to increase the money, but he is too proud for nothing. After all he demands money he does not work for (In-depth Interview March 2012).

Aside from household responsibility around income allocation, this quotation also raises questions about time allocation and strained intra-household relations. Despite the fact that women are increasingly contributing to household income, they are expected to retain their traditional duties such as care giving, cooking and washing. Magaba women, as critical to both the economic and social reproduction of the household, bear heavy responsibilities which indicate that patriarchal practices are still dominant within these households.

6.5 Conclusion

The findings of this chapter indicate that women who pursue livelihoods at Magaba have a range of (though limited) assets which they draw upon for the survival of their households. Some assets are more important than others; for instance, in Harare where life is monetized and commodified, financial capital is of paramount importance certainly in comparison to natural capital. Without financial capital, urban households are unable to sustain themselves. Social capital also plays an important role in allowing women to network socially, which at times directly feeds into their trading activities. Through pursuing their multiple livelihood activities, women are able to enhance the financial security of their respective households or even – in the case of female-headed households – to become the bedrock of their household. Different livelihood outcomes arise which may only have short-term consequences (for example, meeting immediate household consumption needs), but these outcomes demonstrate the adaptability and resilience of households under severe stress and strains. Although Magaba women had mixed feelings about their livelihoods, the overall impression is that these women perceive their lives and livelihoods as undergoing some kind of stabilization at least compared to previous years. At the same time, they continue to suffer the consequences

of patriarchal practices which impinge upon their daily lives. Not only are they traders and income-earners but they are also household managers and primary care-givers in the domestic sphere. They thus carry a double burden, though it may be that shifts are taking place in Magaba households in the sense of a weakening of patriarchy.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

It is uncontested that Zimbabwe has undergone a series of crises over the past decade and longer. Through these protracted crises, an effervescent informal sector developed to help sustain the livelihoods of many poor and vulnerable urban residents, although not without significant challenges. This thesis has sought to demonstrate this with specific reference to the lives and livelihoods of Magaba urban traders in Harare. It has offered an understanding of livelihoods pursued by women vendors in the context of an economy performing well under its potential and during ongoing political conflicts. Generally speaking, the trading activities of these women (and their other income-generating activities) have positively impacted on household sustenance.

This concluding chapter is organized into two main sections. The following section (section two) presents a summary of the entire thesis by chapter. Following this (in section 3), I revisit the sustainable livelihoods framework to indicate its relevance to my study of Magaba traders.

7.2 Thesis Summary

The first chapter highlighted the important questions and objectives driving this thesis. In doing so, it outlined the objectives and the methodological underpinnings of the research and sought to indicate the significance of the thesis on both empirical and analytical planes. The second chapter outlined and critically discussed the theoretical framework that informed the research, specifically focusing on the sustainable livelihood framework. In particular, the chapter identified how vulnerability contexts, livelihood assets (or capitals), livelihood strategies, broader institutional processes and livelihood outcomes condition and shape urban livelihoods. The relevance of the framework for the question of gender was also noted. The third chapter provided the historical and underlying social roots of the crisis which have plunged Zimbabwe into a deep abyss. To gain an in-depth understanding of the crisis over the long-term, the chapter discussed the crisis dating back to the early 1990s when ESAP was formulated and implemented. It went on to discuss more recent happenings, such as the fast track land reform programme (from the year 2000) and Operation Restore Order in the year 2005. These events occurred at a time of heightening political antagonism along party-political lines. The chapter also traced the development and diversification of the informal

sector in urban Zimbabwe over this extended time frame, as well as its contribution to urban lives and livelihoods. As with chapter two, this chapter spoke specifically about women (in this case, their involvement in informal economic activities). While the second chapter provides the theoretical framing for the study of Magaba women traders, the third chapter set out the historical, social and economic context in Zimbabwe within which the activities of these women are necessarily located.

The next three chapters are the empirical chapters for the thesis. Chapter 4 provided a brief historical background to the study area (Magaba) and profiled the women traders (and households) in terms of their socio-economic status; trading activities (and the diversity of these activities); income, expenditure and profits; and other livelihood strategies such as remittances and urban agriculture. Chapter five sought to understand and analyze the challenges faced by women traders at Magaba. These challenges highlight the multi-faceted constraints and pressures which impinge on the daily lives of Magaba women and which seemingly are beyond their control. But, in recognizing women traders as social agents, the chapter outlined the many coping mechanisms pursued by these women in trying to counter the effects of the challenges. Chapter six presented an in-depth understanding of the household assets of Magaba women and their households in relation to the capitals introduced in chapter two, and it assessed the significance of these resources in constructing livelihoods. It also detailed the livelihood outcomes of all the strategies and activities of the Magaba women given the vulnerability contexts and the assets available. The chapter ended by looking at intra-household relations within the households of the Magaba women and it brought to the fore the double burden of these women.

