AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF THE RURAL ELDERLY IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF HOBODO WARD IN MANGWE DISTRICT IN ZIMBABWE

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I declare that this PhD thesis is my copyright. It has never been submitted in any academic institution for examination in the past. My PhD period was a lonely and long journey of a thousand miles. It was characterised by lots of stresses and challenges. It called for me to be resilient and innovative. I lost lots of social relations and invaluable personal life aspects on the way due to commitment to my studies. The tears and sweat of pain I shed right through the way have finally been replaced by tears of joy.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on the survival mechanisms of the rural poor elderly in Zimbabwe. The situation of the rural elderly is looked at in the context of the ravaging HIV/AIDS pandemic. The focus is specifically directed on the increasing numbers of orphans who are generated following the rampant deaths of their parents (sexually active individuals). With Africa failing to effectively withstand the forcefulness of the pandemic, the community structures in Zimbabwe are being heavily shaken to the detriment of all social groups.

It is within this continuum that the research is laid out to investigate the situation on the ground. In this case, a fieldwork exercise was carried out in the Hobodo ward of Mangwe district in Zimbabwe. An intensive and in-depth examination of the critical situation was pursued under the case study model. To make the study more focused, the elderly were placed under investigation with regards to their new role of providing familial care for the orphans. The manner in which they face such a towering task under strained resources and limited knowhow was explored. The well-being of the orphans was also investigated in close relation to the welfare efforts of the elderly guardians. The investigations were made in respect of the contribution of the local resources towards the innovativeness of the elderly guardians. The adaptivity of the elderly and the versatility of the orphans were examined within the confines of the social and the economic capitals of the Hobodo ward. It is within the natural, social and economic capital dimensions of the Hobodo rural locality that the applicability of the sustainable livelihoods framework in explaining the dire social situation of the elderly and the orphans was brought under spotlight.

The study was pursued through the qualitative research paradigm. This was done to capture the social perceptions, beliefs and the innovative capabilities of the elderly in their natural environment; and under the fieldwork setting. Several data collection techniques were employed to unveil the subject under study. These included interviews, questionnaires, participant observations, focus group discussions. Sampling was used to produce the research framework. Participants in the research were largely identified through random sampling. In special circumstances, purposive sampling was used. Tape recording and note taking were largely used to capture the responses of the research participants.

Key words: Household, Coping mechanisms, Elderly and Orphans

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CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This is the introductory chapter for the whole thesis. It provides a layout of the thesis from the research problem to the literature surrounding the social and cultural institutions which house the elderly and the orphans in the local communities of Africa. The chapter further contextualises the coping tactics of the elderly into the broad indigenous and cultural resources of their localities. Sociologically, the elderly's increasing visibility in the rural localities is explored in terms of its impact on the elderly's new familial obligations. The socio economic challenges which interfere with their coping mechanisms in their provision of care for the HIV/AIDS orphans are brought under spotlight. Further, Hobodo ward the research site of the fieldwork is discussed in the broad continuum above. The discussion largely centres around the causes of the increase in the number of the HIV/AIDS orphans who demand high familial care from the elderly. The household is conceptualised in terms of its embodiment of the facilities necessary for the familial care provision undertaken by the elderly guardians. The sustainable livelihoods framework is adopted to guide the study. It scientifically situates the rural household and the activities of the elderly in to the Zimbabwean socio economic crisis; the social atmosphere of the study. The qualitative methodology is introduced to provide the framework for the fieldwork of the study. The methodology is unveiled in terms of how random sampling and various data collection techniques like interviews facilitate the conducting of the fieldwork. At the end of the chapter, the objectives of the study are outlined as well as the sequence and structural composition of the thesis chapters.

1.2 The Research Problem: Ageing in Africa

The thesis focuses on the coping mechanisms of the elderly in the context of the increasing numbers of HIV/AIDS orphans in the Hobodo rural ward of Mangwe district in Zimbabwe. The elderly under investigation are chronically poor. In spite of their economically exposed position, they take up some familial care obligations out of concern for the welfare of the orphans. In this regard, I will unveil the social and economic position of the elderly guardians in light of the broader national crisis situation. This contextualises the origins of their dire economic vulnerability and their diverse coping efforts in pursuing the familial-based duties relating to the provision of care to the HIV/AIDS orphans.

With respect to Africa, the elderly and the HIV and AIDS orphans under their custody will

make up the majority of the 900 million people living in poverty by 2015 (Help Age International, 2008). As a result, the plight of the elderly is of great concern in Africa. The elderly in many African rural localities constitute the most chronically exposed social group due to "a lifetime of hardships, malnutrition, poverty and in older age, high susceptibility to chronic diseases" (Fouad, 2005:1). According to the Help Age International (2008), many of the elderly in Africa experience worsening poverty, discrimination and physical harassment. They are denied access to entitlements which they deserve after a long time of tangible contributions to the organisation of their local communities. Within these troubling social conditions, they take up the task of addressing the social needs of the HIV/AIDS orphans.

Much of this occurs in the rural areas where the elderly are concentrated; and the socio-economic conditions constrain their capabilities (Help Age International, 2008; Kollapan, 2008; Sosyal and Dergisi, 2013). They often face social exclusion as a result of socially-constructed age discrimination in their communities of origin (Hungwe, 2005; Madzingira, 1997). The proportion of the elderly in rural communities is on the rise; and their community responsibilities are increasing. In sub-Saharan Africa, the demographic increase in the numbers of the elderly is increasing due to the HIV/AIDS related deaths of many young sexually active persons. The deaths are causing some sharp disproportional layout in the demographic trends of the local communities of Africa. As the young individuals die, they leave behind some orphans who do not have any substantive means of survival. In Sub-Saharan Africa, there are no sound social arrangements in place on the part of the state institution to minimise the increase in the numbers of the orphans. Consequently, the elderly (in their marginalised state) move in to provide the familial care needed by the orphans. The elderly's increased participation in the familial care provision enhances their position in the organisation of household structures. In their diversified coping skills in the context of the HIV pandemic, the influence of the elderly at local community level becomes pivotal.

For this reason, the elderly are perceived as "new engines of society" (Van Dullemen, 2006:99). In this study, the increasing numbers of the elderly (proportionally) is examined in terms of their contribution and influence with regard to the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans. While the growing numbers of the elderly in advanced capitalist nations are raising several concerns, the overall population ageing in the case of Africa is taking some peculiar dynamics. More specifically, the focus is on the different ways in which the aging process is influencing the involvement of the elderly in community activities. This is with regards to how they are being transformed from being community liabilities into being community assets. This thesis seeks to examine, in the light of changing household

composition, the re-centring of the elderly as family guardians of orphans and the significance of the elderly to the advancement of the welfare of the orphans. In their old age when they require support, the elderly take up the role of caring for the HIV/AIDS orphans. They perform this duty without the necessary resources. Their health is the only asset that they are rest assured of in terms of reliance for their survival; together with the orphans under their custody. However, the maintenance of good health remains a serious challenge in rural Africa. This is caused by some institutional deficiencies. In Zimbabwe, the inadequacy of health facilities causes the elderly to travel some long distances to access necessary medical treatment (Tichagwa, 2000; Muchabaiwa *et al*., 2012). This limits the ability of the elderly to provide adequate care for the AIDS orphans. Nevertheless, the elderly are increasingly activated into action from the fringes of the rural communities where they reside.

Many children who become orphans in urban areas are often relocated to the rural communities to be looked after by their grandparents (elderly). Just like their elderly guardians, the orphans occupy the fringes of the community. They share their marginalised social position with the poor rural elderly. This commonality results in some new forms of social relations emerging between the elderly and the orphans. The new social relations between the elderly and the orphans are necessitated by the groups' quests for survival. In doing so, the elderly draw upon their vast locally-based indigenous knowledge as they try to regulate some community-based processes and ensure that the orphans' dilemma does not significantly destabilise the local communities. This becomes their zone of action and influence, as they mediate and channel the impact of the rise of orphans in a manner which does not undercut their adaptability and well-being.

Despite the engagement of the elderly in stabilising the local communities, the loose regulation of the rural localities results in the multiplication of the orphan population. This happens as the teenage orphans engage in different juvenile activities like unprotected sex (Opong, 2006; UNICEF Report, 2006). The premarital sex activities, besides facilitating the transmission of the HIV virus, also lead to unwanted pregnancies and the birth of children. The caring needs of the babies further immerse the orphans into a socially exposed state as child mothers; without any substantive means of survival the obligation of looking after the babies again falls into the hands of the elderly guardians. Thus the elderly cater for the needs of the two generations of orphans without the capacity and adequate resources to do so. In her analysis of familial care trends along gender lines, Van Dullemen (2006) notes the involvement of more elderly women than elderly men with 100 elderly women for every 86 elderly men taking part. The elderly guardians are inclusive of both males and females. The specific responsibilities which the female and male guardians perform sometimes vary based on the engendered

orientations of a given community. In the case of caring for 2 generations of the AIDS orphans, the situation of the elderly guardians becomes more complicated. This thesis demonstrates the active engagement of the elderly in the familial care of the orphans. Their rootedness in local communities enhances their innovativeness in coping with the deepening challenges of orphan care. The adaptive livelihood strategies of the elderly draw on the rich local heritage. This entails some notions of a moral economy which are partially insulated from the influence of the national set-up. In this sense, the culturally-based protection mechanisms a given community absorb the external shocks in defence of the community.

1.3 The Elderly, AIDS and Orphans: Cultural Practices and Socio-Economic Crisis

The capacity of the elderly to cope with the AIDS crisis and the increasing orphans is crippled by some cultural practices. Local cultures are not homogenous institutions which can be considered to be devoid of tensions. Rather, they facilitate the further embedding of the AIDS pandemic in the local communities. They impact negatively on household- and community-based coping mechanisms. These practices include widow inheritance and polygamy.

When a man dies from AIDS-related diseases, he leaves his family without an important breadwinner. Culturally, his wife and children must remain within the family circle. Based on this, they stand to benefit from family resources just as they did during the lifetime of the household head. In other words, the main means of survival for the bereaved family depends on the assets of the extended family, including the land. But for the bereaved family to maintain its hold over its share of asserts and property, its affairs are formally placed under the control of the young brother of the deceased. The process may involve the inheritance of the widow by the young brother. The widow inheritance exercise often results in the exposure of the widow to the HIV virus; with the children born through the new marital arrangement also being HIV positive. After some years, it is not unusual for the younger brother and his new wife (along with his original wife) to die from the AIDS disease, such that the families of both brothers are left with no one to support them. Eventually, the burden of care is transferred to the elderly grandparents. Though widow inheritance causes such grave problems, it is difficult to eliminate because it is seen as distributing the familial duties and responsibilities across the extended family to avoid the destitution of widows and their children.

In the case of polygamy, this practice is permissible within many African communities. The logic behind polygamy is to widen and strengthen the ties of support through the enlargement of families, with resource-rich members (comparatively) helping members experiencing particular

hardships. More so, polygamy is a way of attaining a higher social status for a man in the local communities. However, Tensions often arise between the co-wives. The tensions arise as the conjugal rights of some of the co-wives suffer as their husband divides his time unequally among them. One of the wives may be tempted to look for sexual attention outside of the marriage bond. If HIV is contracted in the process, the husband the other wives will become infected. Again, the orphan population increases as the husband and his wives die.

Forced marriages are also prevalent; with young girls becoming attached to older man in marriage arrangements (Kambarami, 2006). This type of marriage is practised among the Shona of Zimbabwe, the Xhosa of South Africa and the Akamba of Kenya. Forced marriages often happen during times of crisis such as a famine or extended drought. In some cases, the elderly become involved in encouraging men to marry young girls. The elderly guardians pursue this as a desperate means of securing some sort of livelihood for the orphaned girls. In most cases, the marrying man is old. In return, the elderly receive food and cattle from the new husband of the girl (Barrett, 1991). The older husband marries the young girl in order to acquire a source of cheap labour for his small-scale farming activities. Bearing children and assuming some caring roles for them at such a tender age highly traumatises the young female AIDS orphans. More trauma comes as the senior wives stamp their authority over the young wives (orphans) by insisting that they perform the strenuous domestic chores in the household. In such cases, the trauma experienced by the young wives cause them to run away from the forced marriages; leaving their children in desperation. In other circumstances, they stay as young widows due to the death of their husbands from the HIV/AIDS pandemic. A differing scenario results in the their children being taken over by their grandparents as they refuse to be inherited; rather opt to look for some survival means in the towns and neighbouring countries.

The AIDS pandemic is mistakenly associated with witchcraft in the rural communities. Generally, culture is endowed with the ability to define various diseases in terms of their causality. These include mental illnesses, stomach pains and skin rashes. In the same way, the local communities (with significant involvement of the elderly as custodians of the cultural dimensions of sociability) are struggling to make sense of the pandemic within the existing cultural repertoire. When a person falls sick, he is taken to a traditional healer – who is elderly in most cases – for identifying the cause of the illness. The caregivers of the sick person are told that an evil spirit is behind the sickness and needs some form of appeasement. The HIV-positive status of the sick person is never pointed out. Time and resources are wasted in consulting one traditional healer after another until the sick person eventually dies. In the case of a married person, the widow/widower is left behind with children to care for. If the

husband dies, the widow is persuaded to remarry the brother of the deceased and the pandemic takes the life of the widow and the inheriting spouse. A large number of orphans increase under the custody of the elderly grandparents. In this way, the mismatch between the claims of witchcraft about disease causality and the scientifically testable condition of the HIV/AIDS places the elderly guardians in the dilemma of coping with increasing numbers of orphans.

Orphan-hood in the context of the AIDS pandemic in part exists because of the assertiveness of cultural conservatism, as outlined above. The elderly suffer the consequences of this assertiveness because they are left with the burden of caring for the orphans. However, the elderly and the orphans are not mere victims; as this thesis seeks to show. The thesis demonstrates the agency of the elderly in the time of AIDS, as they re-define their status in communities in the pursuit of ensuring some form of localised stability. They re-centre their livelihood activities in bringing to the fore their responsibilities and activities in facilitating their coping mechanisms during a crisis scenario. The AIDS pandemic provides a basis for highlighting the capacity of the elderly at times of disruption and crises.

It is important to relate the trends behind the increase in the number of the orphans in Mangwe and specifically the Hobodo ward. Though I discuss this further in the thesis, for now I will highlight one particular trend critical to the elderly and orphan care in Hobodo. Given the closeness of the Hobodo ward to the Botswana border, high levels of border jumping activities are prevalent (Muzondidya, 2008). The illegal cross-border practices are mainly conducted by teenagers (orphans included) who find no survival means in the Hobodo locality after finishing primary education. They do not have the money to pay for the costs of processing the legal travelling documents like passports. Consequently, the youths illegally migrate to South Africa and Botswana in search of manual employment. This became prevalent subsequent to the year 2000 with the dramatic contraction of the Zimbabwean economy after the fast track land reform programme was implemented (Moss, 2007). These years witnessed a sharp devaluation of the national currency, sky-rocketing inflation rates and the dwindling of basic commodities in shops. At the peak of the tense situation arising from fast track, the government banned NGOs from distributing food parcels and any assistance to the Hobodo locality (NGOs and Humanitarian Reform Project, 2009:16). This exacerbated the strain on the elderly in their attempts to address the dire welfare situation of the orphans.

The involvement of teenagers in border jumping exposed them to various forms of sexual abuse. Some female teenagers were raped in the thick forests along the Zimbabwe-Botswana and Zimbabwe-South Africa borders. They were raped by gangsters popularly known as *magumaguma* (Global Crisis Solutions, 2007). Some female orphans crossed successfully only to be raped at the

workplaces by their employers (Save the Children, 2008). In most of these incidents, unwanted pregnancies resulted. After giving birth, the teenage orphans sent their babies to their elderly guardians back in Hoabodo through the truck drivers (malaichas). Some teenage girls resorted to prostitution to make a living when they failed to find employment in the neighbouring countries (International Organisation for Migration, 2010:32). Many of the young women became infected with the HIV virus as a result of these developments (Munyati et al., 2006, United States Department of State, 2010). Some of the teenage boys engaged in criminal activities across the borders when survival became tough (Abrahams, 2010). They were sometimes shot and killed, and their dead bodies were returned home to their elderly grandparents to meet the funeral and burial costs. The elderly bore the brunt of the multi-faceted consequences of border-jumping. The AIDS scourge and orphans challenges posed a threat to the integrity of the social space of the Hobodo community. The elderly vigorously sought to minimise this threat. In doing so, the elderly repositioned themselves in the Hobodo localities in such a way that the coping strategies and struggle to maintain some sense of community and belonging became centred on them.

1.4 The Compromised Well-being of the Rural Elderly

Throughout rural Africa, the elderly form a social group without a legally-recognised status. Most countries in Africa do not have clearly-defined policies and programmes which formally regulate the affairs of individuals in their later life. Therefore, the distinctiveness of this social group is not strongly supported by policies and statutes of different governments in Africa. In policy discourse, the elderly are bundled together with destitute groups like the homeless and disabled street beggars. A typical example is Zimbabwe where the elderly are clustered together with destitute groups under the public assistance programmes of the Department of Social Welfare (Munro, 2003). The Zimbabwean government's failure to fully recognise the status, significance and dignity of the elderly, and its indiscriminate treatment of them; leads to the reflection of old age as a form of cursing and liability in Zimbabwe. This is not unlike the case of disability which, in some quarters in the country, is culturally viewed as a divine curse (Shoko and Burck, 2010). The government's position perpetuates some cultural stereotypes on the elderly; and leads to the victimisation of ageing individuals within the Zimbabwean rural communities.

Other marginalised groupings in Zimbabwe such as the homeless and the disabled, can potentially move in and out of destitution depending on changing socio-economic situations. The disabled at times find some means of survival like border jumping to neighbouring countries. Some

Zimbabwean blind migrants engage in street begging in the towns of South Africa (Vigneswaran, 2012). On the other hand, the elderly are less able to explore and pursue alternative livelihoods outside their rural localities. Rarely is their participation the familial care provision acknowledged in state policies. In this respect, their significant provision of caring roles in the face of AIDS is pivotal in the face of the limited capacity of African governments to provide excellent welfare services to the HIV-affected households. Seeking to identify, understand and explain the role of the elderly in confronting the trauma of the pandemic provides a window into the changing meaning of aging on the continent of Africa.

Overall, the innovativeness and adaptability of the elderly in coping with the HIV crisis is more significant if their agency is juxtaposed against their marginalised and desperate socio-economic well-being. In this regard, the local communities which house the elderly in this study are located in the rural areas. In these rural communities, the elderly live under undeveloped infrastructure; without proper sanitation and clean water facilities (Madzingira, 1997). Some elderly engage in livelihood practices such as animal rearing under the free range system (Kaumbata, 2009; Lebbie, 2004). However, these initiatives are affected negatively by perennial droughts with many animals often dying. To some extent, the investment practices of the elderly are undermined by the actions of the state. In many instances on the African continent, this entails rising wars and civil unrests. However, violations of human rights often take place in Zimbabwe. A notable example of such an inhuman act is Operation *Murambatsvina* of 2005 (Bratton and Masunungure, 2006). This was a government operation which destroyed the houses, trading operations and livelihood activities of many Zimbabweans (the elderly and many destitute social groups included). Related to that was the Kenyan experience. In the mid-2000s, the elderly along with other poor community groups had their houses and property destroyed on political grounds (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2008).

In the case of Operation *Murambatsvina,* though it impacted more fully on the urban spaces, it had some disastrous repercussions for the rural communities. Many urbanites who lost their sources of accommodation and livelihoods returned to their rural communities as a copping mechanism. In Zimbabwe, the massive retrenchment of urban workers caused by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1990s led to a growing demand for residential stands in the rural areas. In times of employment crises in the towns, many urban dwellers move into the rural areas where life is cheaper. However, their movement exerts pressure on the economic resources in local rural communities. This results in the property of the marginalised social groups such as the elderly being unfairly redistributed. The unfair redistribution exercises are engineered by the gatekeepers of the local communities; which

entail the illegal commoditisation of the economic resources in the communities. In Zimbabwe, the chiefs in charge of the communities began to fraudulently sell communal pieces of land in monetary terms to the new comers after the Murambatsvina saga of 2005 (Chimhowu and Woodhouse, 2008). In this scenario, the livelihood sources of the rural elderly were undercut.

In the rural communities of Zimbabwe where the study for this thesis took place (Mangwe District), the elderly are based in the local communities which are positioned in the dry areas of the country. These rural localities are found in the hydrological regions 4-5 of Zimbabwe where crop farming is not viable. These regions are generally characterised by high temperatures and low levels of rainfall amounts, such that small-scale farming is mainly animal-based. The poverty in these areas is exacerbated by persistent droughts and inappropriate agricultural technology (Madzingira, 1997:10). A 2001 study on the constraints to rural livelihoods established that 70 percent of the chronically poor (rural elderly included) in the local communities of Matebeleland region owned between only one and four cattle (Alumira et al, 2007). Besides cattle, there are small ruminants such as goats, sheep and poultry which include chicken, guinea fowls and indigenous varieties of pigeons (Kaumbata, 2009; Lebbie, 2004; Gundani, 1994). Most of these animals are for home consumption for they possess low market value. The cattle include the hard Mashona, Sanga and Nguni breeds, which are built of a strong bony framework and less meat; while the poultry is highly resistant to diseases.

However, disease attack is a dangerous factor. The most dangerous diseases include Anthrax and the Foot and Mouth. The 2 are common throughout southern Africa. They kill large heads of livestock belonging to the chronically rural poor in local communities (Derah and Mokopasetso, 2005; Scoones et al, 2010). The outbreaks occur beyond the rural poor's ability to purchase the necessary chemicals for curing the diseases. Additionally, some criminal activities in the rural communities interfere with the coping activities of the chronically poor; with livestock theft being rampant (Maura et al, 2003:11; KwaZulu Natal Department of Safety and Liaison, 2008). In addition to this, wild animals pose a serious threat to livestock and poultry. The animals include baboons which attack goats and chickens (MHLANGA, 2001). Other predators like eagles and various small carnivores which live in the community bushes do likewise (Leta and Bekana, 2010; Selam and Kelay, 2013). For communities situated near big game reserves like the Kruger National Park of South Africa and the Hwange game reserve in Zimbabwe, lions and hyenas which live in the forests and mountains cause heavy losses to animals (Patterson *et al*. 2004; Gade, 2006).

This highlights the tension-riddled interface between nature and society in the case of such rural communities. It is difficult to devise concrete methods for avoiding animal losses as the communities

live side by side with the natural habitats. Culturally, the communities define their make-up and well-being through nature. Their cultures, group identities and social relations are mediated through the same animals which negatively impact on their socio-economic security. Hence they need to negotiate their livelihoods in a manner un-offensive to nature. Thus animal husbandry is of much significance to the elderly and their households in the semi-arid regions of Zimbabwe.

Apart from that, there are crop varieties of African origin which are harvested in large quantities. The crops include sorghum, millet, rapoko, roundnuts and groundnuts (Bird and Shepherd, 2003:30; Tavuyanago *et al*., 2010; Mukarumbwa and Mushunje, 2010). The local communities concentrate on growing these drought-resistant crops to meet their home consumption needs. However, the crops are of low commercial value. As with their animals, a crippling factor is that they are prone to attack by wild animals and birds. The roundnuts are eaten by wild hares, rock rabbits and bush bucks. Wild birds as well as locusts eat large quantities of sorghum, millet and rapoko in the fields; before the crops are ripe for harvesting (Charles et al, 2006:48; Markula et al, 2009:6). Baboons and monkeys are troublesome in the fields of groundnuts and maize. The crop yields of the local communities are further reduced by pest attack. (Alumira et al, 2007). The rural poor elderly cannot afford to buy the expensive chemical pesticides to keep the pests away.

As noted above, the low rainfall patterns result in perennial droughts. The perennial droughts lead to serious crop failures and heavy animal losses. The 1992 drought which hit Zimbabwe and some parts of Zambia resulted in the death of millions of cattle in the local communities as the rivers and dams dried up (Kinsey et al, 1998:92; Kapuya et al, 2013:421). Thus perennial droughts can inflict huge shocks on the livelihood sources of the chronically rural poor. In the prevailing circumstances of the rural poor's inaccessibility to banking facilities and the absence of private ownership rights to communally-held land, the rural elderly resort to livestock keeping as a form of investment and saving (Lebbie, 2004; Kaumbata. 2009). This is enhanced by the cumulative value which the animals possess. Thus the animals (especially cattle) are of particular significance to the communities as a form of investment. Thus the losses referred to above are devastating. During the drought periods, the wild grasses and trees which the rural poor used for building their houses get equally affected. Overall, the recurrence of droughts incapacitates their innovative investment and saving means. This inhibits the ability of the elderly to adequately provide for the familial needs of the HIV and AIDS orphans under their custody.

To withstand these challenges, the local communities resort to the harvesting of forest products. The chronically rural poor sell firewood and engage in beer brewing to earn small amounts of cash to

meet their basic needs (ZimVAC, 2010:13; Magezi et al., 2011:41; Mawere et al., 2013:17). In southern Africa, *Mupani* worms are widely eaten in many local communities (Akapalu et al., 2007; Makhado et al., 2012). The caterpillar *Imbrasia* is eaten in central Africa (Vantomme et al., 2004:2). Such wild insects are also used for medicinal purposes in traditional healing practices throughout much of sub-Saharan Africa. The rural communities situated in the low *veld* region of Zimbabwe depend on wild fruits in times of famine (ZimVAC, 2010:17). Likewise, the Venda communities of South Africa and Zimbabwe exploit the *Marula* fruit for various food sources (Wynberg et al., 2002; Mupofu et al., 2008). For example, *Mukumbi* is a traditional fermented beverage derived from the juice of the fruit, the nuts are used for preparing butter and the fresh *Marula* fruits are eaten by both people and their domestic animals. As the communities turn to the wild fruits for food, they compete with wild animals like baboons which depend on the fruits for survival thus exerting pressure on the local resources.

In addition to the above, the rural communities in southern Africa diversify their survival mechanisms through accessing the wild vegetables and mushrooms which they obtain freely from the bushes (Mvere, 2004; Eyzaguirre and Smith, 2007). The mushrooms and edible weeds (wild vegetables) are abundant during good rainy seasons. The communities along the Chad River basin in central Africa and the Tungan Mairuwa communities situated around Lake Kanji in northern Nigeria practise subsistence fishing in coping with their demanding daily familial needs (Béné and Neiland, 2002; World Fish Centre, 2010). Though primarily involved in crop farming and cattle herding, these communities widen their safety nets by engaging in subsistence fishing in the rivers and lakes within their localities. In South Africa, The Zulu communities diversify their reliance on subsistence agriculture through the selling of crafts and woven baskets (Nettleton, 2010). All these diversification activities like mainstream livelihood practices are carried out in a labour intensive way due to the inaccessibility of sophisticated machinery in the local communities.

The rural communities are sometimes involved in the processes of marketisation and commodification of nature by selling some natural resource goods. However, the commodities are of low commercial value. These market-based transactions beyond the community have a paradoxical effect. On one hand they contribute to the well-being of the community; while on the other they lead to the over-exploitation of nature within their localities. The latter is possible if the marketisation takes place on a large scale. It ends up undermining the natural resource base of the local communities. The trend disturbs the long-term patterns of community sustainability and the cultural repertoire which underpins the sustainability. In this regard, the ongoing cultural practices within rural communities act as a bulwark against deeply destructive forms of marketisation and commodification.

Examples of this are many. Goats and cattle of indigenous varieties are of high cultural value to the rural communities. Hence, they are protected. They are essential in the performance of traditional ceremonies. One such traditional ceremony in Zimbabwe embraces the ritual of bringing the spirit of the dead back into the family. The ritual is labelled '*Kurova guva'* (Gundani, 1994; Barrett, 1991:8). During the ceremony, a black goat is killed to ordain the proceedings of the ritual. A bull is slaughtered to provide some meat for the function. The blood of the bull is drunk by the spirit mediums to appease the guardian spirits of the family. Likewise, the sorghum and millet used for brewing beer is part of the ancestral appeasement ceremonies at both family and community levels (Makindara, 2013; Taylor, 2012). The appeasement ceremonies are carried out on periodical bases. They form an integral part of the cultural edifice embodied within the rural communities. They protect local communities and their interface with nature from being subjected to unbridled processes of marketisation and commodification.

The rural elderly find refuge in these non-materialistic dimensions of the community. They play a key role in sustaining the non-monetary component of nature and the rootedness of the communities in nature. Kinship relations, indigenous knowledge and ancestral commitments continue to animate the rural communities of Zimbabwe. This provides a supportive environment for the rural elderly. Therefore, cultural arrangements constitute some social forms of coping to external shocks for rural communities. However, the same may serve to exacerbate the shocks if not managed. Of much significance with regards to the relationship between culture and commodification is that the new social obligations of the elderly, in looking after the HIV/AIDS orphans, reposition their survival into a more monetary mode. This is in part because some of the needs of the orphans can only be met in purely monetary terms. The payment of school fees and the purchase of school uniforms for the orphans are typical examples. Therefore, the elderly need to embrace some innovative forms of agency in addressing the demanding care placed on them in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the rising demands of the orphans. In this regard, the thesis seeks to understand the ability of the poor rural elderly to outmanoeuvre the pace of the AIDS pandemic with regard to orphan care in the Hobodo ward of Mangwe district in Zimbabwe.

In order to understand the livelihoods of the elderly in Hobodo with regards to the care of the orphans, the sustainable livelihoods framework of Chambers and Conway, (1991) guides the study. This framework is deemed as suitable, as the thesis investigates the social, economic and cultural activities of the elderly in enhancing the livelihoods of the rural households under conditions of immense stress in the Hobodo locality. The crisis generated through the AIDS pandemic does not only

impact on HIV-effected households in Hobodo; but, reconfigures and reconstitutes the households in terms of structure and composition. At times, this entails the tearing asunder of the household units because of the forcefulness of the pandemic. Hence, in making use of the livelihoods framework (which has the advantage of investigating the livelihood practices as centred on households), it is important to recognise that the household is not static but is also undergoing through some strain and fluctuations. The framework also brings to the fore, the agency of household members rather than simply treating them as objects and victims of objective conditions and processes. This is important in re-focusing sociological studies on the agency of the elderly. In this case, special focus is on how they re-position themselves in rural communities as critical sources of adaptation to the AIDS-driven social dilemma of the orphans. In focusing on the elderly, this does not assert that the orphans are devoid of agency in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

According to the livelihoods framework, the rural households draw upon a range of capitals (assets and resources) to defend and facilitate their livelihoods. This is not a static arrangement as capitals may decline, increase, change or recombine in new ways particularly during the times of household shocks and stresses; such as in the case of the AIDS pandemic. The assets considered in this thesis include natural, social and economic capital. The three forms of capital exist in different compositions. These include agricultural production, remittances, natural resources, cultural arrangements and social relations and networks. The rural elderly and the diverse households, of which they are a part, deploy these resources in complex ways as they manoeuvre their way through the ups and downs of the AIDS crisis, thereby trying to capacitate their households.