7.3 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and Magaba Traders

In relation to this broad category of women traders in Magaba, the thesis sought – as its main objective – to understand and analyze their lives and livelihoods. It did so by making use of the sustainable livelihoods framework, which informed the three empirical chapters at least implicitly.

The thesis discussed in great detail the vulnerability context of the Magaba traders, notably the economic and political crises which have marked Zimbabwe for many years. The vulnerability context relates mainly to the Zimbabwean economy (for example, unemployment and inflation) but it is generally recognized that the economic crisis has roots,

at least partially, in political mismanagement (such as the fast track land reform process). This crisis impelled the Magaba women to enter into trading activities and to remain within the informal economy. Once in the trading sub-sector, the Magaba women made use of available individual and household assets (or capitals) in pursuing vending activities but also in simultaneously diversifying into other income-generating activities and food security initiatives (such as urban agriculture) to make up a livelihood portfolio (or number of livelihood strategies). The traders faced a series of challenges during their actual operations, many of them of an economic character and which relate back to the vulnerability context (such as transport costs). The political challenges in particular highlight the issue of institutions and organizations which, as outlined in the livelihoods framework, shape livelihood activities. The role of the police, militia and customs officials therefore entail institutional interventions which shape and re-shape the composition of the livelihood portfolio (including, in the case of customs officials, withdrawing from any further cross border trading because of the risks involved). The Magaba women traders, in often ingenious fashion, responded to these challenges as – at best – coping mechanisms. The ‘end’ result, which is always subject to ongoing fluctuation – are livelihood outcomes. The Magaba women have made important contributions to their household income and food security but, as a grouping, they emphasized that they are struggling and that they are effectively hanging in and hanging on in the face of adversity.

The sustainable livelihoods framework therefore was of great theoretical value in terms of understanding and analyzing the lives and livelihoods of Magaba women traders. I sought to deploy it in a manner which was sensitive not only to ‘structure’ but also to ‘agency’, in recognizing that the Magaba women are not ‘trapped’ in structures but seek to negotiate and maneuver their way in and sometimes beyond these structures.

7.4 Conclusion

By way of conclusion I highlight a possible topic for further research on the Magaba women traders. In this respect, it is important to highlight that the women traders are not a homogeneous group of women. An important variable is marital status.

On the one hand, all Magaba women traders (married and otherwise) have been in a sense ‘pushed’ into pursuing informal economic activities and they remain confined to the informal economy because of such push factors. In this regard, though there has been some progress in

Zimbabwe in terms of stabilizing and normalizing the national economy since the formation of the Government of National Unity, there are no clear signs of economic recovery. The formal economy remains battered by many years of free-fall and contraction, and the unemployment rate continues to be exceedingly high, as does urban poverty. In addition, any formal employment opportunities possibly available to Magaba women would invariably be in the low-income segment of the labour market and likely insufficient as a secure basis for household sustenance. There is every good reason then for the ongoing engagement of urban Zimbabweans in informal economic activities, including by the Magaba women vendors.

On the other hand, there are pull factors involved. One pull factor relates to the ‘method of payment’ and this was emphasized by many Magaba women both married and not. The women said that every day is ‘pay day’; instead of receiving a monthly income, they are able to earn some money every day and use it immediately for pressing household consumption needs. Another pull factor though clearly differentiates the women in terms of marital status. The testimonies of married women intimated that there was a realm of personal freedom (for them as women) in the informal economy, something which they often only recognized once they had entered the informal economy (because of the push factors). In particular, income generated by Magaba married women tends to be under their control and – as household ‘managers’ with household members including children as their first priority – they can channel the income into avenues which meet basic household expenses without significant interference from the patriarch.