The livelihoods framework tends to treat human agency as a highly rationalising activity involving constant strategising. A strong element of this is embedded in the pursuit of the household livelihoods. However, this does not imply the existence of some grand and coherent plans which are astutely pursued on a daily basis. Rather, household livelihood activities determined by human agency involve considerable meanderings, compromises, contestations, stumbling, and outright confusion. At times, this entails negotiating their way through the cluster of opposing activities of other social groupings resident in the same geographical locality which access the same resources for their survival. Overall, there is an absence of coherence. There is forward movement involving (in this case) some creative and innovative thinking and practices on the part of the Hobodo elderly in withstanding the mounding familial demands of the orphans. With the limited assets, the elderly engage (simultaneously) in livelihood activities and in the re-assembling, stabilising and revival of household structures. In doing so, they integrate the orphans into the household for social security purposes. Thus

the livelihoods framework focuses on the different tactics of the elderly in trying to account for their new social roles of reinvigorating the well-being of the AIDS orphans in a tightly-contested social terrain.

1.5 Fieldwork Site and Research Design

In order to have a clear appreciation of the study site (Hobodo), it is essential to start by giving the broader geographical layout of Mangwe district. Mangwe district is situated in the south western part of Zimbabwe along the border with Botswana. To the northern side, it is bordered by Bulilima district and the Zimbabwe-Botswana railway line is used for marking the boundary between these two districts. The town of Plumtree is found along the boundary of these two districts. Khezi district is found to the south of Mangwe district. Mangwe district is located in the semi-arid region of Zimbabwe which stretches into neighbouring Botswana. The district is largely situated in region 4 of the agro-ecological zones of Zimbabwe (Magadza, 2006:163; Bongo, 2009:1). The extreme southern part of the district falls in region 5 (with the region being the most arid agro-ecological zone). The local communities in the extreme south (because of the aridness) are unable to engage in productive crop farming. They experience very low rainfall per annum and high temperatures which are regularly above 40 degrees Celsius during the summer months (Ndlovu et al., 2010:1).

Mangwe district is largely rural. The local communities largely depend on subsistence farming, livestock rearing and reliance on forest products. In a disaster risk management study conducted by Bongo (2009), Mangwe district was found to be highly characterised by perennial droughts. The local communities struggle to eke out a living. The main rivers (Ingwizi, Khalanyoni, Simukwe, Embakwe and their tributaries) provide water to animals and for use in various community activities. In the local communities, a number of dams have been built along the rivers. The Mangwe, Manenji and Ezimunyama dams comprise the list. The local communities devise their survival strategies around the dams. The survival mechanisms include homestead-based gardening and fishing.

The district is predominantly inhabited by the Kalanga tribe; with smaller numbers of Ndebele and Tswana people. Therefore, the local cultural arrangements and practices of the communities tend to be dominated by the Kalanga history and spirituality. The coping mechanisms of the Mangwe communities are culturally tailored along Kalanga traditions and values. Though the Kalanga culture is visible and vibrant in the Mangwe communities, its documentation was suffocated by the formation of the Ndebele state on the Bulima-Mangwe land in the 1830s up until its demise in 1894 (Mazarire, 2003). The occurrence drove most of the Kalanga tribe westwards into the Ngamiland right through to

the Kalahari Desert (present day Botswana). In the early 1900s, the Kalanga communities fell prey to the formation of states. The marking of borders and boundaries engulfed the large Kalanga population into the present day Botswana (Emmanuel, 2012; Maundeni, 2012).

The continuum caused the Kalanga to be demographically more visible in Botswana. Consequently, much of their cultural practices and livelihoods are documented within the context of Botswana; yet reflecting the Kalanga tribe in its entirety (inclusive of the Mangwe communities of Zimbabwe). The chieftainship and the lower levels of traditional leadership of Mangwe communities are structured along the Kalanga lineages. The paramount chiefs of Mangwe district include Hobodo, Bango, Tshitshi and Sanzukwi. Under the chiefs are ward and village level structures of authority. Hobodo ward forms the basis of this thesis. Hobodo ward is located in the extreme south of Mangwe district. It is 143 kilometres south of Plumtree town along the Zimbabwe-Botswana border. The ward is a remote and deeply isolated rural area. It is situated far from essential services such as major health facilities like hospitals. The distant location of Hobodo has protected it from intrusive market-based forces. This resulted to its retention of culture in its more purer form; a condition which harnesses many indigenous-based ways of coping with the orphans' crisis.

Mangwe district has 18 wards. Chief Hobodo's area constitutes ward 16. In the structure of the wards in Mangwe, there are kraals consisting of about 100 homesteads. Six to ten kraals combine to form a village. Aroung ten villages combine to form a ward. In the case of Hobodo, there were six villages made up of kraals whose numbers differed from six to ten. The six villages together form the Hobodo ward. The Hobodo ward consists of the following six villages: Daintambo, Mswiliswili, Rose Common, Thekwani, Khalanyoni and Lumawo.

The primary social unit in the kraals of Hobodo is the household; with the structure and the composition of these households open to significant variations. With the elderly and the orphans being the main focus of the thesis, special emphasis is on the rising demand for the provision of familial care for the orphans at household level. The Hobodo ward has had in recent years a sharp increase in the number of AIDS orphans. Based on the records of the village health workers, there were 379 orphans in the Hobodo ward at the time of conducting the fieldwork in 2012. The big size of the orphan population placed some significant demands on the elderly household heads; of which their roles have become central in the pursuit of adaptive mechanisms and practices within the available means at the local level. Studying the orphan care phenomenon by the elderly entails the examination of the contraction and the elasticity of the local structures in their resistance to the shock induced by the AIDS pandemic.

The study is based on the qualitative research methodology. As such, the provision of care to the increasing numbers of the AIDS orphans by the elderly in the Hobodo ward will be studied in a natural setting. This entails the collection and analysis of data in terms of the subjective meanings, social interactions and day-to-day practices of the elderly and the orphans in Hobodo. The research design involves a case study approach with Hobodo as the research site. By focusing on one specific ward in Mangwe, an in-depth gathering of evidence relevant to the thesis topic is facilitated. The livelihoods framework is used to guide the fieldwork; in order to sensitise the researcher to the questions and themes pertinent to the field of inquiry in Hobodo.

The research participants in Hobodo (both the elderly and the orphans) will be selected on the basis of random sampling in an attempt to provide a representative portrait of the elderly in Hobodo and the livelihoods strategies they employ in caring for the orphans. It is not simply given that the study of Hobodo is statistically representative of Mangwe District. However, the case study of Hobodo brings to the fore, structures and processes which may animate some of the rural spaces in Mangwe due to their sharing of the same geographical location and cultural orientation. The collection of the fieldwork data in Hobodo will involve triangulation. As such, a range of specific research techniques will be pursued. These include structured and semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and observations. The triangulation approach is important in ensuring that the study of Hobodo is scientifically valid, replicable and authentic.

The main unit of analysis for the research is the household. The study centres around the manner in which the elderly attempt to restore some normalcy to the operations of the rural households in Hobodo. The emerging familial relations between the elderly and the orphans are investigated within the context of the household unit. The term household refers to the sharing of residence amongst people who take their meals together. As Beaman and Dillon (2010:3) state, a household refers to a "group of people who live together, pool their money, and eat at least one meal together each day". Though household members are (in most cases) related through kinship and familial ties, this is not always the case. The term family refers to a distinguished cluster of persons whose identity is defined along kinship lines. In a typical rural African context, the family unit is situated in the household structures. In some instances, the members of one family may be scattered across many households. However, the mix-up of the 2 is kept minimal for both the family and the household are social constructs of the community which expresses and enacts the social, economic and cultural concerns of the different social groups.

The crises and shocks in the communities are most deeply experienced at the household level. Thus using the household as the unit of analysis provides an avenue into the social concerns and well-being of a given community. In the study of Hobodo, the disturbances to the well-being of the orphans and the attempts to handle the disturbances by the elderly, by way of drawing on some sets of resources are examined through the household institution. However, this is not aimed at discrediting the importance of inter-household and wider social networks. They are also examined in the study of Hobodo. It is the household unit which embodies the relations and the interactions of the elderly and the orphans in their immediacy. It is the various social relationships which are critical to making sense of the caring functions of the elderly. In addition to that, households are fluid in nature. They exist in many forms like nuclear, extended, single-parent and conjugal (Cherlin, 2005; van Zyl et al., 2008). The advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic added to the diversity of household compositions. The additions include the pronounced rise of 2 new forms namely, the elderly-headed and the child-headed households. The 2 new forms of households are particularly relevant to the study of the elderly and the orphans in the Hobodo ward of Mangwe.

1.6 Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is *to understand and explore the livelihood coping mechanisms of the elderly in caring for the HIV/AIDS orphans In the Hobodo ward of Mangwe district in Zimbabwe*. More specifically, the study seeks to:

- examine the causes, dimensions and consequences of the AIDS pandemic in Hobodo;
- understand the changing composition and structure of the households in Hobodo in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and increasing orphans;
- appreciate the socio-economic conditions of the elderly in Hobodo and the ways in which the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the increasing orphans impact on their well-being;
- investigate the ways in which the elderly carry out their new roles of social parenting in Hobodo;
- examine the diverse livelihood strategies of the elderly in Hobodo;
- identify the coping and adaptive mechanisms of the elderly in the face of the rise in the numbers of the orphans in Hobodo;
- determine the ways in which the support for the orphans takes place beyond the household level in Hobodo.

1.7 Thesis Outline

The thesis is made up of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter. In chapter two, in the context of discussing the social underpinnings of aging and the elderly, the guiding theory for the thesis – the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework – is outlined. This theory, though not without certain weaknesses, conceptualises the human condition as marked by significant agency. This is significant for my thesis in that the framework brings to the fore the need to understand and analyse the elderly as capacitated to think and act in their particularly locality of Hobodo, despite their traumatic experiences linked to the AIDS pandemic and the broader national crisis in Zimbabwe.

Chapter three discusses the research methodology and design with reference to the site of Hobodo. The research methodology is qualitative and involves a case study design focusing on Hobodo, particularly on the household units headed by the elderly guardians of the orphans. In this chapter, I highlight the specific research methods and techniques used during the field work which took place in the latter half of 2012, including sampling techniques. As well, the challenges and ethical questions which arose during the fieldwork are noted

After these chapters on theory and research, I move on to (in chapter four) a discussion of the broad contemporary Zimbabwean context within which the elderly guardians in Hobodo pursue their livelihoods. In particular, this focuses on the deteriorating livelihoods in Zimbabwe from the year 2000 and beyond, though the historical roots of the current crisis are also traced. The focus is on elements and dimensions of the crisis which are particularly pertinent to the lives of the rural elderly in communal areas of Zimbabwe because, ultimately, the thesis is about the coping mechanisms of the elderly guardians in caring for orphans in the context of crisis.

Chapters five and six then turn to the lives and livelihoods of the Hobodo community and Mangwe district more broadly. In drawing upon thoughts emanating from the sustainable livelihoods framework, chapter five looks at natural capital in Mangwe district and the ways in which households in Hobodo draw upon nature in complex ways to sustain their lives. Forest products are particularly important including grasses, trees, soils and rocks. Nature in Mangwe is understood not simply as sources of material livelihoods, as it is imbued with cultural and spiritual meanings deeply rooted in local history. Chapter six focuses on the financial and social capital of Mangwe. This includes reference to land (which again has intense cultural significance), agricultural activities, remittances, as well as diverse forms of informal social networks and safety nets internal to Mangwe communities.

Chapter seven, which is the longest chapter, examines more specifically (in the light of chapters five and six) the livelihood activities of the elderly guardians (and orphans) and the forms and levels of

commitment held by the guardians towards the orphans under their care. It is highlighted for instance that this caring role is done without any meaningful support of government and non-government organisations. Like the elderly, the orphans are also not without agency as they likewise seek at times to pursue activities to counter their problematic conditions of existence. Of importance are well as the kinds of relationships forged between elderly and orphans, and the ways in which the elderly seek to manage these relationships.

Finally, chapter eight provides a synthetic overview of the entire thesis and seeks to show the significance of the thesis in contributing to existing knowledge in this particular field of sociological inquiry.

CHAPTER TWO:
AGEING AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE COMMUNITY

2.1 Introduction

The chapter examines the nature of ageing in the local communities of Africa. A short background of the events which surrounded its discovery as an international cause of social concern is provided. Its meaning is explored biologically, economically and culturally. The Social disengagement, Life Course and the sustainable ageing scientific theories are provided to concretise the various arguments regarding ageing. The social versions of ageing hidden under the cultural differences and conflicting structural institutions of various local communities of Africa are explored. I forward the stage screening concept to explain the founding of the term ageing in explaining the marginalisation of the elderly through some criteria internally ingrained in the structures of the community. The theories above facilitate the positioning of the sustainable livelihoods framework within the defining parameters of ageing. More broadly, the framework is introduced as a guide to understanding the coping mechanisms of the poor communities to various stressing conditions and shocks. This lays out the basis for appreciating the involvement of the chronically poor rural elderly in the provision of familial care for the HIV/AIDS orphans in the Hobodo ward of Mangwe district in Zimbabwe.

2.2 Background to Ageing As a Social Cause

In the 1940-1950s, the elderly began to be viewed as an emerging social group in Europe and North America (Himes, 2001; von Hoffman, 2012). Their emerging needs were not conviniently positioned within the social structures in place; and this caused the new social group to be a cause of social concern. This eventually led to the convening of the first world assembly on ageing by the United Nations in Vienna Italy held in 1982. Twenty years later, in 2002, the United Nations organised the second world assembly on ageing in Madrid Spain. The assembly was held in response to the compelling effects of ageing which had spread worldwide. With regards to Africa, the assembly dealt with the newly emerging familial roles of the elderly in the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The increasing social importance and influence of the elderly began to transform them into “new engines of society” (Van Dullemen 2006:99). Based on the above short background, the chapter examines the centrality of the elderly with regards to their coping mechanisms in rural Mangwe.

2.2.1 Ageing as a Social Process

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (7th edition, 1988:18) defines ageing as "begin to appear older; shows effects of passage of time". In general terms, ageing is a developmental process beginning in childhood and continuing throughout the life span of a human being. The term aged refers to an advanced stage in the later life of an individual during which time a person begins to experience limited stimulation and gradual withdrawal from physical and mental vibrancy (Renehan et al., 2012; Francis, 2014). It is detectable through "frailty, loss of vigour, failure to thrive, loss of physiological function and decreased adaptability" (Crews, 1993:281). It is a gradual change in the human body which causes increased risks of ill-health, disease and death. According to Danilovicha et al., (2004:1669), ageing is characterised by pathological conditions in the central nervous system. This leads to "sexual dysfunction, depression, anxiety and decline in cognitive abilities" of an individual. It entails a decline in the "functioning of the heart, lungs, brain, kidneys, muscles, sight, and hearing" (National Institute on Aging, 1993, cited in Palmore, 2000:645). It is a later stage of life in which an individual experiences memory impairment and reduced mental capacity (Bergado and Almaguer, 2002; Rodriguez, 1999). The ageing stage is accompanied by significant transformations in the individual's appearance and behaviour.

However, what is regarded as aging must be understood in the social context in which the aged (elderly) individuals tend to conform to cultural and social norms, expectations and pressures about what it means to become old. This implies that the elderly (as a social group) are invariably attached to locality-based social meanings. Thus they are socially-constructed along the opportunities and structural constraints of a given community. With increasing biological age, the elderly internalise the above social meanings and comply with them in positioning themselves along social opportunities in their communities. These meanings are not necessarily imposed. Rather, they are grounded in subjective meanings and social consensus of culturally-specific ageing processes. Though biological changes take place in line with the ageing process, these changes are employed to depict ageing individuals (elderly) in a demeaning manner. With the passage of time, the culturally-based perceptions start to have a feedback effect as the aged act out the social meanings and expectations of the community by perceiving themselves as unworthy thereby negatively impacting on their capabilities, bodily health and cognitive functions. This argument implies that the notion of the elderly (as a social group) is historically and culturally-specific. As such, the elderly may be valued and esteemed under specific cultural conditions; with even the so-called diseases of old age (Cox, 2006).

Thus, various medical claims about physiological body changes occuring along with biological ageing do not provide a strong basis for understanding ageing as a social process. In tracing the origins of the ageing phenomenon, the welfare and health issues of the elderly in North America and Europe became real causes of public concern after the second World War in the 1940s (Walker and Litt, 2000:304). By then, cases of disease prevalence were high. So were the ensuing social practices towards the physeologically aged (elderly). In Africa, the process of colonisation led to the rise of colonial social orders which distorted and undercut the respected positions of the elderly in pre-colonial communities. In the case of colonial Zimbabwe, land dispossession and the creation of Native reserves forced the active black Africans into the expanding urban and agricultural (farm) economies as cheap labourers (Sibanda, 1992; Chigora and Guzura, 2008). The rural communities were left concentrated with the elderly and the infants. This had profound and long-term effects on the structure and composition of the rural households. As colonialism became stronger and more prolonged, the knowledge, experience and the expertise of the elderly were increasingly compromised as a basis for social integration and cohesion. In this respect, the social meaning of ageing became historically and socially grounded. Rwezaura (1989) (cited by (Nyanguru, 1992:43) argues, "whereas all animals including man possess an instinctive drive to care for their dependent offspring, they do not possess a similar instinct when it comes to the care of the old members". Thus the relations of the community with the elderly are socially reinforced.

2.2.2 The Aged as Economically-Constructed

In many ways, the ageing phenomenon reflects the inability of community structures to contain the plight of individuals in later life. At the age of 60 years when chronological ageing starts, a person will be having many unfulfilled aspirations and social responsibilities. In most instances, One's aspirations and social responsibilities will be on his dependent minors and relatives of the extended family. Individuals are forced to retire from wage employment at the age of sixty years of age. This will be in line with their biological ageing which is believed to inhibit their capacity to be fully productive in a work environment. Thus they are perceived as economically less vibrant. However, labour market competition for limited employment opportunities between senior workers and younger workers better explains the above retirement phenomenon. This is evident from the shifting age of formal retirement contingent on changes in the rate of unemployment. As the rate increases, the retirement age is sometimes reduced, say from 65 to 60 years. This is meant to facilitate the intake of younger workers into the labour market. Likewise, when vast employment opportunities exists, the age

of retirement goes up. Thus the definition of aged individuals is subject to changes in the various national economies. On the other hand, the retirement phenomenon deprives the workforce of experienced individuals who can stand up to pressurise for the improvement of working conditions and remuneration standards (Thomas and Pascall-Calitz, 2010). The retirement exercises are conducted as a measure of reducing conflicts between older and younger workers. The conflicts become inevitable as older workers are depicted as undermining labour market access and upward mobility within work organisations to the detriment of the younger workers. It is during such struggles as these that terms like ageing find meaning in the community. Thus notions of retirement and pensionable age are biologically determined.

In traditional African communities, such notions are not readily applicable. in the case of contemporary Zimbabwe, it is difficult to define the notions of retirement in the rural communities. This in part arises from the fact that many elderly in local communities never undergo recruitment into wage employment since birth. They are born in the village;raised their families locally;and spend their lives as peasant farmers in their rural localities. The limited access to the essential means of production (namely land) and the unlikelihood of land subdivision to accommodate young families in the local communities sometimes result in the rise of ageist tendencies. At times, the youths label some well-established older members of their families as decrepit and witches. This gradually causes the older individuals to be dislodged from their land either through social isolation by the wider community; and eventually through death from stress emanating out of the unfounded accusations levelled against them (Federici, 2013; Machangu, 2013). In such cases, ageing becomes a phenomenon which develops around the struggles for limited resources and social opportunities in rural communities of Sub-Saharan Africa.

2.2.3 Social disengagement theory

Rooted in the western socio-cultural set-up, Cumming and Henry (1961) formulated the social disengagement theory of ageing. Under this theory, they argue that, as individuals reach later life stages, there occurs a mutual disconnection between the ageing individual and broader social processes. The individual gradually becomes divorced from public activities. One clear example of this is the stage of retirement. The individual withdraws from formal employment in what seems to be preparation for the inevitable namely, death (Bergado and Almaguer, 2002). This social isolation for Cumming and Henry is an inevitable stage which facilitates the severing of a person's relationship with other community members and wider institutional arrangements. This argument is based on the systems

theory. The theory assumes that society is a system in balance. It (society) continuously seeks stability and equilibrium. Thus disengagement is seen as a process that contributes to social equilibrium by making the exit of its members predictable and relatively less disruptive. With regards to the disengagement theory, Levin (1980:45) argues "when the individual and society are mutually engaged; with the individual and the society both desiring such involvement, balance is maintained. Similarly, when both society and the individual wish to disengage, balance exists." At personal level, the ageing stage is portrayed as a turning point in the sense that the social world of the aged is turned increasingly inward (self-centred). In the process, the external concerns become less and less significant.

The disengagement theory is not without its problems:

- The theory is largely functionalist in nature. As with other functionalist-based perspectives, it overemphasises the coherence of societal institutions; more particularly the smooth transition of the elderly into later life.
- It tends to be Eurocentric in that some arguments made (such as references to formal retirement) are rooted in the experiences of the advanced capitalist societies. For these two reasons, it fails to capture the particularities of agrarian spaces in past and contemporary Africa.
- The current conditions of extreme disruptions and trauma which mark the lives and livelihoods of the elderly throughout the sub-Saharan region in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic are not addressed. the rising numbers of the AIDS orphans and the mounting responsibilities of the elderly in caring for the orphans are left out.
- In contrast with the disengagement theory, the recycling of the elderly occurs at a later stage; when individuals are supposedly resting and withdrawing from life activities. In addition to that, , some extremely challenging situations in the advanced capitalist nations over the last few years led to the recycling of long-retired workers. in the United States of America, retired soldiers better known as the 'Individual Ready Reserves' were called back into action during the US involvement in the Iraq wars of the 1990s and 2000s (Force, 2007). Overall, the disengagement theory is flawed in its explanations of the phenomenon of the gerontocratic communities of southern Africa; where the elderly come first in the assignment of pivotal community roles like kingship.

2.2.4 Life Course Theory

As an alternative to the social disengagement theory, Riley and Riley (1999) argued that ageing can best be understood in the context of the ongoing interplay between structure and agency; more

specifically between social structures and institutions on one hand and individual agency and social practices on the other. Ageing individuals are therefore involved in the dynamism of structures, while structures influence the practices of the elderly . Thus there is no reason why ageing as a social process should inherently segregate the aged; as it involves the integration of the elderly into new roles and responsibilities which are central to social cohesion. Likewise, ageing may either facilitate or constrain the elderly in terms of their involvement in critical community obligations. This means that ageing takes on different dimensions across history and space; such that there is no essentialised characteristics and universal conditions of being aged. Thus ageing is a socially constituted process which has differing cultural meanings and embodies varying life experiences.

As Riley (1973:36) states in her life course theory of ageing: "As the society changes, each new cohort encounters a unique sequence of social events. Hence the life-course patterns of people in one cohort will differ in some respect from the life-course patterns of other cohorts." In this respect, different cohorts age in different ways. Ageing therefore assumes varying facets in different communities over time; such that the very meaning of of ageing in Africa may not fit well with the meanings prevailing in advanced capitalist nations. Depending on the nature of the socio-economic changes and cultural beliefs of a particular community, the meaning of ageing can vary For instance, a ninety-year old person is considered as elderly not necessarily because he/she has become useless; but possibly because his understanding of the ingrained practices of the community are under serious challenge from newly-emerging views and life styles. His ideas and skills remain significant among the persons belonging to his cohort; but are made seriously ineffective by inevitable community changes.

Elderly people are generally defined as individuals who are advanced in years; whose community and societal roles have become compromised and devoid of meaning and significance by everchanging institutional arrangements and values. They, and their ideas, are seen as no longer having a place within the mainstream society dominated by the younger generations. However, the scenario cannot be universalised as a portrait of aging and the aged across time and space. In African communities, the story is vastly different. Age is established in African social structures as a measure for entering a higher cultural position in the community. Among the Kalanga tribe of Zimbabwe, old age brings with it prestige and honour, including being relied upon for advice on familial matters and cultural practices (Malaba, 2011). It is linked to the relinquishing of deviant activities inherent within more youthful stages of life like various petty crimes. It culturally disassociates the elderly from some heavy and dirty tasks of the household such as herding the cattle in the bush. However, the meaning of ageing and the cultural functions associated with it are now subjected to serious challenges in the

Kalanga communities due to high prevalence of death amongst the young and active working age groups. An increase in the numbers of orphans who desperately need familial care services forcibly recycle the elderly back into action (from resting to assuming parental duties).

2.2.5 Inconsistencies in the ageing definitions

The United Nations defines older persons as individuals aged sixty years and above (Mathur and Kumar, 2013). In Africa south of the Sahara, this is problematic. Most of the elderly especially women in Africa are illiterate. They do not have written records of their age. They do not know their birthdates and chronological ages (Spitzer et al., 2009; Kabole et al., 2013), partly, this was caused by problems in the procurement of birth certificates by individuals under the colonial regimes. Additionally, they were never involved in formal education. As such, they do not fully appreciate the importance of having identity cards. Furthermore, the cultural definition of old age in Africa is not necessarily linked to a particular biological age. It is more functional in nature. Individuals are considered to be old when they lose their strength. For women, they are considered old when they no longer menstruate; and having passed the child-bearing age (Orner, 2005). People much younger than sixty years may be considered as old based on these criteria.

In the year 2000, the Minimum Data Set (MDS) project on Ageing in Sub-Saharan Africa was jointly pursued by a number of African countries to gather data on the elderly in Africa. The incompatibility of the existing definitions dominated by mainstream notions of ageing in local communities led the MDS project delegates to devise more culturally-sensitive definitions of ageing. The chronological ageing point of sixty years failed to be applicable. Quite a significant number of the elderly had no birth certificates. The retirement age as a mark of ageing was not relevant as many elderly (particularly in rural areas) had never been formally employed. Overall, these factors led the MDS project to consider the age of fifty years as the chronological ageing stage (Kowal, 2001; May, 2003). Thus for African communities, there is no clear-cut and standard tipping out at which it is possible to decisively label a particular individual as elderly.

2.2.6 Cultural parameters

The manner in which marriage is organised in some African cultures embodies significant meanings to ageing. The cultural institutionalisation of forced marriage arrangements speaks to the notion of ageing in the local communities. Marriage arrangements of this nature are still practised among the Zulu and the Shona tribes of South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively (Kambarami,

2006:1). In forced marriages, the husband is (in most cases) an old man who is capable of utilising his physical fitness to sexually satisfy the young lady whom he is given as wife. This is in conflict with the sexlessness and reduced emotional capacity of the ageing individuals portrayed in the theories above. The first half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of the Zionist and Apostolic religious movements in Southern Africa as forms of African resistance to colonial definitions on their traditional lifestyle (Togarasei, 2005). One notable dimension of these movements was their vested interest in the elderly in occupying leadership positions. In these religious sects, appointment to leadership positions is mainly determined by virtue of being an elderly. The notion upholds the elderly as wise and managerially capable due to their vast life experiences; a view which directly contradicts the theories above on the elderly's reduced mental capacity. More so, the sects strongly advocate for polygamous marriages in which young ladies are encouraged to marry older men. In this regard, they can be viewed as explicitly disapproving of the ageing theory of Cumming and Henry which portrays the elderly as deficient in mental reasoning, sexually weak and marked by a hopeless future.

Another way of deducing some African meanings of ageing is by closely examining the cultural games and traditional forms of entertainment. Traditional dances such as *Shangara*, *Jerusarema*, *Majukwa* and *Muchongoyo* (all of which are physically demanding) are performed by elderly members of the Shona communities in Zimbabwe (Chitando and Turino, 2000). The elderly are called upon to perform these dances in stylish fashions during community gatherings and traditional rituals. Again, the meaning of an elderly African individual as portrayed by the dances is totally different from Cumming and Henry's seemingly weak and miserable elderly beings. These African dances reflect the elderly as individuals full of energy and ability to command community respect and attention. The elderly dancers are portrayed as intelligent and dynamic.

On another note, Mbuya Nehanda of Zimbabwe was an elderly woman who led the Shona tribe to rise up against the imposition of colonial rule on the Zimbabwe plateau in the year 1896 (Beach, 1998). She rose above the notion of weakening strength alluded to in biological ageing. She overcame the cultural boundaries of gender and women subordination, to assume a national leadership role. Up to this day, she remains a legendary pillar of strength and inspiration among Zimbabweans long after her assassination by colonial forces during the late 19th century. In this sense, the ageing process leads to a situation where some elderly individuals obtain community positions of prominence and heroism.

When the ageing individuals in Africa fail to positively align the changes that occur in their bodies to the high expectations of their communities, they are considered as unworthy of the category of the elderly. They do not meet the social obligations placed upon them. Hence, they become almost

irrelevant to the life-course of the community. In so far as ageing individuals live up to these expectations and obligations such as the traditional role of socialising the youth into the norms and values of their local communities. They are socially defined as elderly and accorded the due respect. The elderly achieve this socialisation role through narrating folk tales as well as spelling out the taboos and avoidances of their respective communities to the younger members. In this sense, ageing in Africa is arguably associated with the increase in wisdom. Such wisdom is also reflected in the settling of community disputes by the elderly at village courts.

In Africa, old age is positioned within the confines of witchcraft. As an individual becomes more advanced in years his spirituality increases. Based on this, the elderly are believed to possess some supernatural powers. They use the super natural powers to guard their families against Harm. However, the guarding techniques may be in form of causing serious harm to the alleged fowlers of the family. A man who impregnates an unmarried young lady of the family and totally refuses responsibility is dealt with accordingly through private remote vengeance mechanisms (witchcraft) by the elderly members of the family. Thus the powers of controlling the fate of the family come together with ageing. Consequently, many elderly women are believed to be witches in African communities (Harries, 2008). Some scholars theorise witchcraft to be a mere reflection of conflicting values and competing interests for scarce resources like land among the elderly and the younger community members (Mavhungu, 2000; Chileshe, 2005; Peters, 2012). However, witchcraft is part and parcel of the defining attributes of ageing in African communities. Some elderly practice traditional healing while others perform essential traditional ceremonies like rainmaking through similar ritual powers (Truter, 2007). From the same spiritual possession, the elderly minister at the national sacred centres in Zimbabwe such as the Njelele sacred shrine in western Zimbabwe (Rutsate, 2007).

The above roles constitute a big package of the functions of the elderly within the family and local community continuums. However, the assumption of these roles by the elderly is not smooth. It is sometimes met by stiff resistance in spite of the roles being culturally pronounced. The stiff resistance stems from competing ideologies like Christianity which is totally against ancestral worship. The larger proportion of the family members needed for the ancestral functions may be out of the local communities working in neighbouring countries and studying abroad. Additionally, the resources needed to carry out the appeasement rituals for acknowledging the spirit may be financially unaffordable. When such spirituality is not given a social platform and due respect, it reveals itself in the ageing individuals informally through deviant behaviour. The spirit battles out to forcefully position itself in the family. In the scenario, the aged individual begins to determine the fate of the family or

community secretly usually against the wishes of the respective family members. He may (through witchcraft remote) cause misfortunes to befall some employed family members abroad so that they are dismissed from work and come back home to perform the acknowledgement rituals for the spirituality of the aged individual. Such a struggle for recognition by the spirit is the one which is labelled as witchcraft of the elderly in the African communities; yet it is a default feature of ageing.

2.2.7 The Stage Screening Philosophy

As indicated above, ageing is a social construct. This can be understood by elevating it into the philosophical realm. In this regard, the community takes the form of a stage with the obligation of accommodating all actors willing to perform. Various characters come from many angles and move onto the stage. As they merge, not all of them can be accommodated by the limited space of the stage. Furthermore, they are difficult to organise into performing one play due to differences between them; and the tense atmosphere that they create. In order to bring order for the performance to take place on the stage, some of the characters are screened out and dislodged from the stage through various means; consensually but sometimes more coercively. The stage is left with a minimum number of characters possible. In this allegory, the play represents the social interaction and organisation of the community which results in the realisation of the community objectives. Quite often, the elderly disappear from the stage (public arena of the community) together with thieves, robbers, drug dealers, prostitutes, lesbians, gays and witches. Such groups are off-loaded to the spaces beyond the curtains. They are considered unsuitable for participation in the public realm. In the case of lesbians and gays (in many parts of Africa), this may literally entail physical harassment and imprisonment by law enforcement agencies. This happens when they become more active in community engagement (Menyawi, 2012). In the case of the elderly, they are sometimes beaten and falsely accused of practising witchcraft (Hungwe, 2005). They are further derailed from the mainstream community.

Expressed in other words, the community is oversubscribed in terms of social groups such that some are subjected to discrimination. This is done quite often to relieve the community structures of destructive and immoral tendencies. When a community falls under challenge from highly-threatening external shocks, its structures flex in order to cope with the external force in defending the survival of the community. It executes this through some systematic screening of the marginalised elements back onto the stage. The recycling of the elderly into assuming the familial care roles for the AIDS orphans in the community is a typical example. It is at the point (when the individuals advanced in years are screen off the stage) that terms like ageing are coined in the community.

2.3 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) entails the understanding of how different people in different places construct and maintain a living in the context of their peculiar localities. Chambers (1991:1) argues that a livelihood consists of "capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities for a means of living". This definition encompasses a combination of the resources used and the activities undertaken in order to ensure a sustainable livelihood. The framework arose in direct response to the failure of mainstream modernisation theories to understand and champion the development deficiencies and challenges prevailing in the less developed world. The framework surfaced as the modernisation theories were far removed from the social values and cultural dimensions of the rural communities of Africa. The need for alternatives were clear, including development theories and methodological approaches sensitive to, and building upon the participation of the local communities, in consideration of their cultural and social values and internal capabilities. The SLF came out of this historical background as it positioned development activities and practices in a manner which prioritised the reasoning, experiences and the agency mechanisms of the local communities rather than the supposed liberating potential of grand structures of capitalism.

For the SLF, when development interventions and practices accommodate local priorities, the achievement of sustainable livelihoods is enhanced. In this sense, the framework is constituted by both analytical tools and normative ideals. The overriding advantage of the sustainable livelihoods framework (compared to other sociological approaches) is that it is holistic, non-sectoral and inclusive in incorporating pertinent themes and dimensions of livelihoods within its analytical lens. It includes the structural conditions shaping livelihoods (including structural variables beyond the local as well as specific conditions of vulnerability), the available resources existing at community and household levels, actor-centred experiences, diverse livelihood strategies and practices, and livelihood outcomes. Therefore, the questions of structure and agency are bound up within the framework, though arguably agency in particular is brought to the fore based on the recognition of the inherent potential ingrained within the human condition. Thus what people do as well as their capability to change what they do, is influenced by their varying social contexts.

Ultimately, the SLF seeks to go beyond a static understanding of social phenomena to accommodate the dynamism of these phenomena through a complex array of cause-and-effect relationships and interactive chains of events. The SLF recognise the existence of power relations both within communities and households, and the broader power structures which impact on more localised social arrangements, such that the pursuit of livelihoods regularly entails competition, conflict,

subordination and marginalisation.

A livelihood, in terms of the initial articulation of the framework, comprises three concepts: namely, capability, equity and sustainability (Chambers and Conway, 1991). These three interrelated concepts point to both the livelihood process and the outcome (or product) of livelihoods, and I now discuss them in detail.

2.3.1 Capability and Equity

The term capability is very broad and elusive, and it has both proactive and reactive connotations. For Chambers and Conway (1991:17), capability implies the "ability of communities to exercise foresight, experiment and innovate; the ability to compete and collaborate with others as well as exploiting new conditions and resources". Generally, it refers to what people can achieve in their lives (through livelihood strategies) given their entitlements (resources, capital assets) (Scoones, 1998).

It expresses a proactive dimension through the ways in which households are able to formulate, device and pursue new livelihood opportunities. As households or broader social groups become innovative and creative, they are able to strategically position themselves in obtaining a scarce source of livelihood. At the same time, capability expresses a more reactive dimension insofar as households regularly struggle to hold back the shocks and stressful occurrences confronting them on an erratic and ongoing basis.

The exercise and enhancement of various forms of capability are meant to result in the sustainability of a livelihood. All this take place in the context of power relations and scenarios of competition. Households within communities in enacting their capabilities may compete and seek to outmanoeuvre each other in accessing a scarce resource. Clearly, capability is not static as it entails ongoing processes in which capacities are subject to ups and downs in the context of changing life conditions and lived experiences.

This is of relevance to the focus of the thesis, namely, the practices of the elderly in Mangwe District in caring for orphans in the face of the AIDS pandemic. The thesis examines the livelihood capabilities of the elderly; the burdens, stresses and shocks that they experience in their own lives and their reactive responses to these adverse conditions; their proactive ability to discover, innovate, adapt and make use of new livelihood opportunities in their localities; and the vibrancy of the elderly-centred household unit despite the crushing force of the pandemic. Capability enables the elderly to work their way through risky conditions as well as manipulate such situations to their advantage and the orphans.

Chambers and Conway (1991) argue that equity is measured in terms of income distribution.

More broadly, it points to the limited forms of the unequal distribution of assets, capabilities and opportunities across households, social groups and communities. Inequity takes on different forms. It includes discrimination against groupings such as the elderly and women, and the deprivations experienced by the rural poor with regard to basic services like water, health and education. A more encompassing definition of equity would include decent livelihoods for marginalised community members, with the equalization of opportunities in accessing community assets and the levelling of capacity being preconditions for gaining decent livelihoods as characterised by basic standards of human dignity. Equity then is a means to attaining the widening of sustainable livelihoods throughout different localities as it invariably involves some form of socio-economic redistribution. It is understood as a product and a condition which forms the bedrock of sustainable communities in the uncertain future. Equity does not arise without deliberate interventions. The deliberate interventions may take the form of targeted state programmes or struggles at more local levels that articulate the quest for equity.

In the case of this thesis, equity is central as it demands an understanding of the extent to which the livelihoods of the AIDS orphans are disadvantaged by their marginalised social status; and the ways in which the elderly are repositioning themselves in Mangwe district by reasserting their right to exist and their social prominence within the rural communities in terms of their increasing involvement in the delivery of familial care to the orphans. As it stands, both the elderly and the orphans tend to occupy a marginalised social position in Africa. The elderly care for the AIDS orphans without adequate resources and knowhow of their new social obligations (Fouad, 2005). The absence of equity entails the remoteness of the newly-emerging and increasing numbers of the AIDS orphans, whose presence in local communities is failing to be recognized by the existing social structures; thereby leaving the orphans without a guaranteed well-being. In this sense, equity points to the need for the prioritisation of the welfare needs of the orphans by the local communities in their support mechanisms to the household unit.

As such, equity is being addressed in terms of communities being able to strike a balance between their prevailing marginalised status and the trickling down of social opportunities and local resources to the marginalised rural elderly and the orphans under their custody. The ways in which the elderly in Mangwe communities are enhancing their capabilities in orphan care simultaneously involves a challenge to conditions of inequity in the communities and broadens the community-based sustainability at household level. Any measure of increased equity involves increased opportunities and capabilities for the elderly to handle the impact of the AIDS pandemic at household level. Thus it

relates to the elderly being recycled back into action in terms of their AIDS-related familial responsibilities.

2.3.2 Sustainability

The notion of sustainability in the literature on development has, for a number of years, been a buzzword. Though it is increasingly associated with sustainability of nature, ecosystems and natural resources in the context of the ravages of global capitalism, this thesis focuses on sustainability of human livelihoods and the capacity of rural communities to maintain and improve livelihoods while enhancing the resource base on which they survive.

A livelihood can be viewed as sustainable if it can "cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource" (Scoones, 2009: 175). According to Chambers and Conway (1991), sustainability refers to the maintenance and enhancement of resources (assets and capitals) on a long-term basis. In this sense, sustainability highlights the conditions which are a means for livelihoods to be supportive of both present and future generations. Sustainability thus becomes a measurement for assessing the extent to which a social system (community or household) is able to cope with conditions of stress and shock (Bird and Shepherd, 2003). It is an indicator of the ability of a household to retain and enhance its capabilities under challenging conditions. As such, it is a function of how assets and capabilities are utilised, maintained and enhanced for the preservation of livelihoods. However, the key problem entails operationalising sustainability (measuring it empirically). At times, the livelihoods framework is used without engaging the question of sustainability significantly.

As for the rural elderly in Africa (Mangwe included), they sacrifice their meagre resources to ensure the sustainability of their families and households through the provision of orphan care services. Though household compositions are undergoing significant changes and household structures crumbling, the elderly are making significant efforts to ensure that the AIDS orphans are familiarly cared for; and that there is a move towards minimising the conditions of unsustainability and allowing for the regeneration of household units over time.

2.3.3 Livelihoods

Simply expressed, a livelihood is a means of gaining a living (Chambers and Conway, 1991). The term 'livelihood' refers to a portfolio of activities which facilitates and enhances the lives of, for instance, the rural poor (Ellis, 1998). These include own-consumption, formal and informal

employment activities, and commodity-based market transactions. In this regard, shifts toward conditions of equity, heightened capabilities by broadening access to resources, and ongoing coping with shocks, vulnerabilities and crises over both the short and long term (sustainability), all contribute to maximising the lives and livelihoods of rural households and communities. The ways in which these three dimensions (equity, capability and sustainability) work themselves out are contingent on both temporal and spatial variations. In most cases, this is not only community-specific but also household-specific. For marginalised social groupings, either subordinated or excluded in some way; the problems in the construction of durable livelihoods are more pronounced, as the evidence about the elderly in Mangwe demonstrates.

The Mangwe elderly are merely one example, and age is merely a single form of social structuring. Others include gender, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic status. Competition around access to grazing pastures among various ethnic groups in east Africa (Kenya and Ethiopia) endangers the livelihoods of some pastoralists (Bujra 2002); with some weaker groups experiencing exclusion. In other instances, market sales of land in rural areas meant for agricultural production, disrupt and undercut the livelihood activities of land-short small-scale farmers. The recent purchase of large tracts of land in Chisumbanje communal lands of Zimbabwe by the Green Fuels company for ethanol production clashed with the peasant farming activities of the chronically poor farmers of the Chisumbanje locality (Mujere and Dombo, 2011).

The elderly in Mangwe, along with the AIDS orphans under their care, are not powerful groups able to impose themselves on other groups. In many rural communities, they live under social circumstances which are not of their making. They negotiate and manoeuvre their lives and livelihoods in severely constrained and inhibiting social environments. In doing so, the elderly display some agency and draw on (in remarkable, resilient and creative ways) the most minimal of assets imaginable. In this context, the SLF points to a number of capitals or assets which enable households to construct and pursue livelihoods in form of human, economic and social dimensions. Below I provide a three-fold categorisation of natural, social and economic capital.

2.3.3.1 Natural capital

In the study of rural communities, the question of natural capital (nature, land and land-based resources) invariably comes to the fore particularly for the rural poor. The main point relates to the ways in which rural households interact and engage with their nature-based context in pursuing different livelihoods, including seeking to protect, sustain and regenerate the land-based resources.

Besides agricultural activities (both cropping and animal husbandry), many communal resources are of great significance. The resources include bushes, wild fruits, wild grasses, wild animals, insects and fish. Quite often, the above communal resources are not accounted for in state-recorded national statistics; yet harvesting them is a crucial livelihood activity in times of erratic rainfall and drought. Based on the notion of the tragedy of the commons, access to and overuse of common property resources among the poor are blamed for causing desertification, deforestation and soil erosion.

However, access and use of the resources is regulated by a range of cultural discourses and practices throughout much of rural Africa. These highlight the complex and intimate character of the nature-society interface (and the very rootedness of human existence in nature). Nature therefore is protected from the wrath of unsustainable human intrusions with a range of prohibitions in place in guarding them against unfettered extraction and exploitation. In this regard, the notion of natural capital runs counter to rural communities' cultural discourse about nature, as the term 'capital' implies the marketisation and commodification of nature; as expressed in the term natural resources. Whether nature or natural resources, there is no doubt that the rural households constantly draw on the local resources as a form of security in both good and bad times.

2.3.3.2 Social capital

Social capital is an important component of the sustainable livelihoods framework. It is seen as particularly critical for the chronically poor in times of uncertainty, disruption and flux. When health and other social services delivery falter; when long-standing opportunities for making a living are undermined, the very survival of the poor households and their capacity to regenerate becomes hugely problematic.

Social capital as a resource existing at individual, household and community levels comprises intangible assets involving established social relations and networks which enhance cooperation and survival. The relations may also entail interaction with external bodies including state bodies and non-governmental organisations (de Sousa, 1999; Bebbington and Carroll, 2000). In rural Africa, mutually-supportive social arrangements have always been in place. These included community-based cooperative work groups. These are underpinned by some abiding notions of a moral economy based on indigenous knowledge systems, cosmologies and practices which prioritise the public good (Barr et al, 2011; Gregson et al, 2011; Campbell et al, 2013). At the same time, it is important not to over-romanticise social capital as social arrangements which are inherently inclusive for all. Embedded in social capital are often relationships of power and exclusion which are the very cause of

marginalisation and poverty in rural communities of Africa.

In the case of traditional African societies, this more exclusionary form of social capital existed; but in a manner which was rarely questioned and often with considerable benefits for all. For example, based on cultural mandates, the confinement of the performance of rituals like the rainmaking ceremony and the chieftainship to particular clans in local communities took place (Hyland and Umenne, 2006; Chirikure and Pwiti, 2008). This was institutionalised with broad-based legitimacy. When leadership positions in a given community were specifically assumed by members of a particular family, it reduced social unrest in the particular community. On the part of the privileged clans, leadership skills became widely accepted and socially institutionalised within community structures. In such cases, present and future generations within the clans were rest assured of socially in-built structures which guided them in carrying out their social responsibilities. This was based on some implicit understanding of a moral economy.

With respect to social capital and exclusionary processes under contemporary conditions of capitalism, those excluded are hugely disadvantaged. This can be seen in the case of communal areas in Africa; where chiefs or headman may informally sell land to an outsider to the detriment of land-short locales (Drimie, 2002; Chimhowu and Woodhouse 2008). In the case of the Zimbabwean fast track land reform programme which commenced in the year 2000, a number of powerful individuals used their social connections to access many fast track farms; thereby marginalising the landless rural inhabitants in desperate need of rural livelihoods (Makumbe, 2009; Mujere and Dombo, 2011). Thus, social capital may be either inclusive or exclusive. In examining the rural elderly and orphans in Mangwe, emphasis will be placed on the more inclusionary and supportive character of social networking.

Social capital in this regard entails prioritising the needs and interests of the marginalised social groups of the community such as the elderly and the orphans. This inclusiveness is reinforced under the conditions of vulnerability, crisis and threat (including the AIDS pandemic). Enduring cultural arrangements in many rural African communities still exist in which vulnerable people unite on the basis of common origins, history and identity; in the common cause of seeking protection by polling their efforts together. The arrangements take the form of clan-based identities, burial societies and village ties. In this context, Scoones (1998:8) highlights the importance of social resources in the pursuit of livelihood activities in rural Africa. These include "social networks, social claims, social relations, affiliations, associations". The adequate realisation of these resources has a significant impact on the livelihoods of the chronically poor in times of crises. Engaging in these networks is not pre-

destined but is part and parcel of the innovativeness, resilience and agency of the poor in defending their lives.

2.3.3.3 Economic and Financial Capital

The economic capital of households includes such objects and activities as "food, stocks, stores of value such as gold, jewellery and woven textiles, and cash savings in banks of thrift and credit schemes" (Chambers and Conway 1991:23). However, this definition does not fully apply to the study of the chronically poor rural households of Africa as most of them do not have bank accounts. Nevertheless, they possess a range of tangible assets which include land and a variety of rudimentary farming equipment. They engage in trading activities involving some home-made crafts, intermittent wage labour on nearby commercial farms; and receiving remittances (Ndlela, 2006; Mbereko, 2010). Land is a crucial economic asset and small-scale agriculture as it provides food sustenance, either in the form of crops or animal husbandry. The importance of agriculture for rural households is open to considerable spatial variations. Its significance can be declining in semi-arid areas with climatic change and the onset of more erratic rainfall patterns for rain-fed agricultural activities. Peasant farming practised by local communities results in food being produced for home consumption and occasionally, for locally-based market sales. Cattle and goats are kept under the communal free range system (Kumbata, 2009; Lebbie, 2004). These animals are sometimes disposed of through distress sales during periods of financial stress.

In addition, remittances play a major role in alleviating the plight of rural households. In southern Africa, the large economy of South Africa houses many migrant workers from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho and Swaziland (Harington et al, 2004; Ncube and Gomez, 2013). The migrant workers send remittances in form of cash and groceries to their home communities throughout the year. Apart from that, the economic capital also exists in the form of claims, including demands, appeals, loans and gifts (Chambers and Conway, 1991:25). This relates back to the significance of social capital. In times of stress and shocks, claims for assistance may be directed to relatives, neighbours, village heads and chiefs as well as faith-based groups. This assistance is expected to be forthcoming as a matter of right.

2.3.4 Sustainable Ageing

The sustainable livelihoods framework specifically focuses on how rural communities devise mechanisms for coping with stresses and shocks within the conditions of their own existence, with the

focus of this thesis being on the chronically poor elderly in the rural areas (Scoones, 1998). The framework facilitates an understanding of the elderly which does not simply treat them as victims trapped within the bounds of their chronological age and as marginalised members of rural communities. This thereby transforms the ageing stage into a period marked by specific forms of human adaptation and agency despite if not because of the generally marginalised condition of the rural elderly (Aliber, 2001; Fouad, 2005). The adaptive capabilities of the elderly are not reactive measures. Rather, they entail significant socially-mediated responses to the challenging circumstances in their lives which cannot be simply read-off from the above situations. In the context of this thesis, the AIDS crisis presents the elderly with a mammoth task of caring for orphans, and the SLF contributes to understanding the ways in which the elderly manage the new familial roles with very little external intervention. In so far as they do so, it is possible to speak about sustainable ageing. According to Lehning and Harmon (2013), sustainable ageing refers to the ability of the original premises of an individual to support his behavioural changes in later life. The original premise refers to the individual's home or his community of origin.

The changes come about as a result of the physiological and biological changes of the body. The changes are prevented from impacting negatively on the ageing individual by promoting his adaptability to his original habitat. This is realisable through the creation of surroundings which accommodate the free movement and presence of the elderly in their communities. The creations of walkable neighbourhoods, accessible accommodation and improved security measures as well as reduced crime are good examples. The theory is based within the western environment where the institutionalisation of the elderly is on the rise. However, the basic underlying feature of the need for the adaptability of an individual to his environment can be borrowed to explain the African context. The feature marks the avenue which the rural elderly in Mangwe are walking in their coping with the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The adaptation of the elderly is consistent with the cultural values and traditional practices of the local communities which, when respected have the capacity to promote the survival strategies of the elderly. In this sense, the rural elderly (such as in Mangwe), are "aging in place" which is derived from their "sense of attachment, familiarity and identity with the home and neighbourhood environment" (Lehning and Harmon, 2013:5). The elderly are the ones in the localised place. The custodians of the cultural philosophies of a given local community are the respective elderly who permanently reside in the particular community.

Sustainable ageing surfaces as the elderly effectively reproduce and maintain rural livelihood activities within the cultural philosophies and territorial confines of their respective communities in the

interest of the HIV/AIDS orphans whom they look after. It results from the increased adaptability of the elderly which is brought about in the light of the acknowledgement of the deeply-rooted cultural heritage of local communities. Folk tales, totems, taboos and avoidances, social interpretation of the sounds and activities of local animals and birds as well as knowledge of medicinal plants and wild foodstuffs comprise the cultural heritage. Insofar as this entails the reactivation of the long-standing cultural respect for the elderly which may have diminished over time in recent decades, it minimises the significance of detrimental attitudinal tendencies and social practices against ageing individuals. In this sense, the AIDS pandemic – despite its harrowing effects – has had the unintended consequence of safeguarding the territorial space and cultural roles of the elderly against the disturbing developments in the local communities. This points to the revival of household units and the regeneration of the local communities insofar as the elderly reactivate their honoured positions and culturally-ingrained social networks in caring for AIDS orphans.

2.4 Conclusion

In summing up, ageing is a social phenomenon embedded in the advanced stages of the human life cycle. It is biologically and socially defined. The biological explanations of ageing serve to illustrate the changing physiological make up of the human body across the cultural and social boundaries of the communities. The social parameters seek to unpack it along the values and the differing capabilities of the communities. The chapter merges the scientific ageing theories with the fragmented African philosophies on ageing to provide conditions conducive to unveil the Mangwe scenario under study. On the other hand, the study of the sustainable livelihoods paradigm is based on understanding the realities of the struggle of poor people on the principle of their participation in determining the priorities for practical intervention. The unsustainability of ageing results from the social and familial constraints which cost the elderly's some social opportunities in favour of the welfare of the HIV/AIDS orphans. Ageing is a social construct which serve to reduce damaging pressure on the structures of the community. The pension benefits and state social security schemes which the elderly are entitled to in many countries do not exist in Zimbabwe which harnesses the study. Consequently, the elderly's instinct-driven cause to advance the welfare of the orphans stimulates their creativity in designing some survival strategies. The in-built capacity enables the elderly to cope with the desperate conditions in eking out a living under the harsh conditions of rural communities. Such innovative survival patterns of the elderly are rooted within the sustainable livelihoods framework. Thus the chapter provides the platform for fitting the SLF as a guiding theory for the study.

CHAPTER 3:
RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

The fieldwork of the study was carried out in the Hobodo Ward of Mangwe District in Matebeleland South Province of Zimbabwe from July to October 2012. The fieldwork sought to address the main objective of the thesis, namely, to understand the livelihood practices of the elderly with regards to their provision of familial care to the increasing HIV/AIDS orphans. This was explored in the context of the wide-ranging ramifications of the AIDS pandemic and the broader socio-economic crisis in Zimbabwe. The elderly individuals under study were 60 years of age and above. The individuals considered as orphans under the study were 17 years of age and below. The rising number of orphans in the district comprised orphans with 1 living parent and those with both parents deceased. In both scenarios, the death of parents usually resulted from HIV/AIDS-related diseases. The research for the thesis entailed a qualitative methodology. In addition to the above chapter content, the following themes are also addressed in the chapter: case study and the sampling techniques for the study. Variables are covered in respect of the manner they defined the coping of the elderly. Various data collection techniques used in the fieldwork are discussed. The challenges faced by the research team during the fieldwork are presented. The chapter closes by discussing some research ethics which were instituted to protect the rights and the safety of the research participants during the fieldwork of the research.

3.2 Research Site and Period of Study

The research site for the thesis namely Hobodo ward, is located in Mangwe district. The ward is located approximately 143 kilometres south of Plumtree town and falls along the Zimbabwe-Botswana border. Mangwe district has eighteen wards, with Chief Hobodo's area constituting ward 16. Hobodo ward is made up of 6 villages. Each village comprises 6-10 kraals. A kraal consists of about 100 homesteads. 18 wards combine to form Mangwe rural district. Within Hobodo ward, there are 6 villages each with between 6-10 kraals. The 6 villages within Hobodo are: Daintambo, Mswiliswili, Rose Common, Thekwani, Khalanyoni and Lumawo.

The fieldwork was carried out in late 2012 in light of the sequence of events dating back to the year 2000 as described in chapter 4 of the thesis. It is important to note that the four months research period in late 2012 formed the spring season in Zimbabwe. The period was outside the main

agricultural season which lasts from November (planting) to April (harvesting). Thus the elderly guardians in Hobodo were off their farming activities. Hence, their cooperation in the research was assured.

3.3 Qualitative Methodology and Social Constructivism

The research was carried out using a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology is defined as a form of sociological investigation with "findings arrived from real-world settings where the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally" (Patton, 2002:39; Golafshani, 2003:600). Similarly, it is the type of "research conducted in a natural setting to investigate a social or human issue" (agostinho, 2005:2). Arguably, it is investigative and naturalistic in nature. Therefore, the research for this thesis entailed fieldwork in the natural setting of Mangwe District whereby the researcher physically encroached into the lives and livelihoods of Hobodo residents (the elderly and the orphans) for the purpose of conducting scientific investigations. Despite the existence of structural constraints impinging on their lives, the elderly in Hobodo negotiated their lives and livelihoods along the familial care demands of the orphans.

The dynamic nature and social complexity of rural livelihoods of Hobodo necessitated a research methodology which facilitated the capturing of such characteristics. The qualitative methodology was consistent with such a pursuit as it brought to the fore some locally-grounded contingent experiences and social meanings through which the elderly in Hobodo constructed their livelihoods in the face of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Considering the immense force and the damage rising out of the AIDS pandemic in Hobodo, the elderly were not in a strong position to adequately respond to the pandemic in relieving its strain on the lives of the orphans. Thus the coexistence of the elderly and the rising numbers of the orphans, and the social interrelations between them were difficult to comprehend at first. Consequently, it called for a qualitative research methodology sensitive to the quality and character of social relations. Overall then, the fieldwork research was qualitative and inductive in character; drawing upon existing literature to provide initial insights into questions around the elderly and orphans in the face of the AIDS pandemic.

The qualitative approach is located at the heart of social constructivism. In this respect, Crotty (1998:42) defines constructivism as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context". For this reason, the social constructivist approach informed my Hobodo qualitative research as the

fieldwork sought to identify and unpack the social experiences and meanings of the elderly in their struggle to cope with the AIDS pandemic in a manner responsive to the changing local circumstances. In the research, social constructivism was critical in accounting for the social formation of multiple and shifting realities in the Hobodo communities. These realities laid the bases and meaning for the various coping mechanisms and practices of the Hobodo elderly.

Two points are important in this context:

- The notion of ageing and the dimensions to it are historically varied. Under this assertion, the elderly are a socially constructed category of individuals based on the beliefs and the institutions of their particular social setting (community). The identification of the elderly as a distinct group ascertains their relevance and contributions in the community; the matter which forms the main thrust of this study in the context of Hobodo rural locality.
- The research, in line with social constructivism highlights the centrality of agency without ignoring structure. It stresses that local communities, even when marginalised from wider national processes, are able to withstand external challenges by developing their own means of adaptation. In doing so, the study emphasises the agency of the elderly in Hobodo. The orphans, as with other key agents in the Hobodo context demonstrate some agency. The recent thesis by Musvosvi C (2014) on children and AIDS in contemporary Zimbabwe shows that the AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children are not mere victims of the pandemic. They are able to respond to it effectively as active agents. Likewise, my thesis shows that the seemingly powerless and marginalised individuals in the community are not mere objects of others. Rather, they are subjects in their right in constructing and pursuing their lives and livelihoods.

3.4 Case Study

The research design for my thesis entailed an intensive and in-depth investigation of the adaptive mechanisms of the elderly in Hobodo with regards to their role in the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans. Defining case studies in a way consistent with qualitative methodology, Rowley J, (2002:18) views them as a form of inquiry which “investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. It points to ″The detailed examination of a single example of a class of phenomena" (Flyvbjerg, 2006:220). “Based on these points, the fieldwork for this thesis thoroughly investigated the means through which the elderly withstood the difficult rising demand for the care of the AIDS orphans within

the natural setting of Hobodo. The confinement of the fieldwork to one particular setting created research conditions best suited to an intensive examination of the complexities and fluidity qualities of the situation of the elderly and the AIDS orphans. The vagueness of the contingent meaning of elderly and the relationships between the elderly and the AIDS orphans as noted externally necessitated the use of the case study approach to delve into the everyday lives of the elderly in Hobodo.

The case study model made the research case distinct and clearly identifiable. This was done in line with the notion of a case as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Miles and Huberman, 1994:25). The Hobodo ward formed the case unit of analysis for the research. For this reason, my fieldwork was limited to Hobodo. The marking of spatial boundaries (Hobodo) was crucial in forming and framing the territorial space within which the study was to take place. This helped the specificities of the local and contingent lives of the elderly guardians and AIDS orphans to be identified, delineated and appreciated. Therefore, the boundaries of the case sought to ensure an in-depth understanding of the multi-layered realities of the elderly in Hobodo.

The spatial framing of the case study for the thesis invariably entailed some practical considerations such as the feasibility, attainability and practicability of the fieldwork. All research in some form, work within these practicalities. Hence, it is not an inherent weakness of this thesis to have spatially delimited the study for the purposes of addressing the broader research objective. The case study approach and the underlying qualitative methodology and social constructivism are meant to delve into the social processes, meanings and experiences in all their complexities and ambiguities within their particular localities. Therefore, the Hobodo fieldwork findings cannot be simply generalised on other communities.