I raise this for two reasons. First of all, I wish to stress that the notion of ‘poor urban women traders’ needs to be unpacked to identify internal differentiation amongst the traders – an endeavor which regrettably was not fully pursued in the thesis. For this reason, the broad overall claims made above, though valid at the level of abstraction at which they are pitched, would need to be qualified through recognition of difference. Secondly, and following from this first point, seeking to disaggregate the notion of ‘poor urban women trader’ would be a fruitful objective for further research. This would require research more focused on the domestic sphere and intra-household relations.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire for women vendors

Questionnaire No

SECTION A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Name of respondent.....
2. Age of respondent (in years)
3. Marital status of the respondent
1= never married 2=married/ living together 3=Single 4=Divorced 5 =Widowed
4. (If code 2 Q 3) What does your spouse/partner do?
1= House husband/wife 2 =Retired 3 =Unemployed 4= Formal Sector worker 5=
Informal sector worker 6= student 7= other, please specify
5. Highest Educational Level of the respondent
1=illiterate 2= Primary School 3= Secondary School
4= Tertiary Education
6. How many people are in your household
7. How many people in your household are employed on a full time job?
8. How many are employed on a part time or casual job?
9. Are you the sole breadwinner
1=Yes 2= No

SECTION B: EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND

10. Were you employed before starting this business?
1=No 2=Yes, in the formal sector 3=Yes, in the informal sector
4=Other (specify.....)
11. If code is not 1 for Q 10. For how long was this? (days, months &years)
12. If code is not 1 for Q 10. What was your occupation or job title?.....(at least two words e.g. "School Teacher")
13. If code is not 1 for Q 10. Which sector were you employment
.....(at least one word answer e.g. "Manufacturing")
14. If code is not 1 for Q 10. Why did you leave your job?
1=Resigned 2= Retrenched 3= Voluntary retirement 4=retired
5= Fired 6= Other

SECTION C: LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES

15. When did you start the business (write the year)

16. Are there any rules of entry into the operations?
 1=Yes 2=No 3=I don't know

17. (If code 1 Q 16). Do you pay any license fee to the City Council
 1=Yes 2=No

18. How did you get capital/ money to start the business?
 0= Did not need any capital 1= used own capital 2=Used household capital
 3= Borrowed from husband/ friends/relatives 4= acquired a loan 5= other

19. How much did you need to start your business? (US\$)

20. Do you have a bank account for the business which is separate
 from family account?.
 1=Yes 2= No

21. Do you keep any records for your operation?
 1=Yes 2=No

22. What activities do you engage in? (tick as many)

Selling foodstuffs, biscuits,sweets, boiled eggs etc		
Airtime		
Clothes		
Cigarettes		
Fruit & vegetables		
Roasted mealie		
Human piece (weave,braids etc)		
Foreign currency dealings		
Carrier bags		
Selling toiletries		
Selling books		
Selling cellphone lines		
Other (specify.....)		

23. Who do you work with?
 1=children 2=relatives 3=friends 4=husband 5=alone 6=grandchildren

24. How do you acquire things that you sell
 1=from myself 2= from other informal traders 3= from formal traders
 4= import them myself 5= other

25. Where is the operation located?
 1=flea market 2=street corner 3=open space 4=no fixed location
 5= along the road 6=bus terminus 7=other (specify.....)

26. What are the reasons for operating at this site?
 1=close to informal traders selling same products 2= close to informal
 Traders who sell different products 3=only site I can operate from 4=allocated by
 council 6= other

27. Apart from this site is there any other site you operate from?

1=Yes 2=No
 28. If code 1 Q 29. If you operate at different sites do you offer/ sell same products

1=Yes 2=No
 29. If code 2.What are the reasons for not offering same products?

30. What is the reason behind selling the products you do?
 1=it's what the customers want 2= it's what other formal trades sell
 3= it's what other informal traders sell 4= other

31. Does your business allow you to support your family well?
 1=Yes 2= No

32. Who are your main customers?
 1= the public 2= other informal traders 3= formal traders 4= specify

SECTION D: INCOME & SAVINGS

33. What is the main source of your income?
 1= from informal operations 2=from formal operations 3= relatives 4= money from burial societies 5= money from boyfriend 6=begging 7=remittances 8=rentals 9=other

34. How do you finance your business?
 1=from profits 2= credit from other informal traders 3= credit formal traders
 4=husband 5=boyfriend 6=other