3.5 Sampling

The Hobodo ward was randomly selected for the case study from the eighteen wards of Mangwe district. The Hobodo locality formed ward 16. The reason for using a delimited spatial unit was to achieve a case study for which the fieldwork would be feasible; research findings nuanced; and research objectives measurable and attainable. In the Hobodo ward, the fieldwork uncovered the existence of many elderly guardians and AIDS orphans whose exposed living conditions made them suitable for the study. The total number of the elderly guardians obtained from the records of the village health workers (the persons dealing with health matters in the Hobodo ward) was 97. A total of 379 orphans were recorded in the books of the village health workers. 130 orphans out of the 379 above were cared for by the elderly under study. The above figures were for the whole ward.

Besides Hobodo as the overall case study, forty households were selected for research purposes. In this regard, 25 households were randomly selected from the six villages in the ward. The remaining 15 homesteads were purposively sampled based on exploratory research which indicated that they had unique characteristics. All 40 households comprised units where elderly persons took care of the HIV/AIDS orphans. 42 elderly guardians were selected for the study, 30 of whom were randomly selected from the 25 homesteads. The remaining 12 were selected through purposive sampling from the 15 homesteads which were purposively sampled. 44 orphans in the Hobodo ward were placed under study. Of these, 25 were randomly picked throughout the ward. 19 were purposively sampled from the 40 homesteads of the elderly guardians under study. The 19 were purposively sampled to give shape to the experiences and responses of the elderly under study. Thus the 19 helped to bring the responses of the elderly in to context and created some mutuality between two categories of participants (orphans and the elderly). The 25 orphans who were randomly chosen throughout the ward provided the scope for broadening the study in terms of coverage with regards to the even spacing of the research participants over the ward territory. This ensured that the data reflected the true picture of the various crisis experiences in the ward. In addition, some 16 child mothers were randomly chosen for the study. They were picked out throughout the whole of Hobodo. They were chosen out of a total of 37. These were largely border jumping returnees who possessed considerable data on the abuse of teenage orphans across the Zimbabwean borders. The study explored their welfare concerns now that they had children to nurse without substantive sources of survival. More so, data on their peculiar problems under the care of the elderly guardians was explored.

3.6 Variables

A variable is any entity which can take on different values in the research discourse (Southard, 2006). In the case of my thesis and the research underpinning it, I sought to stress the significance of variables in the Hobodo natural setting in which they were found. In the research, variables were important in capturing the relevance of activities of the elderly in a situation where many parents in the Hobodo ward were dying of AIDS and leaving their children behind in many cases to be looked after by the elderly. Overall, the HIV/AIDS pandemic was the key independent variable. The death of parents and the creation of orphans was the intervening variable. The dependent variable was the coping mechanisms of the elderly in caring for the orphans. This did not imply though a simple one-way or linear social process. The activities of the elderly might have had have a feedback effect on the AIDS pandemic by moderating the spread and the prevalence of the HIV infections. The study sought

to establish the reality within the confused situation. In terms of the main research objective, the most important variable studied was the dependent variable (the adaptive capacities of the elderly). The purpose of the research was to understand the variations in this variable in terms of specific activities and strategies devised by the elderly guardians in coping with the AIDS orphans phenomenon in the Hobodo locality. Therefore, the research sought to explore these activities, based on the fieldwork, leading for instance to the identification of such pursuits as the use of herbal medicines, remittances, reduction of daily meals and the exploitation of free forest products.

3.7 Data Collection Techniques

The triangulation of research techniques was employed in the collection of data in the field. The main techniques included various types of interviews such as semi-structured and open-ended. Some focus group discussions were conducted. In addition to that, some brief questionnaires were administered on the research participants. The use of several data gathering techniques ensured a multi-faceted exposition of the hardships encountered by the elderly and the orphans under their custody. It also helped to ensure that the weaknesses of a particular technique were compensated by the strengths of other techniques thereby enhancing the validity and credibility of the fieldwork data.

3.7.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire refers to a document which has questions including various items designed to make some investigations on matters demanding analysis (Earl, 1990:377; Acharya, 2010:2). Questionnaires are a structural component of qualitative research essential for soliciting some standardised data on chosen variables for analytical purposes. In the study, structured questionnaires containing close-ended questions were used on the elderly guardians. Various attributes of the elderly's coping skills were investigated through one word answers and short answer questions. The short answers were both fact-based and opinion-based but all being structured. The questionnaires unveil the abstract determinants which explained why and what the elderly employed to cope with the challenging needs of the orphans in a quantifiable manner. Their varied forms of livelihoods were investigated. The number of orphans which an individual elderly guardian cared for and whether he/she was able to adequately provide for the orphans' needs was investigated. In assessing the applicability of the term adequate to the elderly-orphans varying household situations, the number of decent meals afforded per day; whether the orphans were going to school and how many per household basis got under scrutiny. The forms of assistance the elderly and the orphans received from NGOs and the government were

explored. The elderly guardians' possession of decent shelter, grazing pastures, assets entitlement in terms of land and farming equipment were investigated. The investigations were guided by: good, poor and non-existent answers of the elderly guardians. The elderly's personal sentiments regarding their caring roles were explored. The elderly guardians were asked to express their views on the involvement of teenagers in border jumping activities in light of the increase in the numbers of orphans, HIV patients and burial costs of the dying teenagers on their part. The above matters combined to produce 13 questions which together formed the questionnaire of the elderly guardians. The need for the scientific verification of the reasons, consequences, peculiar differences and the unique involvement of the elderly in the care of the AIDS orphans within the Hobodo locality anchored the relevance of the questionnaires in the study.

Questionnaires were also administered on 44 orphans chosen for the study within the sampling framework contained in the sampling section above. The questionnaire for the orphans began by finding out from individual orphans, the gender of the guardian/s taking care of him/her. This enhanced understanding of the social concerns of the orphans as well as the gender ratio in the care obligations. The orphan's situation in terms of access to basic needs was sought with particular reference to accessibility to education, clothing and shelter. The orphans were asked to reveal what they liked most and what they disliked most about their guardians. This gave a clear picture of the nature of relations between the orphans and the elderly. The amount of time spent by the guardians in attending to the psycho-social concerns of the orphans was sought from the orphans' side. The guardians' attention to abuse incidents of the orphans was examined from the side of the orphans. To appreciate the dimensions of the socio-economic suffering of the orphans, differing circumstances surrounding their entitlement to benefit and use of the property of their deceased parents were explored. This helped in establishing the gravity of the suffering of the orphans in light of the limited caring efforts of the elderly guardians. The chances of the orphans having some chronic pains and how the elderly helped them out were explored. The matters above combined to produce 16 questions which made up the questionnaire of the orphans.

Both the elderly and the orphans were taken individually through the questionnaires to protect the confidentiality of sensitive issues of each individual. They were helped to fill in the questionnaires by the researcher and his assistant since most of them could not read and write. Some could write but their understanding of the English language was very poor. Being so, they needed assistance in filling in the questionnaires. So were the 16 child mothers taken through the questionnaires. The child mothers were randomly chosen to participate in the research out of a pool of 37. The questionnaires

opened up by finding out the gender of the guardian of the child mother being taken through a questionnaire. Inquiries surrounding their involvement in border jumping to neighbouring countries were made. Instances of the sexual harassment of the child mothers and the likely chances of the sexual harassments resulting in the impregnation of the child mothers and them contracting the HIV/AIDS disease were sought. Inquiry into the means through which they brought their babies back to Hobodo through illegal means from the neighbouring countries was investigated. The study sought to examine the psycho-social hardships and abuses which the child mothers encountered on daily bases together with their children. If they reported the abuses and psycho-social problems to their guardians, the reactions of the guardians were placed under investigation. The number of children that the child mothers individually had was inquired including their particular survival mechanisms.

The above matters combined to produce 9 questions which formed the questionnaire of the child mothers. The questionnaire did not produce much of the sensitive/private data which the child mothers sought to protect like the rape incidents. On this note, investigations with the group of child mothers were carried over into the group interviews. Questionnaires were carried out separately from interviews. This was done for the two techniques to complement each other in the collection of data. The questionnaires helped to guide the research participants in aligning their responses to the research objectives. The questionnaires were a strict tool of applying the research hypothesis in the fieldwork. Thus they were a means of breaking down the research problem into the laid out format. The laid out format enabled the research problem to be synthesised comprehensively. The laid down format cancelled out the biases of facial expressions and personal tones engraved in group interviews. More so, the laid down structure of the questionnaires transformed them into referral points for the research throughout the fieldwork. Some of the experiences of the elderly and the orphans were sensitive and needed a semi-private environment. The questionnaires insulated the study against the effects of the changing environments. They standardised the responses of the subjects in order to maintain the research design. The questionnaires produced confirmatory results.

Thus they made the fieldwork exercise scientific. On the other hand, the questionnaires relied heavily on instruments. This made them divorced to normal everyday life "with measurement processes creating a spurious or artificial sense of accuracy" (Harris and Brown 2010:2). Heterogeneity in terms of varied viewpoints of participants made the use of questionnaires effective. However, such varied thinking could be quite limited among participants of a rural locality undergoing an in-depth study as a result of them expressing very similar experiences. More so, Misinterpretation of figures and errors in analysing the questionnaires could result in the research findings being fallacious.

Incomplete memory and reluctance of the participants to open up on sensitive issues could jeopardise the whole questionnaire exercise.

3.7.2 Interviews

In social research, interviews are used to extract data from the varied experiences of individuals on phenomena occurring in a natural setting (bloom and Crabtree, 2006:314). In this case, the experiences under study were those of the elderly and the orphans residing in the Hobodo ward. The experiences incorporated the social views, beliefs and the innovative skills of the elderly and the orphans in making their way through the challenging and infrequent HIV/AIDS scourge. Some group interviews were conducted with some elderly guardians who were not part of the elderly who were randomly selected for individual questionnaires. Six group interviews were conducted throughout the ward, one from each of the six villages in the ward to ensure the capturing of similarities and differences across villages. Each group comprised 7 elderly guardians. The group interviews comprised the most vulnerable and frail elderly whose ability to move to identified points for group discussions was largely hampered by decreasing physical fitness. Consequently, the group interviews were conducted at some points near their homes. The interview notes were taken down by the research assistant. I also took notes on points raised by the elderly; points which I felt were pivotal in determining a break-through to some of the sensitive matters of the interviews. The research assistant did much of the taking down of the notes while I concentrated more on directing the interviews. I probed some questions to the elderly and sought clarity where need arose. The interviews presented the elderly with a chance of relating their experiences in a wholesome approach which brought out some pertinent matters which could be left out through the more structured questionnaires. Capturing the data through note-taking helped to fish out the relevant points out the long and winding stories of the elderly. After the interviews, I sat down with my research assistant to make sure that all the written points were clear basing the exercise on our fresh memories of the interviews.

A group interview was also held with the child mothers. Out of 16 child mothers who participated in the study, 9 of them agreed to participate in the group interview. The group interview was conducted to deduce the sensitive data which they had failed to provide through questionnaires. The child mothers felt embarrassed to relate to me in detail many of their rape incidents by thugs on the border-jumping routes and in workplaces in the neighbouring countries and in Bulawayo town due to culturally-based gender differences. Therefore, my research assistant who happened to be female and young (slightly older than the child mothers) conducted the group interviews. The group interview was

open-ended seeking the child mothers to say out whatever they felt embarrassed to reveal through the questionnaires. On this note, the child mothers opened up and related their experiences which were needed for the study. Tape-recording was used by the research assistant. I got hold of the tape-recorded material immediately after the group interview and made some notes as a back-up measure.

In addition to the above, some two separate interpersonal interviews were held with chief Hobodo and his headman respectively. The chief sat at the apex of the Hobodo locality. His views on the plight of the elderly guardians of the AIDS orphans in ward 16 were sought, as the chief had considerable knowledge of the coping mechanisms of the elderly and the well-being of the orphans in Hobodo. Another interpersonal interview was also held with the headman who was second in charge to chief Hobodo in terms of ranking in the positions of traditional powers in the ward. The interpersonal interviews were a means of reducing their individual conceptions regarding the Aids scourge in their jurisdiction. As for covering the interpersonal interviews with the chief and the headman, tape-recording was used. The reduction of this data into more comprehensive and shortened note formats was relatively easy for the two sessions comprised narratives of one participant each.

The less structured format of the interviews allowed the research set-up to penetrate the sensitive/personal social zones of the research participants. The initial contact between the researcher and some categories of the research participants was marked by uncertainty resulting from the unfounded fear of the participants over the objectives of the research. This caused high levels of anxiety between the two parties as a result of the interviews normally occurring under conditions of "apprehension, exploration and participation" (Bloom and Crabtree, 2006:316). The interviews allowed a reconstruction of the perceptions of the elderly in terms of defining them within the prevailing social cause of the increasing care demands of the rising numbers of the Aids orphans. Thus the interviews provided the scientific ingredient/means of testing the hypothesis of the research. Minter, (2003) argues that interviews provide a platform for the improvement of the accuracy of the data through the questioning, explaining and clarification of issues between the researcher and the research participants. The opportunity to prob verbal and non-verbal prompts of the participants enables the researcher to have more complete data. The flexible structure of interviews enable them to be carried out in less controlled natural environments like the Hobodo ward. This results in rich data being collected and new insights being explored (Minter, 2003).

On the other hand, the data may become saturated to an extent of posing some challenges during the analysis and processing stages (bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Interviews are costly in terms of being time consuming and the need for many resources to cover the setting up of schedules and the

conducting of the interviews as well as the inputting of data for analysis (Minter, 2003). In the fieldwork interviews, some of the stories of the elderly and the orphans were sensitive, long and winding. More so, drawing the elderly out of their normal routines into the schedule of the research was cumbersome.

3.7.3 Focus Groups

A focus group is a "discourse-producing machine" (Murgado-Armenteros *et al*., 2012:76). The group discourse is produced with the flow of ideas of the different participants in the focus discussions. Agreements, points of contention, various beliefs and interests of the focus group members reveal during the discussions. The above differences between the focus group members are the ones which the researcher employs in ascertaining the qualitative representativeness of a given community. Thus he detects the extent of the problem situation out of the responses of the members of a focus group. From a different angle, a focus group can be defined as a qualitative technique for gathering data from an in-depth discussion between the researcher and a small group of people ranging from 4-6 chosen for a specific study (Khan et al, 1991). The researcher works according to some predetermined guidelines. However, He conducts himself in a flexible manner with the participants. As the interaction progresses, he methodically transforms the discussions from being general to being more specific in accordance with the set guidelines. In most cases the focus group discussions are 1-2 hours long for them to exhaust all the matters in question (Khan et al, 1991). In the fieldwork of the study, the focus groups were used for making investigations among the community leaders on the HIV/AIDS subject, the elderly and orphans. The community leadership included the headman, village heads, kraal heads and health workers in Hobodo ward. A headman was the person second in charge of the control of the ward directly reporting to chief Hobodo who was at the apex of the traditional structures of power. Two focus groups each comprising five members were organised from the kraal heads and village heads of the Hobodo ward.

The focus group discussions answered the how and why queries of the research which the questionnaires could not do. They opened up some more avenues in the appreciation of the elderly's care demands through the focus group participants' varied contributions. The sensitive and more personal aspects of the study were explored. This could have serious challenges if more standardised approaches were used. A supportive environment enabling the elderly guardians to openly spell out their weaknesses in their caring roles without any fear was created. However, the discussions were limited in bringing out the distribution patterns of different variables of the inquiry which would

assume a significant role in the processing of data. As the researcher slowly made advances in directing the discussions towards the set guidelines, the participants lost the impetus to clearly express their perceived points of interests on the subject. Thus the focus group discussions somehow diluted the reality of the group discourse due to its in-built structure. The small number of participants in the focus groups (4-6) made the likelihood of generalising the research findings challenging. The selection of the participants into the focus groups was purely random. Kraals were small units which combined to form a village. The villages then combined to form a ward. On average, there were 7 kraals in a village. There were 6 villages all in all in the Hobodo ward. The kraal heads were in charge of kraals. Each village had a head who controlled it in line with directives from the chief. The total number of village heads was 6 in the Hobodo ward. The 6 village heads then reported to the headman. The participation of the kraal heads and village heads in the focus groups was purely based on their willingness to partake in the research. These focus groups involved discussions with the researcher on the well-being of the orphans and how their care posed a threat to the survival of the elderly and the community more broadly.

3.7.4 Participant observation

Participant observation refers to a research technique of actively taking part in an inquiry situation; recording and physically acknowledging what will be occurring on the site (field) (Iacono *et al.*, 2009:39). It refers to the "systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for the study" (MARSHALL and ROSSMAN, 1989:79; Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation provided the researcher direct access to the social phenomena under investigation (coping of the elderly) within its natural setting. The researcher was presented with a chance of deducing the actual data thereby being prevented from capturing assumptions and misleading socially acceptable traits of individuals which they could display as opposed to the reality. Being physically on the ground, he captured a written photograph of the dire situation of the elderly and the Aids orphans of Hobodo. In the fieldwork of the study, data on the non-verbal research aspects like dressing, body language and various homesteads appearances was being observed and recorded down by the researcher and his assistant. The homesteads of the participants had grass-thatched huts built of dagga and indigenous wood. This was a sign of being financially not sound for they could not afford the more durable expensive zink roofing and cement blocks. The orphans were ill-dressed and this expressed the inadequacy of basic needs on their side. The orphans who were sick of the HIV/AIDS disease had skin rashes and mumps in the face. The chicken of the elderly guardians kept under free

range fed on the human waste deposited in the bushes surrounding the homesteads through the open defecation practice by the elderly and the orphans under their custody. The Observations were good in complementing the data which had been obtained through the more rigid and structured questionnaires. However, it was time-consuming to conduct the observations. The participants compromised their actions after realising that they were under surveillance.

3.7.5 Documentary Review

Documentary review refers to the use of records/articles which contain some information about the phenomenon under scientific investigation (Bailey, 1994; Mogalakwe, 2006:221; Wesley, 2010). Documentary review was used to deduce data regarding the various aspects of orphanage care by the elderly. Such data was obtained from the written records of the community leaders in the ward like the village health workers and some government departments like the Social Services. The Social Services district office directly served the residents of Mangwe district (Hobodo ward included). The documentary data provided the basic demographic trends essential for the fieldwork study. For instance, the total number of the orphans in the ward was obtained from the records of the village health workers. The records gave the background data which the researcher needed to be in the real picture of the situation in the Hobodo ward. Thus the records became a springboard for the fieldwork. The records provided the initial link between the researcher's hypotheses with the reality in the research site. The documents helped the researcher to properly map out his fieldwork techniques and timetable in line with the data supplied by the documents. The documents were easily accessible, relatively inexpensive and unobtrusive. On the other hand, the format they were written in was not in line with the research guidelines such that the researcher had to sit down and select the data which fitted into the structure of the research. A typical example was that of the elderly guardians who were mixed up with other guardians below the age of 60 years. Some of the elderly's dependents defined as orphans were way above 18 years which was in contrast with the standard definition employed by the researcher. Some of the most desperate cases of the elderly and orphans were not captured for the records largely comprised the beneficiaries of various programmes like the school fees-paying BEAM government programme. In other words, the orphans who never attended primary school on various constraints were largely uncaptured yet they were the primary targets of the study.

3.8 Challenges in the Field

The fieldwork did not entail highly mechanised means for generating data. Electricity was not widely distributed in Hobodo. The unavailability of electricity in the Hobodo ward deprived us of the means to recharge our tape recorder batteries. As a result, I and my research assistant largely resorted to the taking down of field notes, the filling-in of questionnaires and the carrying out of various forms of interviews which could be done without sophisticated equipment. The research had to accommodate some anomalies like the unavailability of certain essential documents and information on the elderly and the AIDS orphans. In the case of some AIDS orphans (particularly those born of untraceable fathers, there were no identity cards. This complicated efforts to substantiate the basic demographic details about them. These were children who had been born out of rape incidents in the neighbouring countries and along the border-jumping routes and transported illegally to Hobodo ward by their mothers. On the records of the village health workers, the liests comprised all the guardians of the orphans irrespective of age. Being so, some of the guardians were way below the age of 60 years. Thus I and my research assistant had to go through the records taking out the 60 years and above guardians who fitted into our research. Some of the persons taken as orphans were above 20 years. They were clustered together with children for they were not yet married and being taken care of by the elderly guardians. Again, I and my research assistant had to screen the 17 years and below orphans who matched our study definition. A close look at the records of the village health workers revealed that a bulk of the captured individuals were beneficiaries of various programmes in the ward. The most needy elderly and orphans who had severely limited means of survival were not captured.

On this note, a number of bed ridden elderly and orphans who never attended school under various adverse circumstances like financial hardships were not in the records. The uncaptured individuals were the primary targets of our study. Consequently, I and my research assistant devised some means of finding them. We requested for their identification for the study through the traditional leadership and we added them to the list we received from the village health workers and sampled them together for the study. Gender and cultural barriers interfered with interview sessions and focus group discussions. On the basis of differing gender, the child mothers failed to relate to me some of the deep experiences of their lives which I needed up until I had to retreat from the stage leaving my female assistant with them. Fathers-in-law and their daughters-in-law could not participate in discussions about the rape of orphans and such culturally defined matters in the same group. One category had to drop out on cultural grounds and this was a challenge. The accessibility of the whole ward by a car was difficult as the road network within the ward was limited. The residents of the ward

largely used foot paths. Therefore, we went to one side of the ward which had four villages being accessible. A river separated the other two villages from the rest. To get round the problem, the chief organised some meeting point for us and the elderly guardians from the two villages. This was for the questionnaires.

For the group interviews with the elderly from the isolated villages, we drove our car and left it at the river and then crossed to the villages by foot. The two villages were next to each other such that it was convenient in terms of reaching out to both for the group interview schedules through the same trips. There was no running water in the Hobodo ward. The boreholes were few and spaced out. In the ward, both residents and the animals largely depended on the rivers for water for drinking and other functions. We used the river water for bathing only. As for drinking, we carried some bottles from Plumtree town where we went to sleep. The elderly guardians were largely illiterate. They needed some orientation on the objectives of our study. After explaining the importance of the scientific investigation and recording of their concerns to them, they complied. They became rest assured that some final copies of the findings would be given to both their chief and the Mangwe Rural district council for use in their welfare needs. Another challenge was that the research participants did not understand the English language in which the questionnaires were written. Therefore, I and my research assistant had to translate the questions in to their vernacular languages (Kalanga and Ndebele) so that they could give the answers.

3.9 Research Ethics

I (researcher) and my assistant including the driver of our vehicle approached the Mangwe rural district council in charge of the Hobodo ward in terms of local governance. I made an application to carry out my research and fieldwork in the Hobodo ward. I outlined the structure and objectives of the research; and clarified that it was for academic purposes. I produced my identity card before the Mangwe rural district staff; so did my research assistant produce her identity card. I also produced my Rhodes University student card to prove my academic affiliation. I then showed them a hard copy of my PhD proposal which was passed by the higher degrees committee at Rhodes. On this note, The Mangwe district staff was contended about my positive intentions. I and the Mangwe council staff agreed that a hard copy of the findings would be given to the council for its records and for use in council business. Further, the council stressed the need for another copy to be given to the host community (Hobodo ward) and I complied. The council staff wrote a letter to the traditional leadership (chief Hobodo) in charge of the Hobodo ward notifying the leadership that I had passed

through the Mangwe council and followed the required procedures. They asked the chief to be receptive in terms of introducing me to the Hobodo locales and setting up some conditions conducive for my fieldwork operations. I got a hard copy of the letter from the Mangwe rural district council and on that note drove straight to the Hobodo ward.

On arrival at the homestead of chief Hobodo, I introduced myself and my assistant as well as my driver. I produced the letter which I had obtained from the council. I gave it to him for his records. After being taken through the letter by his assistants, the chief engaged me in a discussion which was geared at understanding the goals of my research and how I would carry it out as explained in the sections above. For questionnaires and interviews with the child mothers and orphans, I asked the chief that the village health workers give me some of their members. The presence of the village health workers would avoid an intimidating environment to the minors (orphans) during the interview and questionnaire sessions. Additionally, the village health workers would be the eye witnesses of the community in terms of ensuring that the investigations were not harmful to the kids (orphans). We agreed with the chief that the orphans would be taken through some induction lecture by the village health workers in conjunction with the research team regarding the purpose and goals of the research before engaging them in the questionnaires and group interviews. The same induction process was also done on child mothers. In the daily fieldwork communication, the term orphans were totally avoided on the child participants. This was because I felt that it had some sensitive connotations. Therefore, the research team and the Hobodo representatives agreed to use child, kid and such more positive terms in the place of orphans for verbal communication. The female orphans below the teenage stage were taken through the questionnaires by my female research assistant. This was meant to create a friendly and welcoming environment free of gender barriers.

Related to that, the child mothers asked to have a group interview with my female research assistant regarding their more sensitive experiences. I complied on ethical grounds. Throughout the questionnaire sessions, I and my research assistant did not take the names of the participants. We only noted the name of the village, age and gender of the participant for the orphans. For the elderly guardians, we noted the name of the village, kraal, age and gender of the participant. The noted characteristics are the ones which we used for tracking any individual participant in case of any need for clarity of response arising. However, a participant could mention his/her name in the group interviews and focus group discussions when making a contribution. The research team found this not being harmful for these were open group activities. Rather, mentioning names drew the participants and the research team closer to each other and identifying with the research group. Participation of all

the individuals in the study was through informed consent. More so, the participant was free to move out of the study any time he felt like doing so. I wore formal clothing and my research assistant dressed herself in long skirts just like the local women. We did not want to see the progress of our fieldwork being hampered by differences in dressing codes. We avoided some verbal inquiries on some matters which we felt could be sensitive. Rather, we collected such data through observations. Matters surrounding the unavailability of toilets on some homesteads and the families' engagement in bush defecation comprised the sensitive matters. I and my research assistant agreed not to engage in any discussions completely divorced to our investigations like politics with the locales for this could potentially jeopardise the success of the fieldwork. We took our time to listen to the long responses of the elderly participants. We accommodated their inability to be short and precise in their responses and expressions of their viewpoints.

3.10 Conclusion

In summing up, the fieldwork of the research was carried out in the Hobodo ward of Mangwe district in the year 2012. It was carried out through the qualitative research paradigm. The research sought to appreciate the coping mechanisms of the elderly to the increasing care demands of the HIV/AIDS orphans. How the elderly sustained their participation in the provision of familial care to the orphans was investigated through the qualitative research methodology. Questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, documentary review and participant observation research techniques were employed to deduce data in the fieldwork. The participation of the elderly and the orphans in the research was purely voluntary. Research participants could withdraw their informed consent from the study at any time they felt like doing so. The researcher had a female research assistant to cover the issues of female orphans which could be sensitive and unpresentable to the researcher (male) due to culturally structured gender biased guidelines on discussions between persons of opposite sexes. Various challenges which the research team encountered in the field like the English language barrier to the understanding of questionnaires by research participants were noted. The sampling of participants for the study was largely random coupled by purposive sampling in special circumstances. The case study and the sampling techniques immensely transformed the data inquiry process into producing some solid scientific facts.

CHAPTER FOUR:
DECREASED LIVELIHOODS IN ZIMBABWE

4.1 Introduction

The chapter seeks to give an account of the events which led to decreased livelihoods in Zimbabwe. It traces the negative events through which the economy of Zimbabwe passed. The events were social, political and economic. They included the chaotic agrarian land reform, disbursement of unbudgeted pension packages to the war veterans in 1997, rising inflation and the constant devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar. The events also include the improper running of the grain loan scheme and the social development fund which targeted the rural elderly. These events will be looked at in terms of the negative impacts which they paused for the resource stricken rural elderly in their social obligations of caring for the HIV/AIDS orphans. All the events in question shall be focused on in terms of how they influenced the livelihood of the rural elderly from the year 2000. Some of the events may predate the year 2000 but were pin-pointers to the depletion of the livelihood means of the elderly and the HIV/AIDS orphans from the year 2000 and beyond.

4.2 Historical Background – the 1980s and 1990s

To begin with, the Republic of Zimbabwe is a land-locked country located in the southern part of Africa, between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers. It is bordered by South Africa to the south, Botswana to the west, Zambia to the north and Mozambique to the east. It is largely agrarian and falls in the category of the less developed countries of the world. In order to get a clear picture of the pathetic social situation of the rural elderly and the orphans beyond the year 2000 when Zimbabwe entered into a seemingly pepertual socio-economic crisis, it is significant to briefly trace the historical background of the elderly's living conditions prior to the time when the governance of Zimbabwe was taken over by the black majority government in the year 1980. Prior to 1980, there was serious poverty in the rural communities of Zimbabwe especially among the rural elderly who had been stripped of their means of survival by the colonial regime. The seizure of political and religious powers (which used to provide the rural elderly with some survival means) by the colonial regime exposed the elderly to extreme suffering. The passing of the Land Apportionment Act in 1930 and the Animal Husbandry Act in 1950 forcibly took away the elderly's arable land and livestock respectively (Masiiwa *et al*., 2004:1; Mhanda, 2005:2). The colonial Acts heavily impoverished the elderly. This occurred as the elderly were dumbed in the native reserves which had no developed infrastructure. The military

activities of the liberation fighters in the 1960s-70s were mainly supported by the poor rural communities. In the process, the rural elderly lost many of their resources to incurring the operational costs of the freedom fighters.

This terribly sank the rural elderly into serious poverty. The elderly survival means became much shaken. The rural elderly's sacrifices to the armed struggle finished the little that they were left with after the passing of the Land Apportionment Act and the Animal Husbandry Act. After the attainment of the black majority independence in 1980, no significant measures were put in place by the new government to compensate for the economic losses which the rural elderly had incurred in the armed struggle. The set up of the communal areas (former native reserves) in dry and infertile areas remained largely unchanged. The rural farming activities failed to generate any market surplus such that the typical communal area farmers (elderly) remained mere subsistence producers. In fact, the rural situation became worse. The appalling living conditions were worsened by the introduction of resettlement areas (Moyo and Skalness, 1990; Chitsike, 2003). The resettlement areas were endowed with fertile soils and better farming conditions as compared to the rural communities. By design, the resettlement areas were a means of commercialising the peasant farming activities. However, the resettlement schemes targeted the young rural peasant farmers who were envisaged to be commercially productive. The exercise did not have any positive outcomes for the rural elderly (who, according to the government resettlement policy were unfit for resettlement; yet they had materially committed much of their livelihood resources to the success of the independence struggle.

Throughout the 1980s, the Zimbabwean government did, at least half-heartedly, engage in a range of redistributive programmes to the rural communities. On top of the resettlement schemes, the programmes included the provision of health and educational facilities to the rural poor in the communal areas. However, the programmes did not trickle down quite beneficially to the poorest of the poor; as they did not carry the sensitivity qualities needed to capture their (poorest) cause. The end of the 1980s witnessed a noticeable contraction of the national economy. Consequently, there was noticeable growing discontent among the rural poor. Some isolated and insignificant cases of private land invasions by the poor were witnessed (Masiiwa, 2004).

By the early 1990s, an important shift took place in the government's macro-economic policies. This entailed the implementation of the economic structural adjustment programmes (ESAP) from 1991 (Marquette, 1997:1141). ESAP was intended to address the deepening structural problems within the Zimbabwean economy thereby addressing the mounding public discontent. In doing so, it entailed a range of mainstream neo-liberal reforms. Unfortunately, the results of ESAP were primarily negative

to the rural poor including the urban population who were targeted to receive the benefits of the programmes. This brought the land resettlement programme (which in fact, had already slowed down during the second half of the 1980s) to an end. In the case of urban spaces, the cost of foodstuffs and basic services like access to health facilities increasingly went beyond the reach of the working class. Many individuals were being retrenched because of the downsizing of the urban economy. Therefore, the ESAP programmes resulted in the swelling of the chronically poor and destitute groups in urban centres, with a noticeable shift towards informal economic activities such as petty trading. In numerous instances, the urban unemployed returned (at least on a temporary basis) to their communal areas as a form of basic sustenance.

In an attempt to soften the blow of neo-liberal restructuring, the government provided a social safety net in form of the Social Development Fund (Kaseke, 1998). The Fund was introduced in the 1990s to cater for the costs of accessing basic services such as education through the payment of school fees. The rural poor were also able to access the Fund. However, the Fund ran into serious difficulties. The lack of strict measures in the selection of beneficiaries for the Fund backfired. Many undeserving households gate-crushed into the scheme. The leakage of the Social Development Fund benefits to non-target groups quickly reached unacceptably high levels. On another note, the Fund crashed under the sheer weight of the big numbers of persons who had fallen into a condition of transient poverty. By 1999, the scheme was no longer viable and was abandoned.

This was all taking place alongside the rise of the AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe. The plight of the urban working poor; the plight of AIDS-affected households; and the suffering of subsistence farmers in communal areas surfaced simultaneously. The latter category included the impoverished rural elderly, who in the 1990s were beginning to take up the care-giving roles for the AIDS orphans; among whom were children sent back to rural areas after the death of their urban-based parents. The shrinking urban economy and the rising AIDS pandemic were creating a host of problems for communal areas. Under the scenario, urban to rural migration became more pronounced than rural to urban migration in Zimbabwe. In light of ESAP, the capacity of communal areas to absorb the rising population (and the social problems which came with it) declined. In the rural communities where the elderly guardians and the newly-emerging group of AIDS orphans were being concentrated, serious livelihood dilemmas were emerging as early as the late 1990s. The survival of the elderly and that of the orphans under their care came under serious threat.

This is despite the fact that the government had introduced a number of social safety measures which could alleviate the effects of the rising crisis for the elderly and the orphans. For instance, the

government had the Public Assistance programme in place from the 1980s. However, like the Social Development Fund, the scheme did not specifically address their plight for it was designed to generally assist any social group whose welfare was believed to be under threat (Munro, 2003). The groups included the disabled, those displaced by the armed struggle; and the elderly of foreign origin who had been left stranded on white commercial farms following the departure of the farm owners in fear of the armed struggle. At the time of the inception of the Public Assistance scheme in the early 1980s, the HIV/AIDS scourge had not yet emerged in Zimbabwe. Though the rural elderly guardians as early as the beginning of the 1990s sought to access the programme, their coverage under the programme was insignificant.

At the end of the 1980s, it was easy for the government to implement some target-specific schemes in favour of the elderly guardians and the orphans based on the general soundness of the Zimbabwean economy. The strength of the economy was signified for example by the equivalence of the Zimbabwean dollar to the US dollar in terms of value at the beginning of the 1980s (Noko, 2011).

Under the influence of ESAP, the 1990s saw a worsened situation for both the urban and rural poor. During the early 1990s at the time when the HIV/AIDS disease worsened into becoming an issue of national concern, the Zimbabwean government was not in a strong economic position to address the AIDS pandemic even though it may have had the commitment to do so. The rise in the numbers of AIDS orphans was experienced against the absence of a coherent social policy to address the situation. This became a watershed point for the emerging elderly-orphan nexus in rural communities as there was no clear attempt to address the seriousness of the matter before it reached the status of a full-blown crisis. In many ways, this was consistent with the neo-liberal discourse of reliance on the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the so-called common citizen and the need to inhibit dependency on the state for social support. This is not to suggest that the abandonment of the elderly and orphans arose from the neo-liberal tenet, but that the stressing infrequent situation was emerging at a time when state support was subject to the criticism of neo-liberalists. The Zimbabwean government had to justify what (neo-liberalists) described as unproductive investment and expenditure. It then became the duty and responsibility of the household (in this case, the elderly and orphans) to find the means to sustain themselves. The household unit, with all its limitations during an unsustained economic crisis, became the victim of all these developments.

As indicated above, when the parents living in urban centres in Zimbabwe died from AIDS-related diseases, the children were often relocated to the rural areas to be looked after by their grandparents. The rural elderly, having been structurally neglected in government policies from the

1980s, had no resources of any significance to cater for the orphans. More so, they were not organised in any way to pile pressure on the state to meet their growing needs. In contrast, the government paid close attention to the urban areas where trade unionism and public unrest were rising out of the activities of civic groups and trade unions. The unrests were coming up in response to the ravages caused by ESAP and the gradually disfunctioning state rooted in the melting economy. Insofar as the Zimbabwean state sought to contain the growing economic and political crisis, its exclusive focus immensely shifted to quelling the urban dimensions of the crisis and leaving the rural crisis (notably in communal areas) unaddressed.

In this regard, the rural crisis during the 1990s was deepened by failures in agricultural production in rural communities. Of particular importance to this note was the deadly famine condition which arose out of the nation-wide drought in the 1992-1993 agricultural season. Unlike white commercial farmers who relied on the whole on mechanised irrigation for watering their crops, communal farmers in the main entirely depended on the rains for their crops. The 1992-1993 drought was the worst in living memory (Kinsey et al., 1998:90). It was so severe that it resulted in total crop failures in communal areas. The staple crop of maize was nowhere to be found. Additionally, many open water reservoirs dried up which led (along with insufficient grazing) to the death of livestock held by rural households. More than one million cattle of rural peasant farmers died because of the drought (Maphosa, 1994). The cattle were a chief source of livelihood for communal farmers. Because of such huge loss of cattle, the few remaining livestock could not be used as distress sales for purchasing basic foodstuffs. Starvation became serious especially for the elderly and the orphans. The food aid rolled out to rural communities by government was in most cases yellow maize. The maize was not normally eaten in Zimbabwe for it was perceived as best fit for livestock. The drought worsened the exposure of communal areas to the prevailing harsh economic conditions, as it was extremely difficult for households to recover (including elderly headed households) after experiencing the loss of such magnitude including the loss of key assets such as cattle.

In the late 1990s, the socio-economic crisis deepened with the granting of unbudgeted gratuities and Zimbabwe's military involvement in the civil war of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In 1997, the government gave unbudgeted gratuities to a significant number of disgruntled war veterans whose public demonstrations were threatening (Hove and Gwiza, 2012). The government yielded to the war veterans' demands in order to stabilise the volatile social atmosphere. The funds provided as gratuities were not budgeted. As such, they undercut the financial capacity of the state and additionally deepened the economic crisis by for example leading to a massive devaluation of the Zimbabwean

dollar. The unbudgeted expenditure also impacted negatively on the capacity of the state to harness a social security scheme directed towards the exposed elderly and the orphans.

In 1998, the government took a controversial move. It intervened in to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) civil war (Khan, 2012). The civil war concerned conflicts internal to the DRC. There was no particular justification for Zimbabwe's intervention. Such a costly adventure heavily drained the national economy and no direct benefit was yielded particularly by the less privileged social groups like the elderly and the orphans.

4.3 Post-2000 Zimbabwe

By 1999, Zimbabwe was marked by serious socio-economic tensions. The economy was marked by serious structural barriers and contradictions largely emanating from the events mentioned above. This was coupled by a sharp rise in the opposition against the government by trade unions and civic groups. The opposition became so pronounced that it culminated into the formation of a new political party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

The widespread public discontent took a shocking twist. There occurred large-scale nationwide commercial land invasions by the landless and the economically disgruntled urban groups. The land occupation activities of early 2000 highly disrupted the big agriculture ventures on the commercial farms (Masiiwa, 2004). The big tragedy had earlier been signalled by isolated commercial land invasions in 1998-1999 (Lafon and Maikoro, 2001; Makumbe, 2009). Having failed to contain the rising social unrest (commercial farm invasions), the government formulated its fast track land reform programme in mid 2000. The drawing of the fast-track land reform effectively legalised the land occupations.

The fast-track reform had serious repercussions for the national economy. The undercutting of agro-industry terribly exposed the less privileged rural social groups which heavily relied on government grain handouts. The elderly and the orphans comprised the category. By legalising the farm invasions, the government robbed itself of ready supplies of farm produce which was purchased on its behalf by the GMB from the commercial farmers. The desperate situation descended heavily on the elderly and the orphans. Some of the poor received land under the fast track which led to enhanced livelihood security at household level (Masaka, 2012). However, the communal areas were not significantly decongested despite the fast track land redistribution. Most of the beneficiaries of the programme came from the landless poor in urban and peri-urban areas. The livelihoods of the communal residents were in large part ignored by the state in its focus on the fast track farms over an

extended period. In this sense, the fast track land redistribution programme failed to have any positive spin-offs for the marginalised groupings which form the core of this thesis namely, the elderly guardians and the orphans under their care in rural localities such as Mangwe. A study on the nutritional status of the rural households in rural Zimbabwe which was carried out during the land reform activities above discovered significant deficiencies in the nutritional status of their families (Karen et al, 2001).

If economic and political events are traced over the long-term which include, the economic structural adjustment programmes, the unbudgeted gratuities, the war in DRC and the fast track land reform, it is clear that these effectively made no significant contributions to the groupings suffering under the weight of the AIDS pandemic; particularly those living in the deep rural spaces of Zimbabwe. In fact, the events disrupted the pursuance of targeted interventions for the elderly and the orphans; who found themselves being placed in the unenviable position of having to fend for their survival without external forms of support. The sheer magnitude of the orphan-hood crisis brought to the fore the importance of this point.

Up until the mid-2000s, it is estimated that roughly 1.3 million Zimbabwean children had lost at least a parent because of AIDS and socio-economic hardships (Bolnick et al, 2007:13). In 2008, Zimbabwe had the highest number of orphans per capita in the world (Chamba, 2011). Because of the inadequate state support, the household became the bedrock for managing and organising some coping mechanisms for the AIDS pandemic and its dire catastrophic effects on infected individuals. The state took a backseat while the household formation became critical, as did neighbourhood ties, community relations, indigenous knowledge and natural resources.

According to the household survey data on poverty assessment in 2003, 72 percent of the Zimbabwean population fell below the poverty line defined in terms of total consumption. This was 17 percentage points higher than the 1995 figure of 55 percent (Coltart, 2008). It became increasingly difficult for people to afford their dietary energy consumption needs, with many Zimbabwean children in most provinces suffering from stunted growth. The number of children receiving all of the recommended vaccinations dropped by 21 percent between 1999 and 2006 (World Health Organisation, 2008). Over the same period, the percentage of children receiving no vaccinations at all rose to 21 percent. These children often comprised the AIDS orphans whose survival was being consistently eroded. From the year 2000, the children from poor rural families increasingly dropped out of school (Dekker, 2009). By the end of the year 2006, clean water and food got into short supply (USAID, 2007:3). The reduced access to safe water and adequate sanitation coupled with the collapse

of the public health system made rural communities more susceptible to water-borne diseases. The elderly and the orphans alike (along with other communal residents) often resorted to eating wild berries and roots to survive. The gruelling conditions on the margins of survival caused hunger-related diseases such as kwashiorkor to reach epidemic proportions among the orphans. While these broad trends had some negative impacts throughout the rural communities of Zimbabwe, there is no doubt that the situation of the elderly and the orphans were compounded by the unique livelihood challenges they faced within their respective localities.

The national economic crisis continued to worsen from the year 2000 with the Zimbabwean economic meltdown reaching astronomical levels by the year 2008. With the agricultural production in decline, the country was hard-hit by significant de-industrialisation with the closing of numerous manufacturing companies. Basic commodities were in short supply with shelves in stores often devoid of all commodities. The urban households increasingly relied on informal trading activities. The foreign currency circulating through the formal channels was in short supply due to substantial decreases in the volume of exports from Zimbabwe. On the other end, there was a vibrant black market dealing in the exchange of currencies of different countries.

Urban and rural services delivery got into disarray. This was noted in the spheres of health, education, water and sanitation because of infrastructural decay (such as failure to service water pumps) during this period, it was estimated that 32 percent of rural residents in south-eastern part of Zimbabwe relied on unsafe water from unprotected wells, rivers, streams and dams (ZEWSP, 2006, Manyanhaire and Kamuzungu, 2009:116). In addition, 73 percent of the rural poor travelled more than 5 kilometres to get to the nearest sources of water (ZEWSP, 2006, Manyanhaire and Kamuzungu, 2009:116). In 2008-9, there was a serious cholera outbreak throughout Zimbabwe which claimed many lives (Delft, 2009; Hove and Tirimboi, 2011). Most of these deaths occurred in rural communities where accessibility to clean water and sanitation facilities was severely limited (Chipare, 2010). More so, above 33 percent of the rural poor practised open defecation (Renaudin and Patinet, 2010). This practice made the use of open water wells a high health risk. At higher risk were the elderly guardians and the orphans under their custody for they had no resources to build some decent toilets.

Subsequent to the national elections in 2008, a government of national unity (inclusive of both ZANU-PF and MDC) came into existence in an attempt to bring about some political and social stability. Additionally, the dollarization of the economy was introduced in 2009 (Gukurume, 2010; Noko, 2011; International Monetary Fund, 2009). The dollarisation process phased out the use of the Zimbabwean dollar and introduced the use of the US dollar. The US dollar was used alongside certain

regional currencies accessible to Zimbabwean migrant workers like the South African Rand and the Botswana Pula. The adoption of the US dollar in Zimbabwe caused serious confusion for the rural elderly who did not understand the ways of converting the local currency prices to US dollars. They were at risk of being short-changed by unscrupulous buyers in the sale of their livestock. They encountered similar problems when using US dollars to purchase commodities. Some female teenage orphans desperately engaged in prostitution with men working in neighbouring countries many of whom were HIV carriers (United States Department of State, 2010). They did this to access some foreign currency for using in cash transactions.

Undoubtedly, the dollarization of the economy along with other reforms introduced under the government of national unity at least stabilised the economy. However, there were no clear signs of economic recovery soon after their introduction. Though basic commodities became more readily available in the shops, they were largely beyond the financial reach of typical rural poor households. Furthermore, any trickle down effects to rural areas were not discernable. The unavailability of adequate sanitary facilities and clean water in the remote areas for instance, remained largely unchanged. In January 2012, some fresh cases of water borne diseases like cholera and typhoid were reported in the communal localities of Manicaland province (Relief Web, 2012:28). The few clean water facilities supplied to the local communities were dysfunctional due to lack of maintenance. In the period 2010, about 60 percent of the water pumps in the rural communities were broken (UNICEF, 2010). For this reason, the rural residents continued to travel some long distances to obtain water for home consumption. The overcrowding at water sources created unhygienic conditions which in turn resulted in recurrent cholera outbreaks. This illustrated a serious problem facing the elderly guardians and the orphans, namely, the ongoing incapacity of the Zimbabwean state in addressing their specific needs and challenges.

4.4 Incapacity of the state

As the above calamities were occurring one after the other, their effects impacted on the capacity of the government in significant ways. The significant ways had a knock-on effect on the victims of the AIDS pandemic. In particular, the arms of government meant to directly assist the rural elderly and AIDS orphans or of specific relevance to their lives were no longer able to provide meaningful assistance. The concerned government institutions included the department of Social Services and the department of Health. The increasing incapacity of the state could have not come to the 2 departments at the most

critical time of their rendering of services to the marginalised social groups (elderly and the orphans) under a crisis situation.

With the substantial increase in the number of the HIV-infected individuals and the AIDS orphans, health services became increasingly fundamental. Large numbers of HIV-positive individuals died for the treatment was beyond their reach financially. Even the staff within the health department directly felt the pressure of the systemic crisis within the national economy and the impact of this on the state fiscus. Their salaries and overall conditions of work (along with their morale) deteriorated. The psychological stress of seeing patients dying without any provision of medical care weighed heavily on health professionals. The atmosphere within this department became tense and unpromising with professionals engaging in mass exodus to better remunerating economies. The development broke the linkages established over time between the professionals (for instance, those based in rural clinics) and community residents who comprised the elderly guardians at a time of reduced health benefits.

This occurred out of the downsizing and closures of health centres in rural areas; with some centres being run by senior nurses nearing retirement. These local centres became marked by corrupt practices. The limited medicines available found their way into the black market as the nurses tried to eke out a living. They channelled out the medicines into the black market where they were sold at exorbitant prices beyond the reach of the elderly guardians and the orphans. With the Zimbabwean currency severely eroded by the year 2008 (Chagonda 2010), the salaries of nurses dropped to values less than 50 South African Rands per month; hence their engagement in illegal sales of medicines. In response to the inaccessibility of medicines for the orphans under their care, the elderly resorted to the use of traditional herbs. However, such medication was not particularly effective.

Even the voluntary home-based care programmes which were particularly important for rural AIDS patients became severely strained. The programmes became paralysed by the shortage of basic medical equipment and medicines as the government could no longer maintain adequate supplies to the rural communities. In addition to that, the care-givers running the programmes became demoralised due to lack of equipment and medication as well as the lack of some tokens of appreciation for their efforts. Thus, besides the problems of both state and NGO support in rural spaces in Zimbabwe, more locally-based community-driven AIDS support programmes also experienced serious challenges. This reflected the importance of household-driven responses to the consequences of the AIDS pandemic.

With reference to the department of Social Services, the value of the small public assistance payouts which admitted only a limited number of the elderly got eroded in the hyperinflationary environment. In fact, the public assistance monthly payout was no longer adequate to even cover the

transport costs of the elderly when they travelled to the district offices in towns and growth points to collect the monthly payouts. At times, the elderly would arrive at the district office on the expected day of payment, only to find that the payout day had been delayed. In this case, they were to use their money to go back home and come some other day; which was expensive to them. The Public Assistance money was intended to ensure the purchase of basic foodstuffs for the orphans. However, this was no longer feasible due to the severe erosion of the payouts. Therefore, many of the elderly under the Public Assistance scheme simply abandoned it.

Just as in the case of the staff in the department of Health, social workers in the department of Social Services helplessly watched the rural elderly and the orphans succumbing to hunger without being able to offer them any assistance. Consequently, many social workers resigned from the department of Social Services. This created a shortage of professional staff to run the district offices. The situation resulted in the mismanagement and embezzlement of Public Assistance funds meant for the rural poor. The increasing reports of the embezzlements caused the programme to be temporarily halted in 2007. The stoppage of the scheme was also due to the shrinkage in the volume of budgetary funds allocated to the public assistance programme generally emanating from the severe erosion of the Zimbabwean currency (Clemens and Moss, 2005). When the scheme was revived after the dollarization of the Zimbabwean economy in 2009, a new system of bank accounts was introduced. In the new system, the Public Assistance beneficiaries were required to open some bank accounts with the state-owned People's Own Savings Bank (POSB). Under the new arrangement, the monthly payouts were deposited directly into the accounts of the beneficiaries by the Social Services head office in the capital city of Harare. This was successful in curbing the fraudulent practices of district staff in the department of Social Services.

However, this created another problem for the rural elderly. The forms and the procedures required for opening a bank account were complicated to them due to their illiteracy. The forms were written in English. The elderly needed somebody who would read and explain the contents to them as well as fill out the forms. The proof of address document, which was part of the requirements of the new system, was sometimes difficult to get on the part of the elderly. Some of the elderly guardians stayed far from their rural ward councillors who issued such documents. The commitment of the ward councillors to various community activities such as funerals sometimes delayed the issuing of the documents. After gathering all the necessary supporting documents, the elderly needed to photocopy and certify them. This required some money which the elderly did not have. In view of the above difficulties, many deserving cases of the Public Assistance programme fell through the cracks.

The Zimbabwean government also implemented the Grain Loan Scheme in rural areas as a drought relief mechanism (Munro, 2006). The scheme was run by the department of Social Services in conjunction with the Grain Marketing Board. The grain was meant specifically for the most desperate of communal households who could not make ends meet; of which the elderly guardians were the prime candidates. The grain was bought at a subsidised price. Fewer bags of grain than the big numbers of the individuals in need were delivered to the rural communities. The money to buy the grain was obtained from the payments of individual participation in the Food-For-Work programme which was managed by the department of Social Services. Others could buy the grain using their money. However, some undeserving individuals would squeeze into the Grain Loan scheme and the Food-For-Work programme due to the absence of strict screening measures of the beneficiaries. This led to public disillusionment and some claims about the widespread abuse of the scheme. Overall, it appeared that a culture of entitlement and open access developed among the communal residents pertaining to accessing the grain. The practice got fully expressed in the tragedy of the commons in the study of communal property ownership (Ogendo, 2002:2; Du Plessis, 2011:45).

The massive abuses occurred as individuals rationally sought to maximise their personal gains. This created serious problems for everyone by depleting the available grain supplies. The timely transportation of grain by government trucks to the rural communities particularly to more remote ones was characterised by a range of challenges (Pirie, 1993). The challenges largely came out of the insufficient maintenance of government trucks. In the few cases when the trucks were available, some of the grain would be stolen by the Social Services and the GMB staff during the transportation process. They were tempted to steal for the price of the grain in the shops had gone beyond their depleted salaries. Later, with the deepening of socio-economic troubles, some top government officials including cabinet ministers joined the grain scandals (Bratton and Masunungure, 2011; Machingura, 2012). Thus the rural elderly and the AIDS orphans suffered considerably as a result of the corruption and the incapacity of the government and its employees.

In the department of Education, many schools in rural Zimbabwe became grounded at the peak of hyper inflation and political persecutions in the rural areas. As with all the government employees, the salaries of teachers severely depreciated in value due to unprecedented levels of inflation. Consequently, many teachers became disillusioned and could not report for duty at their respective rural schools. Some of the teachers transferred to urban schools and some left the country in search of better working conditions. The few who were left in rural schools were those nearing retirement together with unqualified teachers. In many rural areas, the parents took decisions to pay the remaining

teachers with commodities locally available in their respective communities that the teachers would accept (Shadreck, 2010; Zaranyika, 2012). However, the measure unintentionally discriminated against the poor households. The households included those of the elderly guardians of AIDS orphans who had nothing to offer the teachers. In light of this, many of the orphans dropped out of school and simply loitered in the villages.

The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was a government programme which was running in the rural communities. This was a government sponsored programme which was designed to cover the educational needs of needy students (orphans and other vulnerable children). The programme was usually rocked by corruption. Additionally, the programme was unable to handle the unprecedented increase in the numbers of AIDS orphans particularly with state funding running dry in the context of the economic crisis. The BEAM committee members were bribed through various means to be biased in the selection of students to benefit from the programme. In most cases, the less deserving cases were chosen at the expense of the more deserving AIDS orphans cases (Patrick and Jane, 2013). Again, this was caused by the fact that the elderly guardians had nothing material to use in bribing the BEAM selection committees. The corrupt practices of the BEAM committees led to the high number of school dropouts among the orphans from the rural schools. The corrupt activities continued unabated for there were no adequate monitoring and evaluation measures put in place by the government to review the effectiveness of the programme at community level. Overall then, there was a general trend for HIV/AIDS orphans to be deprived of their fundamental right to education.

4.5 Disruption of NGO Activities

Historically, NGOs have had a significant presence in communal areas, though their presence has sometimes been uneven. The common mandate of many NGOs (such as the World Vision International) in communal areas was to bring about rural development and promote the social security of the locales. Increasingly, the HIV/AIDS scourge was mainstreamed into many NGO interventions and programmes. As the HIV/AIDS pandemic became more pervasive in rural communities, NGOs took the lead in initiating programmes and projects targeting it and its impacts on familial care provision for the orphans within elderly-headed households.

However, the elderly guardians' relationship with the NGOs was continuously constrained by government intrusions. The banning of the humanitarian activities of specific NGOs was a typical example (Ncube, 2010). The ruling party sought to portray itself as a better alternative to NGO work. During the election campaigns (in the years 2000, 2002, 2005, the rural elderly and the orphans

received food handouts from the ruling party (Kriger, 2005). This was done to encourage the elderly to vote for ZANU-PF. This manipulative arrangement was a poor strategy for an official government policy aimed at addressing the livelihood needs of the victims of the AIDS pandemic. Arguably, the miserable social conditions of the elderly and the orphans were simply being maintained to ensure their dependency on ruling party largesse when the party sought to consolidate its authority and legitimacy in communal spaces.

In a bid to embed itself further into the rural communities, the government restrained the activities of NGOs in the local communities. The government carried out that for it viewed NGOs as potential threats to its grip on the rural communities on matters of control and influence. Thus the relationship between the state and NGOs became highly politicised. This led the government to ban the food aid provided to communal areas by NGOs during times of humanitarian and food crises (Ncube, 2010). The food aid was seen by ZANU-PF as a weapon used by the NGOs to wean communal residents away from their dependence upon the government thereby legitimising the opposition parties. In the political tug-of-war scenario between the government and the NGOs, the rural elderly and the orphans under their custody suffered. They could not fully access the services of the NGOs due to government bans on NGO activities. This occurred while the government was increasingly unable to ensure the provision of basic services like health in rural communities.

This was vividly shown in the problems faced by female teenage orphans in terms of their unique sanitary needs. Neither the government nor the NGOs provided sanitary pads for the female teenagers and purchasing them was beyond the financial capacity of the elderly guardians. Consequently, the female teenagers recycled their sanitary cloths. The practice was not hygienic for the teenagers lacked adequate soap to wash the cloths. This interfered with the teenagers' capacity to control their menstrual systems. The situation eventually brought about high levels of discomfort on them; compromised self-esteem and morale. It also interfered with their ability to perform basic daily activities because of fear of embarrassment and humiliation.

4.6 Strategies of desperation

As this chapter indicates, the challenges faced by the elderly guardians and the AIDS orphans in rural Zimbabwe were immense especially given the systemic economic crisis and incapacities of the government in providing necessary support. Consequently, the elderly and the orphans found themselves in great despair. The desperate strategies of the elderly were happening concurrently with

the same scenario in the NGOs which were struggling to sustain their activities under conditions of donor fatigue.

The elderly's desperate means were central in explaining the significance of their resilience in successfully handling the duties of orphan care within their localities. According to a Help Age International Report (2005:6), the elderly played a critical role in caring for the AIDS orphans in Zimbabwe. The report estimated that 71.8 percent of the orphans in Zimbabwe were under the care of the elderly guardians. Viewing the scenario in a wider spectrum, Van Dullemen (2006:99) noted the involvement of more elderly women than elderly men in the care of AIDS-orphaned children in Africa, with one hundred elderly women for every 86 elderly men taking part. Such estimates as these laid out the concrete basis needed for carrying out this study. On average, the rural elderly who cared for the AIDS orphans right across Africa (Hobodo included) lived in abject poverty under serious exposure to chronic diseases and limited access to health facilities (Fouad, 2005:1;Opong, 2006:665). Such appalling circumstances coupled with the meltdown of the Zimbabwean economy made the elderly of Hobodo special cases of study.

As poverty and hunger increased in the rural areas, many teenage orphans indulged in criminal activities in desperate attempts to survive. Some engaged in stealing in their communities. They stole domestic livestock, grain and personal belongings of neighbouring households (Mutasa, 2010; Poverty Reduction Forum Trust, 2011; Chirau et al, 2014). This strained the relations between the elderly guardians and their neighbours. The uncalled-for activities of the orphans further complicated matters for the elderly guardians; for these were the same neighbours whom they normally turned to for social support and material aid in times of hardships. The activities threatened to undercut social bonds across households. At times, the developments slowed down the flow of support and aid towards the elderly; and stopped it in extreme cases. Under normal circumstances, probation officers from the department of Social Services assisted in the supervision and monitoring of the deviant juveniles. However, the qualified officers had left the department in search of greener pastures as elaborated earlier in this chapter. In their absence, the duty entirely fell into the hands of the elderly guardians.

The criminal activities were particularly prevalent among the male orphaned teenagers. However, the concerted efforts of the elderly to rehabilitate the orphans were constantly undermined by the rise of tempting situations rooted in the unaffordability of basic foodstuffs and other commodities on the part of the orphans. Besides the criminal activities of the male orphans, the desperate situation drove many female teenage orphans to engage in prostitution (Munyati *et al*., 2006; Poverty Reduction Forum Trust, 2011). In the process, some female teenage orphans were impregnated by older men who

were not easily traceable like truck drivers. The babies whose fathers were untraceable ended up being catered for by the elderly guardians. Such experiences increased the numbers of the orphans under the care of the elderly headed households. Many of the female teenagers delivered their children in the homes of the village midwives. The unavailability of nurses in many rural centres made it difficult for the female teenagers to obtain birth certificates for their children. On the other hand, delivery of babies by female teenage orphans at the formal health centres facilitated the issuing of the birth certificates at the district hospital and other identity documents at the District Registrar's Offices. Like with other issues, this required the elderly guardians to repeatedly travel to the district hospitals and the Registrar's offices with the teenage mothers to acquire the documents. This situation came at some considerable expense to the elderly guardians; resulting in delays in the securing of the identity cards for the babies of the orphans.

These points epitomise the depth of desperation characterising the lives and livelihoods of the elderly in the strained living conditions of Zimbabwe. The high levels of desperation caused some nightmares and psycho-social stress on the part of the orphans and their elderly guardians (Rusakaniko et al, 2006). Under such severe conditions, it became extremely hard for the elderly to provide for their basic needs and those of the AIDS orphans under their custody. In response to the deep crisis, many rural families traded their last remaining livestock for some few buckets of maize (Poverty Reduction Forum Trust, 2011). The desperate move of selling the remaining livestock highly disturbed the livelihood of the rural elderly in particular. The livestock were a source of food, social security, symbol of wealth and economic investment (Barrett, 1991). Out of intense desperation, the rural elderly and the orphans under their custody usually ate the seed maize which was intended for the next planting season (Machingura, 2012). This placed the elderly and the orphans under conditions of absolute food insecurity for they largely depended on peasant farming for their livelihoods. They would be left with nothing for planting in the fields. These intensifying hardships led to the surfacing of many unprecedented social practices in the rural communities. The stunned rural elderly and the AIDS orphans, along with other marginalised groupings resorted to eating some insects and rodents like rats which were not normally eaten in Zimbabwe (Mukwedeya, 2010). The practice dehumanised them.