35. How much do you spend on the goods to sell (in US\$)?
 1=below 50 2=51-100 3=101-150 4=151-200 5=200+

36. What is the business average income (in US\$) per month?
 1=below 50 2=51-100 3= 101-150 4= 151-200 5= 201-250 6=251+

37. Has your income increased, decreased or stayed the same over time?
 1=increased
 2=slightly increases
 3=decreased
 4=slightly decreased
 5=I don't know

38. Is your operation more profitable since dollars got into circulation
 1= Yes 2=No

39. Roughly how much money do you need to support your family monthly (in US\$)
 1= 50-100
 2=101-150
 3=151-200
 4=201-250
 5=251+

40. Roughly how much money do you need to support your business monthly(in US\$)

- 1= 50-100
- 2=101-150
- 3=151-200
- 4=201-250
- 5=251+

- 41. Are you involved in decision making with regards to which business to engage in? 1=Yes 2=No
- 42. Are you involved in decision making with regards to spending the income/ money 1=Yes 2=No
- 43. Following question 41 & 42 who then makes the final decision?
1=husband 2=wife 3=daughter 4=son 5=myself

SECTION E: TRADING & CHALLENGES

- 44. What are the barriers/constraints/impediments that you face as women in your business?
1=inadequate space
2=inadequate income to support the activity
3=police raids
4=strengths from male competitors
5=environmental problems
6=other (specify.....)

- 45. What institution or organization influence your activities
1=ZRP police 2=municipal police 3=other traders 4=customers
5=council authorities 6=other (specify.....)

- 46. If code 1, 2,3,4,5 Que 45. How do they influence the activities?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 47. What kind of strategies do you adopt to counter those challenges? (referred in question 44, tick your strategy)

Early rise & late keep strategy		
Using signals to alert each other in present of police		
Deceptive commodity & merchant hiding strategy		
Bribery to the police & other authorities		
Change of operating place		

- 48. How do you feel about the trading environment as compared to the previous years?
1=better 2=worse 3=the same 4=I don't know

SECTION F: PERCEPTIONS ON BENEFITS AND CONSTRAINTS

- 49. What are the advantages of self employment (tick your answer)

Increased income	
Flexible working hours	
Independence	

No taxation	
Allow me to support my self	
More profits	
Hard work is rewarded	
Other (specify.....)	

50. What are the disadvantages of self employment (tick your answer)

No job security	
Access to credit difficult	
Harrasement by authorities	
Poor management skills	
Scarcity of good for resale	
No guarantee of income	
Stressful due to long hours	
Other (specify.....)	

51. Do you have any future plans of expanding your business?

1=Yes 2=No 3=I don't know

52. How much time do you spend working at your business?(in hours/hrs)

1=below 1hr 2=1-5 3=6-10 4=11-15 5=16+

53. Would you want to spend more/less time in your business

1=Yes 2=No

54. If code 1, 2 in Q 53. Explain why you would opt for less/more hours?

.....
.....
.....
.....

55. If you get a job in the formal sector would you accept it

1=Yes 2=No 3= I don't know

56. If code is not 2 Q 58. What salary would motivate you to get into formal sector (in US\$)

1=150-300 2=301-450 3=451-500 4=501-600
5=601+

G. LIVELIHOODS AND OPERATION MURAMBATSVINA

57. Were you a victim of Operation Murambatsvina?

1=Yes 2=No

58. Were you psychologically traumatised as a result of Operation Murambatsvina

1=Yes 2=No

59. Did the operation interfere with your livelihoods?

1=Yes 2=No

60. What was your primary source of income before Operation Murambatsvina?

	Tick your
--	--------------

	answer
1=Remittances	
2= flea markets	
3= tuck-shop's	
4= fruit and vegetable vending	
5= formal salary wage	
6= rental (accommodation)	
7= petty trade (airtime, freezits, sweets etc)	
8= cross boarder 9= other (specify.....)	