Additionally, young girls were forced into early marriages by their parents/guardians (Masinire, 2011). This was done in order to secure some level of financial security for the young girls (female teenage orphans included) from their husbands. In return, the elderly guardians also received some food and general support from the husbands of the girls. The forced marriages of the young girls exposed them to pathetic conditions in polygamous families. In such marriage arrangements, the young

girls had nothing much to benefit. Rather, caring for babies at such a tender age highly traumatised the young female orphans. Alternatively, the female orphans were contracted to perform domestic work at various homesteads in their respective villages. In return, they were paid very little money, barely enough to meet their most basic needs.

Furthermore, many orphans dropped out of school due to financial constraints as indicated earlier. For some teenagers whose school fees had been paid, They just loitered in the villages after the schools were literary closed with no serious business going on during the height of the crisis and the departure of teachers from rural schools in 2008. They found nothing to occupy themselves with. This tempted some of them to engage in sexual activities among themselves (UNICEF Report, 2006:4). The sexual activities resulted in unwanted teenage pregnancies. The burden of looking after the pregnant teenage orphans fell on the elderly guardians. Some orphans eventually got formally married to each other. The burden of familial care haunted them in most cases after the birth of their first borns. They would surrender their children to the elderly guardians while they sought some survival means abroad. Thus the caring demands increased on the elderly.

Additionally, the dropping out of school by teenagers and their failure to get something to keep them busy caused them to engage in border jumping. On this note, Muzondidya (2008) noted a high rate of border jumping by teenagers to neighbouring countries like South Africa and Botswana in search of manual work. The illegal routes across the borders were fraught with danger. Some of the border jumpers never came back home as they were eaten by crocodiles in the Limpopo river which lies along the Zimbabwe-South Africa border (Araia, 2009), More so, some were raped, beaten and killed by the gangsters who facilitated their illegal entry into the neighbouring countries. In the neighbouring countries to where many of the orphans illegally migrated, they were abused in many ways which included xenophobic attacks. Some crossed successfully into South Africa and Botswana but later fell sick and died due to the inaccessibility of free medication and health services due to their illegal immigrant status. Some were killed by the law enforcement agencies during their arrest in the neighbouring countries prior to intended deportation (Human Rights Watch Report, 2007:60). Their deaths were never reported back home as their origins were untraceable; this occurred as they were not in possession of travel documents for fear of being tracked by the law enforcement agencies. Consequently, they received pauper burials in South Africa and Botswana. When their young wives completely lost contact of their husbands' whereabouts, they returned with their children to their grandparents. They sometimes left their babies with their grandparents and also joined the border jumping routes in search of some means of survival.

In addition to this, some of the teenage boys engaged in criminal activities across the borders when survival became tough (Hungwe, 2013). They would be shot and get injured or killed; and the costs of either of the situations would be born back home by the elderly guardians. Some orphans managed to secure some piece-work. They would work for many months without being paid. When they started to demand payment, they would be reported to the police by their employers as undocumented immigrants. They would then be bundled up in big trucks by the police and deported to Zimbabwe without getting paid (Rodgers, 2009; Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013). Neither were they allowed to carry home the few belongings which they would have bought in the neighbouring countries. Their situation at the time of deportation was even more precarious than before they left their rural communities in Zimbabwe. Some young women including the female teenage orphans were raped at the workplaces in the neighbouring countries (Save the Children, 2008). Some resorted to prostitution to make a living when they failed to find some piecework (International Organisation for Migration, 2010:32). In many of these sexual activities, the female orphans became pregnant. Once born, the babies would be sent to the elderly guardian's back home through delivery truck drivers for a certain fee. With time, the teenage orphans would become terminally sick of the AIDS disease and returned home sick only to add more misery to their resource-stricken elderly grandparents. After their death, the elderly guardians would continue to care for the babies. All this was happening at a time when the health and social service facilities in rural Zimbabwe were overstretched (Gregson et al, 2001: 194-95).

4.7 Conclusion

The hard-crunching socio-economic challenges and struggles of the year 2000 and beyond fell more heavily on the marginalised social groups like the elderly and the orphans. Metaphorically, the elderly were being hard hit by the double sword of the nasty repercussions of a collapsed economy and the growing demand for orphan care. The worsening socio-economic challenges caused the wider community to develop some shocking hatred against the elderly. The dwindling survival means brought the social relevance of the elderly in the community under attack from the public. Some unfounded stories aimed at demonising the elderly started to circulate in the Zimbabwean society. In 2002, a story of an old woman carrying a dead baby on her back circulated throughout Zimbabwe (Hungwe, 2005). It was said that the old woman walked through the communities asking for food and drink. Some times, she would ask for assistance to have her sleeping baby on her back attended to. The general public would extend their help innocently. As soon as the old woman disappeared, a

member of the helping family would die. The story became so strong that it sent some waves of shock nationwide. In the rural centres where homes are not fenced and open to strangers, it was believed that spreading some coarse salt and ashes right round the home would scare the old woman away without any physical contact with her. Thus the respective family would be spared from the tragic experience. This caused the elderly to be feared and highly demonised. Consequently, it became extremely dangerous for the elderly to go around in the communities begging for various forms of assistance.

Based on the allegations, some incidents of physical assault of the freely wandering elderly women were reported. The elderly were no longer free to move around for fear of victimisation. The fabricated story clearly illustrated how the chronically poor elderly suffered the consequences of a meltdown economy. Despite their huge sacrifice in the provision of familial care to the HIV/AIDS orphans under severely constraining circumstances, the elderly were betrayed by the community. Their relevance in the wider community became questionable to the public. Instead of the community augmenting the elderly's caring efforts to the orphans, it shockingly misdirected its desperation and economic disillusionments against the innocent elderly. Thus the intensity of economic suffering further reduced the territorial space of the elderly in the community and complicated their coping mechanisms in the care of orphans.

CHAPTER 5:
NATURAL CAPITAL OF MANGWE DISTRICT

5.1 Introduction

The chapter accounts for the various survival techniques which lay out the livelihood patterns of the rural communities of Mangwe. The survival techniques include birds, animals, edible insects, roots, various plant and tree species, *wild fruits, grasses, soils and rocks*. Fishing, water harvesting and honey harvesting activities comprise the list. The rural livelihood forms above are viewed in respect of the capabilities and innovativeness of the chronically poor social groups of Mangwe district. The livelihoods largely make their assets. The extent to which the assets subscribe to the thinking and activities of the poor in devising some grounds for challenging some opposing social forces points to their livelihood strategies. The livelihood patterns are transparent in the formation of social meaning and the mechanisation of survival approaches by the poor rural communities of Mangwe. They also embrace the manner in which the poor people of Mangwe relate with their local resources and the geographical properties of their communities in developing some particular tactics of predicting their cause in the face of terrible circumstances. The local resources exist in form of natural capital. Placing the above arguments into the broader scientific context, A livelihood can be viewed as sustainable if it can "cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource" (Scoones 2009:5).

5.2 Forests

Over the centuries, the indigenous Kalanga inhabitants of the area developed a deep spiritual relationship with their local environment (including the forests). The deep relationship became embedded in their social values and practices. In many ways, this close and intimate link to their forest locality remained largely undisturbed by colonisation and the movement of other tribes onto the Zimbabwe plateau. Their forest-based life and mode of existence hence remained largely intact as the Kalanga people sought to develop their livelihood strategies around their local forest-based resources. Their and lives and livelihoods became so attached to the forests that they endured many crises through this profound ethical attachment.

Mangwe district is rich in a variety of forest products and the Mangwe communities live amidst the forests with villages spaced out in and around the forests (Magadza, 2006:164). Forest products are communally-owned and are a critical element of the natural resources of the rural communities of

Mangwe district; and they therefore form part of the environmental dimension of Mangwe rural livelihood strategies. The reliance of Mangwe communities on forest products is particularly visible in times when the communities confront and seek to manage various livelihood shocks. The forest products include birds, animals and insects as well as numerous plant and tree species.

The significance of forests for Mangwe livelihoods in difficult times has become abundantly clear in the context of the HIV and AIDS pandemic which is pervasive throughout rural Zimbabwe. In the anxious moments of the AIDS scourge, Mangwe communities metaphorically have withdrawn further into the forests in accessing resources for sustenance. In this sense, the forests provided the rural communities of Mangwe with insulation to withstand the heat of the AIDS pandemic. The forests have offered a framework of hope for Mangwe communities in the face of crises such as AIDS, as forests are central to the repertoire of strategies of coping and adaptation in the pursuance of some semblance of rural livelihoods. In this way, long-term local knowledge, experience and practices vis-à-vis forests are drawn upon in crafting livelihood activities which cushion Mangwe inhabitants from the full force of crises.

5.2.1 Wild fruits, grasses, plants and roots

Mangwe District abounds with wild fruits which form an invaluable component of the social life and livelihoods of its local inhabitants. Though the district is dry and semi-arid, certain indigenous trees thrive despite the hot temperatures and low rainfall. Among the most significant indigenous fruit trees in the Mangwe area is the marula tree (Magadza, 2006:163). The indigenous tree fruits, like forest products more broadly, form an integral part of the social values and morality of the Kalanga people who reside in the district. Indeed, Kalanga livelihoods over centuries led to the development of embedded social institutions and taboos to govern the relationship between the people and the trees and thereby cement their symbiotic co-existence and inhibit any permanent harm to the natural environment arising from the consumption of wild fruits. As will become clear, the daily reliance on forest trees – for nutritional needs, crafts, energy and medicinal purposes – lead to the communities protecting and promoting the survival of trees.

The significance of the linkages between Mangwe rural communities and wild fruits during the rise of social and economic stress in Zimbabwe from the year 2000 has been noted by Ndlovu et al. (2010). In a study on drought mitigation and livelihood coping strategies in Mangwe district, villagers were found to rely extensively on wild fruits in their bid to survive the crisis. Some of the wild fruits which used and relied upon by the local communities, as highlighted by the study, included *Azanza*

garckeana (Uxakuxaku), Opuntia megacantha (Amadholofiya), Matohwe, Matamba, Nhungulu and *Makwakwa*. In addition to the study by Ndlovu et al. (2010), an earlier study by Magadza (2006) from 2000 to 2003 sought to determine the various essential uses of the marula wild fruit by Mangwe households. It was found that the fruit was used for the brewing of alcohol and other liquid refreshments, and that the kernels of the fruit were used for making oil and were added to foodstuffs to make them more nutritious and tasty (Magadza 2006:165). Additionally, the marula fruit formed the key ingredient of a termite poison to protect wood-based structures in the community.

Clearly, the Mangwe communities summoned their localised self-reliant capacity in resisting the ravaging crisis by turning to wild fruits for a range of purposes. This in-built innovativeness, in drawing upon a local resource, enabled the communities to withstand the full weight of the socio-economic and AIDS crises and their consequences and thereby reduced the gravity of these consequences. Such responses became a defining characteristic of the social space of Mangwe rural communities in the face of social and economic collapse nationally; the crises were held back, with Mangwe communities reclaiming the ethos and spirit of their social traditions and networks. This is evident in the case of all natural resources used by Mangwe inhabitants, including the grass and plants in the forest.

The forests of Mangwe district are composed of various kinds of grasses and plants which thrive in the climatic conditions of the district. Being so, the rural communities live side-by-side with these plants and grasses as both the inhabitants themselves and their domestic animals depend on them for survival. The domestic animals are kept under the free-range system and graze on communally-held lands, which the latter governed at community level.

The communities eat many kinds of wild grasses in their daily diets. The most commonly eaten grasses are the night shield, wild okra, *Mowa* and *Mutangawa*. These grasses are served as relish together with *sadza*, which is the staple food of the rural communities. In many parts of Zimbabwe, *sadza* consists exclusively of mealie-meal (ground maize). In the case of Mangwe, it consists not only of mealie-meal but also of sorghum and rapoko. This is because of the drier climate in Mangwe, with sorghum and rapoko being more drought-resistant than maize. *Mowa* in particular is used as a spice for the *sadza* relish and it adds significant taste and nutrition to the traditional *sadza* dish.

During the rainy season in Mangwe, if and when it comes, mushrooms of different varieties appear in the forests and are picked and eaten for their nutritional value. There are safe and poisonous mushrooms for human consumption, and the ability to distinguish between the two kinds is deeply engraved in the rural livelihood skills of the communities. No modern-day technology for making such

a distinction is employed or necessary. The preservation and storage of edible mushrooms through well-established drying methods are also done locally, and the methods used ensure that the mushrooms remain safe for consumption at a later stage. Many wild tubing plants are eaten raw for the purposes of boosting the immune system.

The roots of many trees are crushed and mixed with water to form various concoctions. These concoctions are consumed for boosting the immune system as well as for treating various ailments more directly. Additionally, the aloe plant grows naturally in the bushes of Mangwe and is found in abundance, and it is also used for medical purposes – for both Mangwe residents and their animals.

Besides the use of grasses and plants for consumption, they are also used in making artefacts for clothing and adornment, such as wrist bangles made by women. The bangles are worn by women and some are occasionally sold to visitors who come in search of them. The same grasses are woven into table mats and baskets of various types. The baskets are used for various domestic functions such as for holding small items and storing harvested grain, as well as for placing food for convenience during familial or community gatherings. As well, various juicy plants grow freely in Mangwe and these are used for colouring locally-made handicrafts. More so, at times people use plant juices as floor polish for their kitchens, making the floors look green and smart.

In the rural communities of Mangwe, the cost of roofing houses with corrugated iron sheets is beyond the reach of the inhabitants and hence they resort to thatching their huts with locally-available grasses (Ndlovu et al., 2010). The grasses for thatching are found in the north-eastern part of the district near the communities of Marula and Sundowns. This part of the district is characterised by cooler temperatures favourable for the flourishing of the grass. The rural communities in the extreme south of Mangwe district, notably Maninji, Mambale and Hobodo, experience higher temperatures and less rainfall compared to other parts of the district, and these climatic patterns are less favourable for the grasses. The uneven distribution of the grasses suitable for thatching facilitates the commercialisation of thatch grass between the north and the south district areas, with the southern communities purchasing the grass from their northern neighbours. The main method of payment for the thatch grass is goods and animals such as goats and chickens.

The trade relations and transactions are extremely localised and are not integrated into broader market relations beyond the district. The transactions are not enacted strictly through the market mechanism of supply and demand, but are embedded in the social meanings and values of the Mangwe communities based on the significance of relations of reciprocity. The capacity of Mangwe communities to continually engage in these socially-embedded and localised transactions empowers

them to pursue livelihoods independent of the wider economic forces and crises at play in Zimbabwe and undisrupted by them. Although not necessarily intended as such, they are a protectionist measure regulating and defending the inter-community networks within the district against potentially negative disruptive external forces, and they thereby maintain the inter-community identity and intactness of the Mangwe communities.

Hence, besides acting as a livelihoods coping mechanism, the transit of grass between diverse rural communities facilitates a sense of local belonging and unity in the face of hardships. Indeed, the willingness to identify and evaluate the monetary cost of the thatch grass by reference to locally-produced goods and animals reflects the social and cultural significance of shared values within the Mangwe communities. In this way, the communities cope in crisis situations in ways that they specifically design on their own. The seeming oneness of Mangwe society, at least in the sense of the presence of porous social boundaries between the communities, is manifested in the web of diverse social relations and networks formed between the different communities, with the transaction of grass being but one component of this. This enables the observance and in fact the renewal of the core values of Mangwe communities despite changing social and economic circumstances. Thus the social foundations of the communities remain resilient in promoting the well-being of the local people.

These social relations help in detaching the communities from the implications of the surrounding shocks, but certainly not in any complete sense. The shocks penetrate the communities and are not kept at bay at the socio-spatial boundaries of Mangwe district. This is indicated by the mainstream essential goods and services which the rural communities need but cannot necessarily afford, such as education, foodstuffs and industrially-produced building material. Though resource-deficient and suffering from failures to access these goods and services, the rural Mangwe communities do devise strategies to secure them no matter how constrained they are in doing so. The wherewithal of these rural communities to draw upon their local social values, networks and capacities to obtain from outside what they lack is a critical component of Mangwe rural livelihoods.

In particular, rural livelihoods – at least in the case of Mangwe – could not be reduced to the activities of isolated and discrete households or even discrete communities. Mangwe rural livelihoods embody a range of spatial levels, from household to inter-community levels. Thus, there is a complex array of livelihood strategies and activities occurring simultaneously and over time which cannot be fully understood with reference to smaller social entities such as the household. In many senses, household-rooted livelihood activities are defined and structured by the specific communities in which they are positioned, as that is the social context in which they exist. Beyond that, in instances where

households work within the context of a combination of communities, these social networks regulate the activities of the separate communities in bringing about some shared purpose and interest among them. A range of multi-spatial social webs therefore is the defining quality of Mangwe rural livelihoods.

The ongoing maintenance of common and shared livelihood goals between communities in Mangwe results in a social web which accommodates and protects the less privileged and weaker members of the communities. This web is based on practices of reciprocity and redistribution which have been locally-tried and tested over generations and entail well-established social safety nets. These safety nets form part of the nexus of decentralised ways of pursuing livelihoods which are not dependent on the state and market, such that livelihoods remain in large part within the enhanced arms of the communities. The existence and placement of livelihood means in empowered community arms reduces the negative effects of social security disturbances on the welfare of the Mangwe residents, particularly the more marginalised ones.

Trees are also essential in the provision of firewood for the communities of Mangwe, both for cooking and for warming themselves. As Mangwe is not connected to the national electricity grid, firewood in fact is the source all local energy needs. With the growing number of HIV and AIDS orphans in the communities, it is difficult for households to afford sufficient blankets and warm clothing from the shops to care properly for the orphans. Because of this, the elderly guardians light fires in the houses where the orphans sleep to keep the latter warm. The Mangwe communities, though using the forests extensively for firewood, do not use the forests in an indiscriminate way. They regulate their usage to sustain and maintain the forest woodlands, as they have already over many generations. In other words, meeting their energy needs is not at the expense of depleting the forests. A fine balance exists within the in-built social practices of the communities to both sustain the forests and the local communities.

Additionally, the indigenous forest trees are ready suppliers of wood for the rural communities in building various domestic structures, such as huts, cattle kraals, storage facilities, and goat and sheep pens. The raised, off-the-ground, storages for keeping plant stock and livestock feeds are critical during the non-agricultural season and these storage structures would not be possible without locally-available wood. The small household gardens in which vegetables for home consumption are grown, as well as the fields for crops, are also protected with fences made from branches of trees. On top of that, the fibres of trees are used for tying together pieces of wood in the wood-based home structures. The outer bark of trees is removed and the inner fibre is then soaked in water to make it tender but strong before

being used to secure the wood. In this way, the rural communities cut down the cost of purchasing nails and wires for reinforcing the joints of the structures.

Furthermore, the trees are used for making handicrafts, kitchen utensils, wooden carvings and other items to minimise dependence on markets. The skills required for making these products are informally passed down from one generation to the next. Young children, normally the male-child, learn to make such items at very early ages through observation and imitating the activities of adult household members. By the time the young children reach the stage of assuming social responsibilities in the community, they will already be experts in the making of the items and more broadly become ready for future familial duties as parents in the rural communities. But there are also more specialised wood products, notably the production of music drums and yokes. The drums as musical instruments were used in religious circles and for entertainment purposes. The yokes are used in peasant farming operations, particularly for ploughing the lands in readiness for planting. Overall, the local-making of wooden products enable the Mangwe communities to meet their domestic needs with very minimal monetary costs on their part, which is part of the coping capacity of rural communities.

The active and sustainable usage of 'natural capital' in pursuing rural livelihoods goes contrary to any labelling of Mangwe communities as incapacitated victims of broader political and economic forces beyond their control. This labelling of the poor as passive victims, devoid of all human agency, is based on externally-driven problematic conceptions of rural communities and reads off rural community dynamics from broader structural processes and constraints. It is based on a national or regional level of analysis and does scale down the analysis to the local, or community, level. In so doing, it undermines the presence and validity of ingenuous livelihood activities in Mangwe in favour of asserting untested assumptions from afar. Though not beyond criticism, the rural livelihoods paradigm does at least acknowledge the empowering processes embedded in localised forms of livelihood strategies. What might seem inactive or perhaps dormant from the perspective of macro-structural analyses comes alive when more micro-analyses are undertaken. From the viewpoint of this thesis, this is particularly true in the case of the rural elderly, who are regularly conceived as beyond or past agency in contributing to rural livelihoods. Just as Mangwe communities seek to withstand the destructive structures of the broader Zimbabwean political economy, likewise structuralist theorists need to be subject to some sort of resistance on the part of the rural analyst.

The livelihoods framework is sensitive to the generation and development of protective mechanisms as activated by the Mangwe communities as they seek to renew themselves in the face of broader crises which invariably enter into their socio-space. In this way, the rural livelihood patterns

promote the re-generation of local communities by sustaining them over time, albeit not in any static way. Broader structural effects are therefore mediated by local community cultures and networks as the responsive mechanisms within the communities become released in diverse ways, such that the effects cannot be read from any supposedly logical effects. Expressed in other words, livelihood patterns within the socio-spatial boundaries of the communities are not simply a response to outside forces. They have always between intertwined with outside forces, and in complex ways: including assimilation, adaptation, withdrawal, resistance and repulsion. Whatever takes place entails some form and degree of agency on the part of Mangwe households and communities, as they seek not only to pursue livelihoods but also to sustain their communities; and, invariably, any agency is guided by the cultural values and social networks inherent in the community systems. In other words, the socially-embedded rural livelihood patterns constitute a sort of indigenous philosophy which guides the rural communities of Mangwe in cope with shocks and stresses in ways which maintain their originality and durability. They provide a framework which defines and delimits the character and direction of social action in the everyday performances of Mangwe rural communities.

Mangwe rural communities make a range of wood carvings for ornamental purposes in the home. In and through the carvings, the communities engage in a process of demonstrating their skills in art. Art in fact becomes a form of communication in which the communities are able to visibly and visually reflect on their experiences, interests and imaginations. Often, in the carvings, portraits of beautiful women and ideal community men are made and presented. Also, carvings of various animals and birds reflect the close and intimate links which exist between Mangwe people and nature. These depict the communities' unwavering interest in guarding the sovereignty of their local natural habitat jealously. Thus, the ingrained and meaningful position that nature assumes in the lives of the communities is portrayed through the carvings. In this way, the placement of the wooden carvings in the homes conveys the socially-constructed meaning between Mangwe households and nature, and the reliance of the former on the latter with regard to the basic needs of rural life. This placement also expresses the ways in which local community relations are governed and symbolised by the attachment to nature, and the pronounced rural livelihoods connotations embedded in society-nature interface.

Additionally, the carvings are sold on a small scale to small businessmen who come to Mangwe in search of them for resale purposes. The businessmen obtain significant profits from selling the carvings to larger merchants either in Bulawayo or in the neighbouring countries of Botswana and South Africa. In this sense, the local-focus and welfare-orientation of rural livelihood resources in Mangwe is sometimes abused for personal financial gain by outsiders. These outsiders penetrate and

access local resources, at least indirectly, through gaps in communal monitoring and the loose and porous regulation of exclusion by the Mangwe communities. However, at the same time, the communities benefit collectively from this.

Stone carvings are also made, out of different types of locally-obtainable stones depending on the interests and skills of the artists. Most notably, soap stone – which is soft and easily workable – is used in the designing and making of crafts and other objects. Over centuries, the indigenous Kalanga and Ndebele inhabitants in the area (the latter settling in the area in the mid-1800s) developed simple but effective technologies in making use of the leaves and fibres of indigenous trees. These technologies incorporated artistic flair and creativity to meet basic needs. They continue to be widely used for a variety of purposes in the livelihood patterns of the rural communities of Mangwe. For instance, the leaves and fibres are drawn upon in making beautiful hats which are worn locally. Bags of different shapes and sizes are made out of the fibres, and are used for example as wallets and handbags by both men and women in Mangwe communities. As well, door mats and tablemats are made out of the fibres and leaves. More so, the leaves are used for weaving hand baskets for carrying various fruits and vegetables home from the forests, fields and homestead gardens. The most popular leaves used in the weaving of these baskets are those from the *ilala* tree which grows freely in the forests. A special wild grass is used for cleaning the bags and hats when they are dirty, as the grass dissolves in the water just as many chemically-based cleaning detergents do.

The ingenious mind-set of the local people in designing their livelihoods around nature contributes to community self sufficiency. Indeed, the long-standing local knowledge and culturally-acquired skills of traditional technology and art protects these rural communities in the face of various threats and stresses, such as severe inflationary pressure and rising prices for basic commodities in the nearby shops. Resorting to what they locally possess facilitates the resilience of the Mangwe communities. To illustrate this further, the barks, leaves and the roots of the forest trees are used to meet the medical needs of the rural communities, and this indigenous knowledge is widely possessed and recognised in the communities. The medicines are prepared in particular from tree barks and leaves, and entail a range of concoctions emanating from mixing the water and juice from the barks and leaves. In some cases, the barks are burnt into ashes and then mixed with water for drinking. Tree bark is also used in the case of chasing evil spirits, with the barks being burnt and the smoke allowed to fill the homestead. As the smoke escapes through the openings between the wall and roof of the hut, the evil spirits also said to be also leaving.

Some individuals within the communities are specifically tasked with overseeing and supervising the use of the traditional medicines. These are professional traditional healers belonging to the Kalanga and Ndebele groups residing in the rural communities. They are in effect the custodians of the knowledge of the medicines and they are involved in the use of the medicines on a full-time basis. Their involvement in the management of traditional medicines extends to and through their families. More specifically, the spirit of healing automatically possesses a living member belonging to a particular sacred family when its current traditional healer dies. In this way, indigenous knowledge and practices are passed on from one generation to the other such that the Mangwe communities are always assured of readily-available medicinal services.

These traditional healing practices in Mangwe, rooted as they are in a cosmology focusing on nature, are particularly critical during times of stress and strain. As noted in an earlier chapter, the collapse of the national economy in Zimbabwe reached its peak in 2008. This dramatically impacted on the public health system and indeed paralysed it, including the ongoing shortage of basic mainstream medicines and drugs. Many medicines were only obtainable from private medical hospitals and at prices which were well beyond the reach of poor rural communities like Mangwe (even if such hospitals were available locally).

During the period, the public health practitioners at the Mangwe state clinics advised their rural patients to resort to boiling the leaves of the locally-available *Mutohwe* wild tree for treating flues and related coughs. As well, the medical lotions for treating skin rashes became very expensive and scarce during the height of the economic troubles in Zimbabwe. The Mangwe health practitioners, because of this, prescribed the use of a wild common grass called (*Ruredzo*) for treating rashes. The grass was dissolved in water, and the soapy mixture of the grass and the water was then sprinkled on the rash of the sick person during bathing. The prescription seemingly worked very effectively. These public clinic initiatives borrowed from long-standing medical practices of the Mangwe communities and were adopted by Mangwe residents on this basis.

The faecal matter of many wild animals is used as chemical substances for treating various ailments in the Mangwe communities. The dung is burnt on an open fire and the smoke is inhaled by the patient to treat diverse health ailments. In particular, the waste of the bushbuck is used for treating coughs among children as part of culturally-embedded medicinal knowledge and practices.

In 2008, the exorbitant prices of toothpastes and toothbrushes prevented Mangwe communities from purchasing them. In this context, and as a coping mechanism, the communities resorted to the use of the leaves and branches of the local *Mushangura* and *Muchakata* trees for brushing their teeth.

These trees are known to contain chemical compounds which facilitate cleanliness of the mouth and teeth. By maintaining dental cleanliness in this way, community resilience was bolstered and personal dignity was ensured despite the crisis.

Much of the indigenous knowledge about nature within the Mangwe communities is not encoded in written texts but is transmitted and circulated in oral form. Written regulations, in any case, would be not of any significance given the low levels of education in Mangwe. Only 41 percent of residents had even completed primary education (Ndlovu et al., 2010).

Reeds are found in large quantities on the banks of the larger rivers which flow through the rural communities of Mangwe, notably the Embakwe and Ingwizi rivers but also the Ramakwabane River which flows along the border of Zimbabwe and Botswana. The reeds serve a multipurpose function in the communities, including making baskets (as discussed earlier) and for constructing big mats which serve as an alternative to beds for sleeping. The mats are widely used as beds in Mangwe and are in fact preferred to mattress beds, because of their affordability and cleanliness compared to mattresses. The string for weaving the reeds together into mats are made out of the sisal plants which grow in the local forests. The reeds are also used for making fishing nets, and Mangwe communities traditionally rely upon fishing for meeting their dietary needs. As with other local artefacts and tools, this commonly acceptable and affordable type of net is locally-rooted in the technologies of Mangwe communities.

In addition to that, the reeds provide a highly nutritious feed for both domestic and wild animals in the rural communities. Cattle, donkeys and goats all graze the fresh reeds on the banks of the major rivers, as do wild animals such as water buck and impala. The reeds are favoured by grazing ruminants – both domestic and wild – because of their location on the rivers for convenience to water. As a result, the animals regularly find shelter in the reeds which grow into thick bushes on river banks. The intimate relationship between animals and local communities, as manifested for instance in river locales, are expressed in the local philosophies, taboos, totems and social values of the communities. The taboos and totems in many ways govern the social relationships in the communities. A typical example is the restrictions on the consumption of specific foods based on the type of animals linked as totems to specific clans in the Mangwe area. Amongst the Ndebele, to cite one case, there is a clan which highly respects the buffalo (nyati) and its surroundings, such that it is perceived to be divine and is not to be killed or consumed. .

The main purpose of taboos and totems is to ritually observe and reinforce the significance of nature and in the process to protect it. In doing so, this brings to the fore the embeddedness of social

practices in nature. These cultural observances, such that different animals signify different totems for different clans, ease pressure on the overall natural habitat of Mangwe communities. Other taboos also exist. For instance, the mountain tops in Mangwe are not allowed to be cultivated, as it believed that they are home to the spirits of the ancestors. The ancestral spirits deserve respect by keeping their places quiet and undisturbed, and breaking the taboo is said to result in a bad omen befalling an individual or the whole community. Indeed, it is punishable under traditional regulations to engage in any practices that are culturally forbidden. Different forms of fines are payable to the traditional chiefs if such taboos are broken. The fines vary from domestic animals to assets possessed by the offender in his or her homestead. Indirectly, the taboos safeguard the habitat of a wide variety of animals, birds, reptiles and insects which live specifically in the mountains, including baboons and rock rabbits.