61. How was your household affected by Operation Murambatsvina?

	Tick your answer
1.Lost Shelter	
2. Lost source of income	
3 Deterioration of health	
4. Food insecurity	
5.Increased vulnerability	

62. What kind of coping strategy did you adopt as a result of Operation Murambatsvina?

	Tick your answer
1.Own resources	
2. Relatives support	
3. Non Governmental Organization	
4. Government Support	
5. Community Based Organization	
6. Nothing at all	
7. Other	

63. What kind of assistance did you get?

	Tick your answer
1.Shelter	
2. Food	
3. Compensation	
4. Relocation	
5. Financial help	
6.Nothing at all	

64. Approximately how much was lost as a result of Operation Murambatsvina? (in US\$)

- 1= 50-100
2=101-150
3=151-200

4=201-250
5=251+

H. URBAN AGRICULTURE

65. Do you practice any form of agriculture either at home/any free space?
1=Yes 2=No

66. If yes, where do you farm?
1=Homestead
2=along the main roads
3=along the railway lines
4=allocated land
5=hillside
6=residential stands

67. How did you initially access the piece of land?
1=formally allocated
2=inheritance
3=allocated by a friend
4=invasion
5=unauthorized municipal space
6=other (specify.....)

68. Have you been involved in a conflict over the land?
1=Yes 2=No

69. If yes, with whom?
1=government
2=neighbor
3=municipal police
4=ZRP
5=other (specify.....)

70. What kind of crops do you grow? (Write as many)
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

71. Do you sell your produce?
1=Yes 2=No

72. If yes, approximately how much do you get? (in US\$)
1=20 and below
2=21-40
3=41-60
4=61-80
5=81-100
6=101+

73. What is the importance of urban farming?
1=supplement income
2=improve food supply and nutrition
3=improve food access

4=culture value
5=hobby
6=no alternative

74. Do you wish urban agriculture to be a planned urban use?

1=Yes 2=No

75. Has urban agriculture improved your standard of living?

1=Yes 2=No

Explain why

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you....Tatenda....Siyabonga

Prepared by Takunda J Chirau (g11c6617...Rhodes Student) in fulfillment of
Master of Sociology.

Appendix 2: Interview Guideline

Background Information

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- What is your marital status?
- What does your husband do?
- Who is the breadwinner of your household? And WHY

Assets

- What kind of assets do you own (financial, natural, social, physical and human)?
- Among these resources which one is the most valuable to you and WHY?
- Which one of the resources do you rely on for your daily activities?
- What sort of problems do you encounter in accessing these resources?
- How are your relations structured within your households (husband and wife and other members in the family)

Livelihood Activities

- What sort of livelihood activities do you engage in to survive?
- Among these activities which one is your main source of income and WHY?
- Explain what motivated you to engage in these livelihoods?
- Aside from this/these activities are there any other major sources of income.
- Has the number of income sources increased/decreased and WHY?
- What are the reasons behind reliance on these activities?
- Can you rate improvements so far since the time you started this/these activities?
- How are the livelihoods organized, diversified and maintained at one specific period of time?
- What role do household members play in carrying out these activities?
- Who decides and invest money on a certain activity?
- Is the money you get weekly, monthly or annually enough to cater for your needs?
- If NO what is it that the money is failing to meet?
- How do you spend the income you get from these activities?

Support

- Where do you get your funds from?
- Do you have any other support?

- What kind of support is it?
- What other kinds of support is needed for the livelihoods to improve

Trading and Challenges

- What sort of challenges do you meet as an urban trader?
- Which one is the most critical challenge? And WHY?
- To what extent are these problems affecting you as a trader?
- What sort of strategies have you adopted to counter the challenges?
- How does the following institutions affect your activities: ZRP & Municipal Police
- How do you respond to their operations/what strategies do you adopt to counter them?
- In your opinion what can be done to overcome these problems?
- What role do you think the government of Zimbabwe should play to assist you?

Perceptions on Benefits and Constraints

- In your opinion what are the benefits of self employment?
- In your opinion what are the drawbacks of self employment?
- Do you intend to intensify or reduce your business and WHY?
- Can you describe how has the change to foreign currency enhanced your business?
- Has the trading environment improved as compared to the previous years and WHY?

Livelihoods and Operation Murambatsvina/Restore Order

- Were you a victim of Operation Murambatsvina and WHY?
- If yes, how were you affected by the Operation Murambatsvina?
- What kind of activities you engaged in was affected by the Operation Murambatsvina?
- Can you describe how this operation limited your engagement these activities?
- What kind of loses did you experience as a result of the Operation.
- What is your general feeling about the Operation Murambatsvina?

Urban Agriculture

- What do you understand by urban agriculture?
- What kind of farming do you practice and what is the significance of this to your household?
- What is the main purpose of these crops?
- How has urban agriculture contributed to your household sustenance?
- In your opinion what do you consider the most limiting factor of urban agriculture?