Some powerful cosmologies clearly shape the taboos and prohibitions of the Mangwe rural communities. And these cosmologies are depicted and conveyed in different ways, including by local paintings of lone woman carrying firewood as reflected in the backdrop on the bright moon. It is believed, in terms of local culture, that the woman was disobedient by going out to gather firewood from a prohibited sacred place in the community. In return, she received punishment from God and this entailed, amongst other things, public humiliation and embarrassment by being displayed on the moon as a lesson to the culturally ill-disciplined. These strong long-standing cultural beliefs still exist and are effective today, and they are the basis of forming and enforcing rules and regulations to protect the natural surroundings within which Mangwe communities survive. This is not to deny that new or altered taboos, avoidances and totems emerge over time.

Such locally-based arrangements focusing on the nature-society interface address and advance the welfare of the local residents of Mangwe district, at times when the state's presence in the area is minimal or negligible or even when the state more forcefully intervenes in rural livelihoods. However, though these arrangements are quite specific and precise in relation to community concerns and much more so than remote state institutional arrangements, the capacity of local arrangements to block the occurrence of shocks and crises is limited. This is because they are driven by certain methodical and sequential processes. For this reason, they are gradual in shaping up to detect the gravity of a hazard or shock before it strikes. More so, the rural poor lack political muscle and economic resources in rising above the outside forces which impact in crisis-form in Mangwe. At the same time, Mangwe communities do display significant adaptability in the face of broader crises within which the communities become immersed. Community adaptability at times appears dormant within the Mangwe localities and resurfaces at opportune moments, particularly when an overpowering crisis emerges. This

reactivation of community adaptability demonstrates the sheer resilience of community institutional arrangements as rooted in the nature-society nexus. The emergence from a period of dormancy is usually aggressive in a bid to reaffirm and indeed reclaim the community's right to exist. This was reflected for example by the land occupations of the rural communities of Mangwe onto privately-owned commercial farms from the year 2000 to 2005.

5.3 Insects and Animals

A diverse range of insects, birds and animals are found in the forests of the rural communities of Mangwe. Over the centuries, as indicated previously, Mangwe communities developed a deep and intense relationship with them. Many wild animals historically were taken into national and provincial parks for tourism and protection purposes by the government but many remain deep in the forests of Mangwe and continue to breed there. Mangwe communities treat the animals, birds and insects as a cheap and readily-available source of food. In terms of birds, doves are the most widely eaten but starlings, partridges and the guinea fowls are also favoured. In fact, Mangwe residents over time have successfully domesticated guinea fowls successfully. Other animals, for a variety of reasons, are not consumed as food, notably reptiles.

However, Mangwe communities interact with them in other ways. Snakes for example are used for providing important ingredients in two important forms of divination which are deeply embedded in the philosophical spheres of the rural communities of Mangwe, namely, traditional healing and African witchcraft. Notably, the oil from snakes is used by traditional healers for chasing away bad luck. The use of oils from the python (as well as from lions) is believed to boost confidence and makes somebody to be feared by the public. It is also claimed that hyenas are used by witches as transport during their night-time activities of causing injuries and deaths to their enemies and successful people whose progress may be threatening to them in one way or the other. Likewise, owls are believed to be used by witches for sending warning shots to their would-be targets. This is done in the event of some expected changes in the conduct of likely targets, which would otherwise enable them to escape the dangerous looming witchcraft action.

Additionally, far from the use of modern technology to predict climatic changes, Mangwe rural communities make predictions by observing the behaviour of various wild animals and birds in the forest. In this way, birds and animals express essential messages to the communities. A certain indigenous bird (known as *kowiro*) shrieks in a certain manner to indicate the coming of good rains, and the arrival of swallows (and other migratory birds from the north) in the area provides a similar

message. Swallows in particular are understood as being aware of changes in the weather, such that the Mangwe communities culturally perceive them as possessing advanced intelligence to understand and appreciate the rainfall patterns before they fall. Overall, the restless flights and wild excitement of birds in the area are believed to be signs of a good summer agriculturally. To the contrary, the coming of cold and incremental weather conditions in the near future is signified by the continued hooting of the Dendera bird. All of this is part and parcel of rural technologies developed over centuries and which are 'tested' and verified through repeated accurate results. This technology emerged and developed far before modernist scientific knowledge about the out-migration of birds (such as swallows) from cold places such as Europe under cold winter conditions to Africa.

Birds are also favoured in that they feed on millipedes and other troublesome pests in the crop fields of Mangwe. For this reason, the local farmers do not bear the financial cost of buying chemical pesticides for the clearing the pests off their croplands. Like birds, some insects – either their presence or absence – also send a message to the Mangwe communities. For instance, an outbreak of swarms of locusts is perceived to be a sign of a terrible drought, such that the locusts appear in abundance in order to provide a source of nutritious food in the face of impending crop failure. Of course, any crops in the ground come under attack from the locusts. But their presence acts as a warning signal to the local communities, and this enables the Mangwe communities to re-strategise their survival mechanisms and activities. Hence, the strategic knowledge and understanding of warning signs embodies copying methods in the face of possible livelihood disaster.

5.3.1 Harvesting of Mopane worms

As stressed already, Mangwe communities resort to the harvesting of forest products for sustenance. The collection of Mopane worms for food and sale, grass-cutting for sale and cutting of firewood for sale were recorded among the elderly guardians in the Mangwe-based fieldwork. Of these, the collection of Mopane worms is the most important. During the years of good rains, the forests of the Mangwe communities are filled with these worms and they are communally accessible. The communities gather the worms in the most sustainable way as practised throughout the centuries. The worms are then prepared in the traditional manner by roasting on fire and thereafter salted, after which they are ready for sale or for being stored over time for later own consumption. Though widely eaten locally, they are very marketable throughout Zimbabwe and the southern African region (sold informally, or in supermarkets and stores) such that they have become an important local commodity. The commodification of the Mopane worms has in fact at times become a lucrative business for the

Mangwe communities. In this way, local entrepreneurial capacities are an extension of local cultural practices relating to the communities' intimate relationship with nature. The process of commmodification is not detrimental to local cultural values and local resources, as the community members act as gatekeepers in channelling outsiders' access to the Mopane worms in the Mangwe forests. And, in doing so, they defend the integrity and self-reliance of their communities.

However, the lucrative activity around Mopane worms is hampered by many factors in the bid to sustain the rural communities of Mangwe in the context of ravaging poverty, stress and the HIV and AIDS scourge. The factors are as follows:

- The harvesting of the worms is only possible during the years of good rains, and good rains traditionally take place in three-year intervals;
- The Mangwe communities do not engage in systematic marketing strategies for the worms, such that they tend to sell them at low prices for largely for subsistence purposes only;
- They generally fail to budget the incoming income from Mopane sales for future expenses (during the Mopane off-season) and tend to use this income for immediate daily expenses;
- Related to this, the Mopane activities are largely 'stored' in the welfare-orientated social dimensions of the rural livelihoods patterns of the Mangwe communities without any attempt to maximise profits; and
- The possibility of harvesting Mopane worms is being undercut under the weight of widespread deforestation and veldt fires in the Mangwe communities, because the Mopane worms feeds on the leaves of local trees.

In addition to these points, the wider economic problems in Zimbabwe are placing significant burdens on the local communities and are undermining this culturally-moulded activity. This is being revealed in the following ways. First of all, the activity is slowly undergoing a seemingly natural death, as the wider economic crisis is disturbing local cultural means for community regeneration. Notably, the young members of the communities, who are supposed to internalise cultural skills are concentrating on border-jumping activities to neighbouring countries in search of more rewarding economic opportunities. Secondly, despite attempts by the local communities to protect their natural heritage (including Mopane worms), the loose exercise of regulations enforcing the rules of exclusion in the Mangwe communities is failing to keep out the large numbers of people coming from other parts of

Zimbabwe in search of the worms. Most of these outsiders come from the Mashonaland provinces and they fail to possess the necessary environmental-friendly skills of harvesting the worms.

In spite of the above flaws, the harvesting of Mopane worms remains significant in the Mangwe communities and Mopane activities facilitate and reinforce a sense of community intactness amongst the local people. In large part, this is due to the fact that the activities are conducted in a collective manner and for similar sentiments and reasons. This leads to a commonality and collective identity as Mangwe inhabitants engage in shared practices and goals in coping with shared problems, which marks them off from outsiders whose rationale for engaging in Mopane worm collection and sales is seen as different if not opposed to them. These common grounds form a critical basis for a shared coping with regard to crises and shocks. This is realised as individuals form groups for the harvesting of forest products, including Mopane worms, without any pronounced tendency to exclude certain individuals. These flexible and accommodative groups become pivotal in the formation of home-grown social security networks, and they thereby enhance the adaptive capabilities of the Mangwe communities while being sensitive to the livelihood plight of community members.

At the same time, there is a clear gender-based division of labour in the collecting of Mopane worms (as there are for other forest-based livelihood activities, such as cutting of grass thatch), with women – including both mothers and grandmothers – in particular being engaged in many of these activities. This is a manifestation of existing patriarchal arrangements whereby women are responsible for familial responsibilities and extensions of such responsibilities in the public domain. Therefore, it is the women who form and organise such groups and thus they play a significant social role in coping strategies for the communities as a whole. These regular forays into the forest also allow women to share their experiences, views and concerns autonomously from men and this strengthens their resolve to care for their communities in the face of crisis conditions, including the AIDS pandemic.

This of course does not in any way entail a challenge to their maternal realities and the prevailing system of patriarchy; if anything, it simply reinforces the gendered structuring of livelihood activities in Mangwe. Undoubtedly, the centrality of gender and maternity in the rural livelihoods of Mangwe is embodied in the dominance of women in the gathering of forest products. Nevertheless, this does give women a sense of importance as well as a degree of livelihood independence, given their general plight as – broadly speaking – less privileged segments of Mangwe communities in terms of control, possession and access to land (which is dominated by men). Further, in the public spaces of Mangwe, land is held privately by men though it is not privately owned. But women's involvement in the public sphere (in the form of forest activities) entails a more collective responsibility as they act

within the realm of communally-held resources. This harvesting of forest products by women goes beyond the more male-focused land-based competing mind-set and expresses and reinforces the more womanly-focused concern with community wellbeing as a whole. Though existing within a gendered division of labour, then, women's forest activities (including in relation to Mopane worms) allow women the opportunity to work and act in line with the common good of local communities. As part of patriarchal discourses and practices, women explore and enact the survival of their households and communities in the opportunities made available to them in and thorough accessing communally-owned resources. Women's involvement in the harvesting of forest products produces reliable gains as coping options for Mangwe communities are widened.

5.4 Water Harvesting

Water is a critical dimension of the society-nature interface amongst the rural communities of Mangwe district. It is needed directly for the communities themselves and for all other living organisms on which the communities rely, including animals, birds, insects and the forests. However, as emphasised already, the Mangwe area is generally dry due to low rainfall patterns per annum and erratic rainfall. Water is available is deep underground but it needs to be accessed. In order to access this water source, the Mangwe communities dig water holes and wells. These holes and wells are often found alongside or just outside the boundaries of homesteads or, alternatively, they are dug in the few wetlands which are available locally in the area. The wells provide water for home consumption and also for the drinking of small domestic livestock.

In addition to the wells and holes, some dams have been built by the Zimbabwe government in strategic places across the district to provide larger quantities of water and to conserve water. The most notable dams are found at Ezimunyama, Madabe, Ingwizi and Maninji. The dams are normally where the larger livestock (such as cattle) drink. And they are also used intensively as water sources during the dry seasons like spring when the rivers are dry. In addition to government-built dams, a number of non-government organisations have sunk boreholes in the Mangwe localities, particularly during the crisis period from the year 2000, thereby increasing accessibility to water by the Mangwe communities for use. The communities have sought, in an innovative fashion, to use any availability of water to diversity and maximise their livelihood options and activities. This includes fishing and bee-keeping.

5.4.1 Fishing

The local communities traditionally practised fishing. Historically, fishing was practised in the local rivers by the Kalanga and the Bushmen who originally occupied the Mangwe area, and fishing skills have been passed down through generations within the local communities up until today. Though the Bushmen moved further in to the deserts of (now) Botswana in the 1800s, the Kalanga continue to reside in the area and engage in fishing in the rivers and streams which pass through the Mangwe area. In addition, the government-constructed dams – as a means for further harvesting local water resources – also allowed for the diversification of fishing sources as fishing now takes place at the dams. This is particularly important during the dry season when the water flow in the rivers becomes a trickle and hence it allows for the fishing livelihood activity to take place throughout the entire year. The local communities of Mangwe view the dams (and rivers) as repositories of the scarce commodities (notably fish) which they cannot afford to purchase in and through markets, as they are reliant on these water sources for the constant and free supply of fish.

The fishing practices in Mangwe, including the style of fishing used and the means of catching worms for bait, are structured by the established rural technologies of the Mangwe communities. For instance, the art of making the fishing nets from reeds and other local material is culturally-informed and affordable. And the post-catch sorting out, preparation and storage of the fish are all culturally- and community-centred and embedded. Overall, the methods of fishing employed are not harmful to the replenishment of the fishing stock, such that fishing continues over the long-term. This mode of rural technology therefore entails culturally-founded mechanisms which are not in any way based on modern scientific claims about the value of fish consumption, including proteins and nutrients like calcium in fish. However, Mangwe people know the significance of fish in their diet, and they consume the right amounts and types of fish based on the practices and the knowledge passed down by the elders in the community. The significance of this cultural transmission should not be underestimated, for it allows the communities to protect their local livelihoods from the monetisation and commodification of nature by being able to access fish independent of the market mechanism. In doing so, this maximises local control over livelihood outcomes.

In pursuing this activity, the Mangwe communities seek to safeguard the fish from abusive practices by intruders into the communities. In other words, the ongoing interaction between the Mangwe communities and their water reservoirs creates institutional arrangements for protecting water sources and by implication the local fishing technologies. For instance, at Ezimunyama Dam, only local Ezimunyama community members are allowed to fish in the dam and Plumtree town dwellers are

excluded from using the dam facility. These protectionist measures, in defining outsiders and excluding them, confirm and reinforce local social relations in a manner conducive to community-based livelihoods. This localised grip on fishing as a livelihood contributes to community self-definition and self-identification as deeply embedded in the relationship to water. Fish-poaching activities by outsiders undermine Mangwe communities as communities, because fishing is culturally-coded as almost synonymous with the very existence of these communities. In other words, the use of sustainable fishing technologies simultaneously involves the uninterrupted cultural regeneration of mechanisms of livelihood patterns within Mangwe communities.

5.5 Honey Harvesting

The semi-arid conditions and hot temperatures of Mangwe district are very favourable to the presence of bees and honey is harvested from the bee colonies. Historically, honey was harvested in the rural communities of Mangwe by the indigenous inhabitants of the area, namely, the Kalanga and the Bushmen communities, and the honey was for home consumption. To this day, the honey is harvested from the forests where bees prepare it in the hollow trees and underground; and hence it does not entail bee-keeping by the communities. The bees make the honey as part of their feeding habits and storage of food, and the local communities simply harvest the honey and boil it for consumption purposes. Boiling the honey ensures that bees are not attracted to the honey at the homesteads after collection from the forests, and this also maintains the freshness of the honey. However, at times, the honey is eaten raw. The local communities of Mangwe incorporate the honey into their diet in various ways, including spreading it on bread. Besides meeting their dietary needs, the Mangwe communities also use the honey as a chemical for treating skin rashes. Knowing the effectiveness of the chemicals of various plants contained in the locally-available honey capacitates the Mangwe communities in their fight against various ailments.

The harvesting methodology is culturally-transmitted and does not entail any market-related expenses on the part of the Mangwe communities. Harvesting normally takes place at night when the bees are less active. The harvesters go to places in the forests where bee colonies are known to exist, and they light fires under the selected tree using fresh leaves or fresh grass so that the fire releases significant amounts of smoke. The smoke goes into the bee hive and the bees flee the hive in order to avoid suffocation. While the bees are confused and disorientated because of the smoke, the harvesting process is carried out quickly. The baby bees are separated from the honey and returned to the hives to ensure no disruption to the life-cycle of the bee colony.

The harvesting of honey is a group activity as it is done collectively among friends and kin. Like other communal resource-based activities, the collective action centring on honey harvesting results in the tightening of the web of familial relations which have been subjected to serious strain because of the HIV and AIDS crisis. This is brought about as parents or guardians bring along children in the forest harvesting as a social activity (both educational and recreational). And this reinforces familial bonds and social responsibility amongst guardians and parents in fulfilling their familial obligations in satisfying the dietary needs of their dependents. The knowledge, skills and practices involving bees, harvesting and honey thereby contribute to promoting the resilience of the Mangwe communities.

The significance of the honey in the provision of nutrients is part of historical and cultural knowledge in the Mangwe communities. During the intense time of suffering for Mangwe from the year 2000, some NGOs (such as Tshinyuni Babili Trust) sought therefore to widen the possibilities of honey harvesting through programmatic interventions. This entailed the provision and supply of industrially-made bee hives. But the Mangwe also continue to use their traditional forest-based harvesting techniques.

5.6 Soils and Rocks

Mangwe communities have culturally-endowed understandings of the various soils and rocks in their locality, as part of their socio-ecological system of rural livelihoods. For instance, anthills are found in abundance and the anthill soil is used for building their huts and houses, particularly because it acts as an adhesive for binding stones and bricks together and therefore it is a direct replacement for industrially-made and market-purchased cement; in fact, local Mangwe inhabitants claim that it is as effective as cement. The darker and stickier anthill soils in particular possess reduced permeability qualities which inhibit damage by water to physical structures. The importance of anthill soils as a cementing agent has been particularly significant given that cement (as with all building materials) became subject to significant inflationary pressure from the year 2000. Again, this rural technology cushions Mangwe communities from the ravages of market forces and the spiralling of market prices far beyond their financial reach. And the prevalence of such locally-rooted technologies is a manifestation of rural practices which seek to protect the integrity of Mangwe communities.

The Mangwe communities also use the anthill soil for moulding bricks, with the bricks contributing to the construction of homesteads or pens for the small domestic ruminants. Traditionally, houses and pens were built out of wood. However, building practices changed with the development of

more urban-based building practices where concrete blocks are used in building. The use of blocks in Mangwe, as described below, did not alter the collective character of the building process and its rootedness in nature. In other words, the more modern block-based structure of buildings did not do away with the collectiveness embodied in the rural technologies of the local Mangwe communities.

Brick moulding in Mangwe for some time now has provided the communities with the opportunity to design and construct (in creative ways) alternative housing forms compared to the traditional wood and dagga huts. It is a physically-demand task involving mainly men and is carried out through kinship-based team work. In a particular team, some members dig the soil in order for it to become loose; some heap the soil together and mix it with water; and some team members take the mud and mould it into bricks. When the bricks dry, the team neatly arranges the bricks into structures popularly known as ovens and they cover the ovens with mud. The team members arrange the bricks in a fixed pattern to ensure that they do not fall apart. Some members gather firewood and burn the bricks with fire to make them red and strong. The bricks are then ready for construction.

The steps above reflect that the making of bricks as a group activity, which brings together at group level the collective spirit of the community. The spirit of togetherness as produced by this and other group activities is necessary for handling the different crises which befall the communities. The same contribution that team members provide in moulding bricks is embedded in the overall coping mechanisms of the local communities. The moulding of bricks is in fact metaphorically synonymous with the moulding (and shaping) of Mangwe communities as they seek to respond to the adverse effects of the surrounding crises which invariably penetrate and disrupt to some extent the livelihood activities and social networks of Mangwe. The patterning of rural livelihoods along collective lines also provides some sort of social safety nets for the local communities. More specifically, the less privileged and more marginalised inhabitants are accommodated by the livelihood strategies. They are, in this case, presented with an opportunity to engage in brick moulding and to receive, albeit limited, compensation-in-kind for their work.

Apart from its contribution to the building of homestead structures, readily-available anthill soil is also used for improving the soil texture of crop fields. The rural communities engage in the digging of anthills and spreading the soil to their fields in preparation for the next planting season. The application of the anthill soil to the fields is done as a replacement for purchased inorganic compound fertilisers and the communities claim that their organic method achieves very positive results. The communities in fact argue that the compound fertilisers destroy the soil texture of their fields and undermine the nutritional composition of the soils; and that, because inorganic fertilisers need to be

applied annually during each agricultural season, therefore their use leads to dependence on fluctuations in the market in terms of the availability and prices of fertilisers. This dependence on commodity markets is beyond their control and the use of anthill soil therefore facilitates a degree of community autonomy vis-à-vis the market. The application of the anthill soils to various soil types, including the relevant quantity to be used, is entirely determined and controlled by the indigenous knowledge-systems in rural Mangwe. This local knowledge of anthill soils not only improves the quality of soil in their fields but also does not lead to the burning of crops in the field during the common extended dry spells in Mangwe, something which inorganic fertilisers are inclined to do.

The soils are used in the making of clay pots of different sizes and they have a wide range of domestic purposes. Some clay pots are used for cooking, some for storing water for drinking while some are for the brewing of traditional beer. Additionally, clay pots are used for storing grains temporarily before they are loaded into larger traditional storage facilities or after being taken out of the facilities in preparation for the making the staple meal of *sadza*. The art of making the clay pots is part of Mangwe's gendered and age-based division of labour, as it is possessed in large part by certain elderly women who invariably over time impart their knowledge to the younger generation of women. After the clay pots are made, they are dried in the sun and then subjected to very high heating conditions on an open fire, which ensures that the pots are dry and solid. They thus become resilient to incremental weather and notably wet conditions. The gendered division of labour, which admittedly is based on a system of patriarchal practices, nevertheless ensures that men do not usurp the valued roles of women in the local communities. And hence the gendered pattern of rural livelihood activities tends to undercut the prospects for gender-based conflicts or at least regulates gender relations.

The local soils are also used for ornamental and artistic purposes. these activities are dominated by young children and women. Both social groupings, in their own particular ways, express their hidden and innermost feelings through this ornamental work. In the case of children, the items crafted embody their wishes and dreams for the future, though these dreams are quite often structured along the lines of gendered relations at least as understood by the children. The items point to their future social positions and roles in the community as men or women. Young boys tend to construct artistic soil-based works based on a masculinised future, such as farming with ploughs and cattle, or hunting with spears. In the case of female children, they make toys of babies; and their mothers assist them through the drying process by means of both the sun and fire. After that, young girls carry the baby toys on their backs. Indeed, they practice suckling the babies and comforting them as in a real situation when an infant is crying. All this happens under the watchful eyes of their mothers and grandmothers,

who train them for their future domestic duties. As challenges of growing up face boys and girls, they are able to be guided through the process by immersing themselves in this ornamental work. But this relates to gendered futures which become are inscribed in the mind and hearts of young children. The items, as signs of young aspirations, orientate the children to an expected – almost predetermined – gendered future.

A social platform which allows the guardians (notably older women) to socially impart the essential knowledge of life to the young children is thus created through the ornamental work. The platform provides for the capturing and channelling of the children's fragile capabilities by offering the guardians a mentoring relationship and employing leisure and entertainment as a lubricant between the two (guardians and children) in a kind of social apprenticeship programme. As a form of socialisation, the acquiring of ornament-focused technical skills by children further enhances the social integration of children into familial and community institutional arrangements and hierarchies. Nature then, in this case in the form of anthill soil and the construction of artefacts of children, is deeply embedded and intertwined with local histories and social relations. The respectful and harmonious relationship between community and nature by implication implies harmonious social relationships. More broadly, the non-extractive use of the anthill soil for ornamental work becomes a signifier or framework which defines and delimits the institutional arrangements of the Mangwe communities, including the importance of the elderly (or at least those who are relatively older) in reproducing social cohesion. In this way, the anthill soil is transformed from being simply nature (and existing in and of itself outside 'the social') to being imbued in a complex set of community-rooted and respected social relationships around both gender and age.

The intimacy between nature and society, as expressed in the anthills, is also seen in the traditional art of Mangwe communities. The red soils of the anthills are an important ingredient for instance in the pictures which are often painted on the walls of the homesteads. While these murals no doubt beautify the homesteads (including flowers, birds and animals) they are also a daily reminder of the nature-society interface and the respect which communities demonstrate for nature as part of their cosmology. Notably, animal murals are embedded in various cultural values like totems. These murals entail a physical projection and presentation of the innermost feelings of affection for the socio-natural locality, and hence it has a philosophical and spiritual dimension through shared local meanings and significance of nature are activated and reactivated. The art indeed refreshes the rural communities from the troubles of perennial droughts, increasing numbers of the orphans and economic stresses. They are able to reaffirm their identities in relation to nature through the art of red soil designs. Almost

literally, nature is therefore constantly re-inscribed through artistic work detailing the spirituality and livelihoods of Mangwe households, as nature is internally embodied and present in the community and its livelihood patterns.

Cultural symbols produce bonds of sociability and indeed are central to local group formations which facilitate the creation of a web of social relations regulating social interaction as well as curbing social conflict in the communities. A typical example is the unification of many families and households into various clans symbolised by different local animals, with clans representing culturally and socially the key behavioural traits believed to be associated with the clan's animal totem. In this scenario, the animals are symbolically transformed into social arrangements centred on totems. The totems bind specific household units together as a group with a common identity, by laying out the practical arrangements for the enhancement of compliance and compromise among members of the same clan. But they simultaneously regulate the interaction of various clans to promote coherence at the higher scalar level of the community. For instance, the totems provide for the marriage of couples from different totems like elephant and monkey and therefore bind Mangwe communities together in mutually-organised and reciprocal social relations. This is exemplified by customary marriage in Mangwe communities, as it is mandatory for the man to engage in voluntary work at the homestead of his mother-in-law. He is also expected to provide the provision of food and other basic needs whenever the need arises for the in-laws. The man is to highly respect the parents of his wife by avoiding for example leisurely and informal interactions with them. Such community-wide social relations provide a framework for conflict resolutions and for coping mechanisms in difficult social circumstances.

In addition to this, Mangwe communities depend on red termites (*Majuru*) from the anthills as a highly nutritious source of food. They access and catch the termites by using a special type of reed found on the banks of rivers and other open water bodies, after which they are fried and eaten dry. When the summer rains fall, Mangwe inhabitants also catch flying insects from the anthills, called *Ishwa*, which are tasty and full of fat. More so, most of the edible mushrooms mentioned earlier are found on top of the anthills.

The anthills further provide favourable graveyards for the rural communities, as the deceased are buried on a specially-chosen nearby anthill located outside of the homestead of the respective family. The anthill which houses the grave or graves is treated as a sacred place. No searching for food or social activities must be carried out on these special anthills except intermittent familial visits for the performance of traditional rituals of the family. It is culturally upheld that the dead have to be buried at anthills for them to enjoy the cool temperatures of the trees which grow there undisturbed. At the same

time, burying the dead on anthills facilitates the decay of human tissue and its turning into soil nutrients, in large part because of the presence of the termites in the anthills. In this way, the rural communities of Mangwe show cultural respect and concern for the dead but also return the dead person from where they came, namely, nature.

On the local rocks, the communities meet many social and material needs. As discussed above, local stones are used in various ways including artwork. In addition, Mangwe communities spread their crop harvests on top of low level, hard and flat granite rocks which are distributed throughout the district. This happens for crops like sorghum, millet and rapoko which are grown in the dry semi-arid district of Mangwe because of their drought resistance characteristics. These granite faces are ideal for the processing of grains, including threshing and the separation of grains from chaff. The granite rocks are also used for the drying of crops, such as round nuts and maize, which are then stored for later use. But, further, there is often drying of some sorghum or millet which will be prepared for grinding after being mixed with water during the stamping process. The granite rocks, because of their hard and flat surfaces, are a locally-established and culturally-sound arrangement for food hygiene in the processing of grain crops. This culturally-embedded standard of food hygiene speaks to the innovative and adaptive practices of Mangwe inhabitants in their locality in realising their livelihoods. This, at the same time, symbolically draws the Mangwe communities closer to the rocks. In this way, the rocks receive full local protection against possible detrimental human activities.

When the crops are being dried, young children and unmarried young ladies are the ones who go to stay at the rocks to chase away the birds from the grains. For the unmarried girls, it gives them an opportunity to be approached by men with offers of love. And, by offering a platform for the courtship affairs to be practised, the granite rock in this way again assumes critical cultural significance in the rural communities of Mangwe. Culturally, dating activities are to take place beyond the presence of parents and taking care of the drying grains is one opportunity which separates the young ladies from their parents. The quietness and tranquillity of forest areas, and the presence and sounds of fluttering birds in the vicinity, is seen as conducive relevant to the possibilities of young love and romance.

On another note, the granite rock is used by the local communities in the making of grinding stones. These stones are used on a regular basis in the grinding of various cereals and seeds for the production of mealie meal (or *sadza*). This practise has deep historical roots, though it is being slowly phased out by the introduction of electricity- and motor-driven grinding machines into the local communities of Mangwe. Because of expenses incurred though in paying for the grinding of cereals and seeds, and the unavailability of cash resources for covering these expenses, poor communities like

those in Mangwe still revert to traditional methods of grinding. In this regard, the art and skill of making the grinding stones from the granite rock continues to be passed on across generations. This retention of traditional methodologies of food production and processing forms a part of local intellectual knowledge systems and of Mangwe's livelihood patterns more broadly. And it provides a key basis for robust coping strategies particularly at times of severe financial crisis.

Additionally, the granite rocks supply the stones and quarry used for the construction of homesteads in the rural communities, and they are specifically used for laying the foundations of houses. This leads to strong foundations which are able to withstand the pressure of intermittent heavy rains and flooding. This traditional building technique entails informal social apprenticeship – normally involving kinship relations – in which the learner labours in the construction of a house under an experienced builder. The close kinship-based relationship between apprentice and master-builder regulates the work relationship and inhibits misunderstandings and social conflicts which may arise during the building process; in fact, it solidifies and reinforces local kinship relations. Continuing to draw upon such local resources exemplifies the significance of traditional rural knowledge and methodologies in the face of the deepening commodification of life for even deep rural spaces in Zimbabwe. Failure to retain these traditional ways of being and acting would expose the Mangwe communities to the full force of marketisation and commodifcation and would therefore severely undermine the local autonomy of rural livelihoods.

Some local mountains are especially reserved for the performance of traditional ceremonies like the rainmaking ceremony, which is carried out just before the rainy season is expected to start. The performance of rain-making rituals entails the submitting of requests of rains to the ancestors. Some requests are quite specific, such as the prevention of deadly thunder storms and the prevention of flooding. Even for those who are involved in Christian churches, the sacred mountains continue to offer a holy spot which allows church adherents to communicate with the most high and divine God. In this way, the quiet environment at the mountains is relevant and important for meditation and communication for both traditional and modern sacred and religious events. In this way, and through the intertwining of traditional and modern ceremonies, the rural livelihoods of the Mangwe communities are realised symbolically through the holy visits to the mountains. The local Christian churches, which are often independent without affiliation to any mainstream church bodies, believe that the power of their almighty God lives and remains in the mountains and in fact can be fully accessed from and through their through religious visits or pilgrimages to the mountains. The mountains then, and despite different religious belief-systems (some focusing on a unitary God and others on ancestors)

provide shared experiences and views which prevent intra-community social conflicts which would be ultimately detrimental to the promotion of local livelihoods patterns. The mountains, because of their holiness, provide a neutral platform which unites the different religious groups in identifying themselves as one community. This unification of various groups as one community is a typical characteristic of Mangwe livelihood patterns.

5.7 Conclusion

The local communities of Mangwe base their survival on the various forms of natural capital discussed above. The natural resources influence their behaviour to become resilient in the face of adverse conditions. Their adaptability to the poor climatic conditions of Mangwe is largely a result of aligning their well being along the natural capital composition. Such innovativeness is the one which defines their uniqueness in standing out in the midst of shocks. It enables them to successfully re invent themselves in the event of being overrun by some infrequent occurrences. The social, economic and cultural dimensions of the Mangwe communities are embodied in the livelihood sources above. The communities' cognisance of this fact causes them to seek refuge in the livelihood sources in times of stress like the increasing care demands of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The cognisance is socially expressed in the existence of the body of indigenous knowledge systems. The communities accommodation in the livelihood sources enables them to socially define themselves as one entity making up the broader Mangwe locality. The social bond creates the space which stores the various skills and art of the chronically poor in their original form. It is the bond which produces the social mechanisms of trickling down the skills and cultural art through generations along the family circles. In the process, the household unit rediscovers its social position in the community. It regains its integrating capabilities on its members. This refreshes the family members' social attachment to the larger Mangwe locality.

CHAPTER SIX:
FINANCIAL-SOCIAL CAPITAL OF MANGWE DISTRICT

6.1 Introduction

The chapter accounts for the various survival techniques which lay out the livelihood patterns of the rural communities of Mangwe. The rural livelihoods of Mangwe are viewed in respect of the capabilities, innovativeness and assets of the rural poor. The extent to which the assets subscribe to the thinking and activities of the poor in devising some grounds for challenging the opposing forces points to their livelihood strategies. The livelihood patterns are transparent in the formation of social meaning and the mechanisation of survival approaches by the poor rural communities of Mangwe. They also embrace the manner in which the poor people of Mangwe relate with resources local to their communities in developing some tactics of predicting their cause in the face of terrible circumstances. The local resources exist in form of natural, physical and social dimensions. The three dimensions produce the economic/financial dimension as the poor exploit them in ways which maximise their material gains as they seek to realise their diverse interests. For the purpose of gaining some deep insight, this chapter specifically focuses on the diversity of financial and social capital of the Mangwe communities. This is realised by way of focusing on the manner in which the two transcribe into the needs and activities of the rural poor as they diversely engage within their local communities. Placing the above arguments into the broader scientific context, A livelihood can be viewed as sustainable if it can "cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource" (Scoones 2009:5).

6.2 Land

Through time, the Mangwe communities developed a deep and sensitive connectivity to the land, and this connectivity became embodied for instance in various agricultural activities including crop farming and animal husbandry as discussed below (Madzudzo and Hawkes, 1996; Hitchcock and Vinding, 2004). This is in addition to their intimate and respectful relationship to the various elements and dimensions of nature presented in the previous chapter. As such, land represents the very existence of the Mangwe communities as expressed in their diverse livelihood activities. The mass exodus of the Bushmen from Mangwe into the Kalahari desert of Botswana in times past led to the presence of Mangwe communities not based on a nomadic way of life but living a more sedentary live with more permanent settlements (Lee and Hitchcock, 2001; Mitchell, 2002). This correspondingly transformed

particular pieces of land into spatial territories in Mangwe inhabited primarily by the Kalanga ethnic inhabitants, with the Ndebele population also being of some significance. The demographic dominance of the Kalanga ethnic group expresses its more original occupation and possession of the Mangwe area (Mazarire, 2003; Tavuyanago and Mbenene, 2008).

At the same time, the connectivity to land in Mangwe district was subject to significant disruptions during the colonial period. For instance, in the 1930s and 1950s, the Rhodesian government passed the Land Apportionment Act and the Animal Husbandry Act respectively (Mushunje, 2005; Mhanda, 2005). The purpose of the first act, allowing for ongoing enclosure of land and dispossession of rural people, was to supposedly improve the use of rural land by further availing fertile land to the more technologically-advanced white community. The latter piece of legislation targeted the reduction of the indigenous communities' large herds of cattle, with these herds seen by the colonial authorities as detrimental to the natural landscape and the future of agriculture. The two acts directly impinged on the intimacy of the nature-society interface for the Mangwe communities, as did the whole colonial period until 1980 for rural communities throughout the country. This led of course to the armed struggle during the 1970s.

Successive colonial governments, in bringing about massive land dispossession, tended to retain the existence of tribal authorities and communal forms of tenure in tribal trust lands, though in specifically distorted forms. Forms of communal tenure and traditional authorities continue to exist in the post-independence communal areas but they are clearly not authentic successors of pre-colonial land and governance arrangements. Under current arrangements in Zimbabwe's communal spaces, the 'ownership' of land is organised in terms of the different social units in the local communities, with the combined effort of the social units producing the territorial expression of the communities as distinct entities. At the nucleus family level, some land is individually owned between the male members of the family, but mainly by the most senior male of the household with the rest shared by a number of households for communal grazing. At the next scalar level, it becomes owned at the level of extended families who come together to identify themselves as a clan. The clan articulates its rights over its land based on the shared interests of its many component families. Above this, many clans merge to form a chieftainship. A chieftainship is formed and exists for many reasons, one of which is to regulate access to land and the productive use land for the various communities within the territorial confines of the chieftainship (Nthomang, 2002; Hitchcock and Vinding, 2004). Controls on the habitation and use of rural land are consistent with the cultural practices and regulations, social identity and territorial integrity vested in the traditional chiefs within their respective areas of jurisdiction.

The synthesis of local cultural practices and the regulatory approaches of the local chiefs produce the land-based territorial and institutional space which incorporates and accommodates the family unit. Additionally, the willingness, interest and importance of the elderly in Mangwe in taking up and addressing the challenging demands with regard to AIDS orphans is an expression of the culture of continuity of the community as located in the vibrancy of the household unit. The sending of remittances to Mangwe by the youths working in neighbouring countries also stems from the strong imperatives focusing on cultural obligations rooted in institutional arrangements which are ultimately based on land and governance around land. All this is designed to maximise social security amongst local communities within the confines of their territorial land. This though does not imply social cohesion at all times and under all conditions. It is not unusual for disputes to arise over the use of land and, in this regard, a framework of community courts exists to resolve such disputes (Luthe, 2007; Musindo, 2007; Maundeni, 2012). The supervision of the courts is vested in the traditional leadership, as this leadership (as the apex of Mangwe community structures) decides on all matters pertinent to the use of communal land.

6.3 Peasant Crop Farming

Mangwe district comprises permanently settled communities. These permanent settlements depend on access (over generations) to the same land areas; either under individual or communal tenure. The district of Mangwe is characterised by high temperatures and low rainfall. The situation renders the area unfit for profitable commercial farming. As such, the rural communities of Mangwe depend on peasant (small-scale) farming. The peasant farming activities are largely divided into two major practices, namely livestock rearing and crop farming (Mazvimavi *et al*., 2010; Tshuma et al., 2012). However, peasant farming does not form some concrete basis for livelihood activities due to the adverse climatic patterns, the absence of sufficient and arable land for the local communities, and the unavailability of adequate agricultural support schemes emanating from the state particularly in the context of the prevailing economic crisis. The rural communities in Mangwe largely carry out their cultivation activities through some locally-developed means which culturally comply with their indigenous skills and unsophisticated farming equipment.

Under crop farming, the Mangwe communities grow sorghum, beans, millet and rapoko. In addition to this, some drought resistant varieties of maize are grown on a limited scale. The cereals are mainly grown for own consumption at household level to meet some basic household needs like food. at times, the crops are sold for the purpose of generating some cash. The Mangwe households sell their

crops to the Grain Marketing Board (the arm of government responsible for the storage, marketing and the distribution of grain commodities). However, the sales are only possible during the years of good rains; when the harvests are good. The good rains are experienced on 3-year intervals. Therefore, the economic earnings from crop farming are not sustainable for the rural households. The possibility of growing maize is heavily dependent on the government-support programmes which are erratic; and in the context of the incapacity of the government's agricultural extension services. Other crops grown include sweet potatoes and round nuts (*nyimo*). In some cases, individual families decide to build home gardens near their homesteads, especially when water sources near the homesteads are reliable. I discuss gardening later in the chapter.

Despite the agricultural challenges in Mangwe, the continued involvement of the local communities in peasant crop farming is embedded in the social meanings and cultural significance which the cereal crops have assumed over centuries. Sorghum and millet are the main crops grown in the local communities of Mangwe. They comprise the staple foods of the communities. On the other hand, they possess some cultural functions. Their use in the brewing of beer for the performance of the traditional ceremonies and social functions of the communities is a typical example (Aristide, 2006; Moyo, 2012). They embody some cultural and philosophical value for the communities as they are engraved in the rainmaking ceremonies of the communities, totems and the whole web of belief systems of the Mangwe communities (Malaba, 2011; Rödlach and Dilly, 2011). In this way, crop farming in Mangwe should not be reduced to a productivist understanding of agriculture (as geared exclusively to production and consumption). It is intertwined with the rituals and beliefs of the local communities. It preserves the existing cultural and social arrangements. The pursuance of agricultural output is not the primary objective, as engaging in crop farming entails the continued recognition of the practices of their forefathers. They define their uniqueness as distinct communities through the traditional cereal crops.

Mangwe communities continue to grow the traditional crops even when the output is minimal. In the harvesting seasons when the corn is ripe in the fields, animals like baboons, bush bucks, hares, rodents and birds living in the bushes side-by-side with the communities feed on the cereals. In the past decade, the growing and selling of the cereal crops have been susceptible to the ebbs and flows of the national economy of Zimbabwe in the context of the die financial stress from the year 2000 (Clements and Moss, 2005). However, the Mangwe communities continued to plan their fields. This is because the overriding advantage of the crops lies in their social and cultural significance to the local communities. The continued production of the crops demonstrates the tenacity of the rural households

in engaging in coping strategies and the community spirit (moral economy) which underlies this study. This is expressed in the inter-changeability of crops between households and their divisibility into smaller quantities which define the particular socio-economic needs of individual household units.

6.4 Livestock

The rural communities of Mangwe keep a range of large and small livestock. The livestock is used mainly for the provision of food, sale to generate some family income and for ceremonial purposes. Being in the dry semi-arid south western region of Zimbabwe, the livestock thrives well in the Mangwe localities (van Rooyen and Homann, 2008). The dry conditions reduce the frequent outbreaks of livestock diseases. The livestock include cattle, goats and sheep, as well as different types of poultry in the form of chicken, guinea fowls and pigeons. Additionally, donkeys are kept. Though they are of low commercial value, they are significant for the provision of draught power in the various peasant farming operations of the household unit. The donkeys are highly favoured due to their high resistance to the harsh climatic conditions of the Mangwe district. The livestock is kept under the free range system. Under the system, the animals graze the natural grasses and foliage which is widely distributed across the local communities. In terms of livestock sales, these normally occur between households within the mangwe communities. The sales assume some important economic and social dimensions of the transactions of the local communities. The beasts of the same size, calibre and quality may be sold at different prices by different families. The difference in prices is a reflection of the disparities in the social and negotiating status possessed by the different Mangwe families in pursuing their coping strategies.

What matters most to the Mangwe rural households is not the profit margin attained through local sales of domestic animals. Rather, they value the extent to which the sales sustainably translate into their coping means. These sales significantly helped the Mangwe communities to withstand the crisis marked by the drastic devaluation of the Zimbabwean currency in the period which stretched from 2000 to 2008. During this period, the value of the Zimbabwean currency dropped to non-convertible levels of the United States dollar (Moss, 2007). In this sense, livestock acted as a measurement of value for local transactions at a time when the currency became valueless and unsuitable to be used as a medium of exchange. In other words, domestic livestock became a highly localised medium of exchange and the basis for giving value to all other commodities. This reflected an important degree of ingenuity in establishing a localised market economy in the light of the decline of the national market economy.

6.4.1 Cattle

The sales of cattle take place at the cattle markets which are run by the Mangwe District Council on behalf of the local communities. The cattle market buyers, who pay on a cash basis, are usually commercial farmers and butchery business persons coming from the towns of Bulawayo and Plumtree. The cattle markets provide some income for the rural families of Mangwe. However, the local significance of the cattle rises far beyond the economic gains of the households. Over the centuries and through generations, the cattle acquired some immense social and cultural significance in Mangwe.

For instance, the payment of the bride price in marriage is done in the form of claims for cattle (Zvobgo, 1986). In the tradition, the value of the newly-married woman is calculated in terms of cattle which are then paid to the family of the woman. The number of cattle is used to determine the economic value of the services that the married woman is expected to provide to the family of her husband. In this sense, cattle assume some cultural value which enables the 'measurement' of the non-quantifiable characteristics of social life. They are possessions (assets) which are used to facilitate the necessary conditions for the discussion of contractual relations between two families along the cultural lines of the Mangwe communities. This arrangement is deeply embedded in the lives and cosmologies of the Mangwe residents. The transfer of cattle between two families under marriage arrangements effectively entails the commodification of the sexual rights and responsibilities of the female members of the Mangwe communities. This leads to an intricate web of social relations being produced at local level.

Under this arrangement, a man with many daughters ends up bing comparatively well-off materially. This occurs as his daughters become married and the cattle bride price is paid to him by his sons-in-law. In this way, the bride price transaction shapes the agrarian structure of Mangwe communities as defined in terms of cattle holdings. The ownership of many cattle (more than other households) brings social status to the particular households. Thus sound cattle holdings are associated with prestige, prosperity and influence. This is denoted in the local languages of Mangwe notably Kalanga and Ndebele. In the Kalanga and Ndebele languages, a herd of cattle is referred to as *fuma* and *unoto* respectively. The direct English translation of these two terms is 'wealth'. This wealth is not necessarily limited to the economic value and specific exchange value during market-based transactions. Rather, the wealth of the household is embodied in the sheer presence of the cattle holding. More so, the cattle act as a marker of the social significance of the household within the Mangwe community. Besides their use as bride price, cattle have further relevance in shaping the cultural identity and belonging of Mangwe households. In this regard, traditional chieftainship

installations and ceremonies, funerals of highly-ranked local individuals and the performance of various community events are graced by the killing of cattle. This depicts the cultural centrality of cattle to the local communities of Mangwe.

The cattle kept in the Mangwe communities belong to the indigenous African breeds, notably the hardy Mashona, Sanga and Nguni breeds. These breeds have a strong bone frame, with limited meat quantity and poor (tough) meat quality. This lowers the commercial value of the breeds. However, the same factors make the breeds fit for carrying out various agricultural activities of the rural households. This is largely mirrored in their provision of draught power. Their high resistance to adverse climatic conditions also places them in great favour with the local communities, as this provides a degree of resilience for local livelihoods in the face of crises enveloping the communities. In this way, the Mangwe households build their coping mechanisms around the indigenous cattle. The local animal breeds symbolise and reinforce the history, self-identity and the sense of belonging to the Mangwe communities, as opposed to foreign exotic breeds such as Jersey which are of higher commercial value but do not socially mark and delimit the Mangwe communities' territories. The communities utilise the distinctiveness of their cattle to socially mark their territories. Within this assertion, the communities developed the capacity to detect acts of aggression in form of foreign advances detrimental to their well-being. . The massive grabbing of local communities' cattle by the Rhodesian regime (under the auspices of the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1950) soured relations and sparked some clashes between Mangwe communities and the colonial government at the end of the 1960s. The local communities were forced to react in an aggressive and forceful manner to the seizure of their cattle due to feelings of loss, insecurity and displacement. Deeply rooted in their poverty as they may be, the Mangwe communities devise effective means of detecting serious threats to their well-being through their cattle. Overall, then, cattle provide important insights into the lives and livelihoods of Mangwe residents.

6.4.2 Small Ruminants and Poultry

The security of the Mangwe rural communities is expressed in the small ruminants which they keep in large numbers (van Rooyen and Homann, 2008). The ruminants thrive well in the extreme temperatures of Mangwe. The small ruminants in form of goats and sheep are particularly important in different crisis periods. They become valuable sources of food during such critical moments. Without them the Mangwe households are compelled to sell their limited movable assets for the purchase of their basic food commodities during these stressing moments. The small ruminants multiply rapidly in

a short space of time. Being free range animals, minimal costs are incurred in raising and caring for the animals on the part of the rural households. Thus, when the goats and sheep are sold, some profit is generated by the rural households.

The long history of rearing the small ruminants over centuries has resulted in the cultural and social dimensions of the local communities being interwoven with the animals. In this regard, the goats are widely used in traditional ceremonies of appeasing the ancestral spirits (Gundani, 1994; Phibion, 2003). In marriage rituals, goats are of great cultural significance (Shoko, 2007). They are used to ensure that the ancestral spirits of the two families (of the husband and wife) interact peacefully for the protection of the newly-founded family. Through such ceremonies, goats become a tangible representation of the local means for initiating, renewing and consolidating social relations and joint intra-household interests. Without goats, the cultural functions would be difficult to carry out. Additionally, the Mangwe communities would be denied the opportunity of confirming and reaffirming their collective identity and well-being. As for the sheep, the traditional healers use their products for various purposes. In this way, sheep become integrated into the cultural practices of Mangwe communities. The fat of sheep is used by traditional healers for the chasing away of bad luck and evil spirits from their clients (Eastwood et al., 1995).

In terms of domestic usage, the skins of both goats and sheep are dried and cleaned and then used as mats in place of chairs and sofas specifically for women to sit on in the rural homesteads. In this sense, the skins possess some cultural significance in defining the gendered attributes of the local communities. Apart from this, they provide some symbiotic relationship between ruminants and the local communities. The goats consume dry human waste as part of their diet. They access it in the bushes where it is deposited through open defecation by the chronically-poor social groups who cannot afford to build toilets in their homesteads. In this sense, the goats provide a way of keeping the environment clean; thus minimising disease outbreaks. At the same time, certain wild animals feed on the goats and sheep. The wild animals include jackals and baboons which live in the bushes and mountains of Mangwe. Despite the heavy losses they inflict, the wild animals are tolerated by the Mangwe communities as they culturally define the totem beliefs of the communities. The baboons assume a broad symbolic role in the cultural taboos of the Mangwe communities (Chigidi, 2009). The presence of a baboon near a homestead which is hosting a sick patient is culturally-defined as signalling the impending death of the person. In this respect, the family of the ill person maps out the future of the household on this basis.

In addition to small ruminants and cattle, the Mangwe communities keep various types of poultry (Maphosa, 2009). The poultry are maintained at reduced costs. This enables the rural communities to economise on household food expenses by not relying on local butcheries for meat. Poultry manure also provides high quality manure for the homestead gardens. Consequently, the Mangwe households are able to do away with the use of inorganic compound fertilisers which they believe to possess some detrimental effects on the soil structure of their gardens. With respect to the larger tracts of land used for field crops, the local communities use manure from cattle and small ruminants which is available in larger quantities compared to chicken manure. In this sense, the rural livelihoods of Mangwe capacitate the local communities by recycling animal waste products to their benefit. The rearing of poultry enables the diversification of livelihood strategies. From a purely budgetary point of view, poultry does not make a significant contribution to Mangwe livelihoods. The rearing of poultry is particularly important as a coping mechanism for the poorer households in Mangwe.

6.5 Remittances

Mangwe district is an undeveloped rural area with largely undeveloped infrastructure. In this continuum, livelihood opportunities are severely limited. In this regard, school leavers are unable to find any employment opportunities locally. For this reason, many Mangwe teenagers illegally cross the Zimbabwean border to neighbouring countries in search of greener pastures (Mutangadura, 2011; Mupakati, 2012). Although some are killed on the way by *thugs (magumaguma)* and wild beasts in the thick forests and rivers along the borders, a considerable number successfully enter into South Africa and Botswana. Most of them join the informal sector where they become self-employed. Others become employed as farm workers and domestic maids. On regular schedules, they send some remittances back home in either cash or kind (Maphosa, 2005; Mugumisi and Ndlovu, 2013). The money and groceries are sent to the Mangwe communities through the delivery truck drivers (malaichas). The remittances are sent in different combinations to parents and the elderly guardians as well as siblings back home. The sending of remittances occurs within the Mangwe-based kinship relations such as the prevailing marital arrangements, totems and cultural linkages.

Though the elderly and the orphans in Mangwe and the border jumpers in South Africa and Botswana are located far apart, their familial links and the significance of their social ties continue to resonate across distant spaces through the flow of remittances. In the process, a significant financial contribution is made to the Mangwe livelihoods. The groceries remitted in the form of foodstuffs are

crucial. The respondents in the fieldwork of this study revealed that they resorted to the use of remitted foodstuffs in the preparation of daily breakfasts (which otherwise could fail). The money sent to relatives back home is used for the payment of educational expenses of siblings; as well as meeting other basic household costs. Though illegal border crossing is a vivid manifestation of the crisis of rural livelihoods in Mangwe, it contributes (in some measure) to the coping strategies embedded in the household-based livelihoods. The significance of remittances is further highlighted by the fact that they are not subject to wild fluctuations emanating from the severe contraction of the economy. These include the severe shrinking of local employment opportunities; the spiralling inflation; and the devaluation of the local currency. Hence, they provided some reasonably stable income for the Mangwe households during the crisis period stretching from the year 2000 and beyond (Maphosa, 2005; Mthetwa et al., 2013).

In addition to this, it is culturally upheld in African communities such as those of Mangwe that children are supposed to care for their guardians. The turning of their backs against their guardians/parents is believed to result in bad omen befalling them (Wachege, 2012). Based on this, there is an ingrained familial obligation on the part of the border jumpers to send remittances home in cash or kind; despite the considerable time and financial cost involved. This facilitates the regular supply of remittances to the guardians back home which is critical in the face of the infrequent crisis in the Mangwe communities. The remittances, (in respect of the border jumpers) have become associated with positive attributes including individual creativity, social compassion and community cohesion. In an earlier study of the Hobane community of Mangwe, the young teenagers who did not join the border jumping trend to Botswana and South Africa were considered to be dull and non-versatile (Maphosa, 2005:9). Such labelling denotes the acknowledgement of the value-based facets of the significance of the remittances in the Mangwe communities.

In the Mangwe communities, the remittances produce a social scale for detecting variations between families in terms of need and suitability for government social welfare programmes and limited donor handouts. The variations are significant variables employed by the local leadership in screening the community members for benefiting from various welfare programmes in the communities. The variations in terms of need are used so that the most desperate families (elderly-headed AIDS orphaned households) are targeted by the welfare schemes. In the Mangwe local communities, vulnerability is variedly defined. The costs of coping with the demands of the HIV/AIDS orphans are just one challenge out of many. The social assistance on offer will be too low as compared to the huge numbers of desperately deserving persons. The families which receive very

little remittances after long time as compared to others are considered as the poorest and most vulnerable in their given communities. Their food reserves are more unpredictable and their diets less balanced than those of the latter. The elderly guardians taking care of the HIV/AIDS orphans comprise the pool of the most vulnerable. Thus they become priority targets of the various welfare programmes which come to the rural communities either as government programmes or as donor aid programmes. The elderly-headed households remain more exposed for the received remittances become severely strained by the wide range of familial demands of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The awarding of some piece jobs by some prosperous rural families sometimes follows the same considerations. A household head with a piece job to be done feels obliged to serve the sorry situation of the orphans by awarding the piece job to the elderly guardian. In this sense, the remittances release some culturally coercive influence necessary for the survival of the elderly and the AIDS orphans under their custody.

6.6 Casual Work

Pursuing casual work is a means of earning a living in the Mangwe communities, and this work is mostly done by the most vulnerable groups. In a 2007 to 2009 survey of the coping techniques of the Mangwe communities to various shocks, 25 percent of the research participants belonged to these groups as defined in terms of non-ownership of farm implements and domestic animals (Ndlovu et al., 2010:2). Predominant amongst these groups were elderly guardians, HIV and AIDS child-headed households and elderly widows staying alone. The members of these groups carry out casual work in the homes of more prosperous households in Mangwe. They weed the crop fields of these well-off families as well as offering homestead-based cleaning services. In return, they are paid-in-kind with basic food commodities, such as cups of salt, sugar and beans. In the case of casual work by single teenage mothers, they are paid with various toiletries, soap, sanitary pads and nappies for their children. Quite often, casual work is the only source of earnings for these vulnerable groups, and they are terribly resource-stricken because of the death of breadwinners such as parents or husbands.

In many circumstances, the property of the deceased breadwinners had been shared amongst his or living siblings leaving the bereaved dependents stranded. The transfer of the assets to the male members of the deceased is facilitated through the cultural institutions which allocates economic assets through patriarchy. For a woman who refuses to be inherited by the brothers of her deceased husband, she loses all rights to means of production and all other property which she previously enjoyed access to under the control of her husband. She in fact literally goes back to her original family where she stays without any access to capital assets like land and cattle. A similar situation is faced by many

elderly women whose husbands die in their ageing years. This happens in particular when they do not have a biological son to inherit the couple's economic assets such that the deceased husband's family takes control of them. The widow and her children are left destitute due to the redistribution of the pieces of land among the living members of her deceased husband's family. In some cases, the land and cattle may not be redistributed away from the elderly woman but her household suffers nevertheless as a result of its inability to engage in the hard tasks of peasant farming and caring for the domestic animals. In such contexts, the most pronounced means to survive is through casual work.

In some cases, female teenagers pursue the border jumping route after finishing their primary education because of the severely limited survival options in the Mangwe communities. Some are impregnated along these routes (particularly by criminal elements) while others become pregnant by their employers in the neighbouring countries while doing casual work and are then chased away. The young mothers return home with their babies and are in a pronounced economically-exposed state. Because of this, and as a livelihood practice for themselves and their babies, they are driven to engage in causal work back in Mangwe. The history, character and closeness of the social relation between the child mothers and the local employer largely determine the contractual terms of the piece work. The unwritten terms of the casual work agreement are influenced by the assessment of need by the employer for instance, with some free food being offered in situations where the teenage mothers are understood to be extremely desperate. This is purely done on the basis of goodwill to enable the teenage mothers to meet basic economic needs in return for casual work.

Casual work is also carried out by the elderly guardians of the AIDS orphans. The work they carry out though is compatible with their decreasing physical fitness. This includes pulling groundnut plants by hand out of the ground. Sometimes the elderly guardian will team up with his or her grandchildren (AIDS orphans) in the performance of casual work. This arrangement quickens the completion of the casual work (which is often paid on a piece-rate basis), broadens the kind of casual work which can be done and may also lead to the employer offering more favourable working conditions and remuneration because of sympathy expressed for the dire circumstances of the orphans and their elderly guardians. Because of the overall status of the elderly in Mangwe communities arising from the existence of some form of local gerontocracy and additionally due to their ongoing care of the AIDS orphans, offers by the elderly to engage in causal labour are generally acceptable and accepted by the more prosperous Mangwe households. The closeness of the wider community to the elderly guardians is already enhanced socially and culturally through kinship structures and geographically through homestead arrangements; and this makes the community fully aware of the gravity and

peculiarity of the plight of the elderly guardians so that casual work for the guardians of AIDS orphans is regularly prioritised.

Furthermore, casual work is performed by a large group of people from the local community, with each member of the work team contributing to the particular work task according to his or her informal contract with the employer (which invariably entails piece-work rates). The homestead-based employer comes early in the morning to the worksite before the work commences and then again at lunch with some food for the casual workers. Besides food for lunch, no further remuneration may be forthcoming. These informal work arrangements allow for social interaction between Mangwe residents, including between child mothers and young single men, and at times this interaction blossoms into romantic relationships and leads to marriage. The child mothers and the single men, once married, are allocated pieces of land by the chief or village head to support their new family (or, at times, child mothers are absorbed as second wives into existing families). In this sense, causal work may facilitate the reintegration of child mothers and border jumping returnees into the communities' household structures. These new families possess no cattle or farming implements, and they possess no readily-available cash for their basic needs. This in itself leads to other casual work arrangements, in which the new male household head becomes involved in heavy manual labour on a piece-rate system. These piece jobs include the repairing of leaking grass-thatched roofs, clearing the fields before the rainy season, and repairing cattle kraals and fallen fences at various homesteads.

The casual work is very important for the most vulnerable households in Mangwe, as the work is often payable in the form of the provision of essential coping services for the labourers, such as the provision of ploughing services for their crop fields by the contractor/employer. In exchange for the casual labour performed, an agreed part of the fields of the labourer (who may be a household head) is ploughed using the cattle and the implements of the employer. In this sense, the intra-community causal work arrangement is of mutual benefit to both the more prosperous and vulnerable households in Mangwe and offers some kind of social protection for the latter. It also underlines the adaptability of Mangwe communities in coping with the newly-emerging circumstances within their localities, notably the AIDS pandemic and the ways in which it has deepened vulnerability within the community. The elderly guardians and the AIDS are not left totally exposed to the pandemic as community structures have been put in place, though informally and perhaps unintentionally, to cushion the blow of the pandemic.

On another note, the viewpoints and practices of the child mothers and the male border jumping returnees is assessed through their commitment or otherwise to handling their financial constraints

through engaging in casual work. The elderly female guardians, during the performance of piece work, also take the opportunity to re-socialise the child mothers into the proper community norms pertaining to motherhood. In this way, casual work becomes a form of community-based rehabilitation in which those who physically and/or socially removed themselves from the cultural repertoire of the Mangwe locality are reintegrated into the community without necessarily disrupting the latter. The significance of the socialisation and social ties reinvigorated through casual work in Mangwe should not be underestimated, as social relationships rooted in place provide a sense of belonging and identity which bond homesteads and communities in times of crises.

6.7 Social Institutions

There are a number of important social institutions in Mangwe which serve as a form of bonding social capital. I discuss the key ones in this section, including kinship relations and various types of voluntary groupings.

6.7.1 Kinship Relations

In the first instance, the Mangwe communities are bound together by a web of interwoven kinship relations, taboos and avoidances (van Binsbergen, 1990; Hanegraaff and Kumar, 2005). The kinship relations, as embedded in the history of the area, serve to mark the registers and positions which constitute the Mangwe communities while also delineating differences within the communities (such as gender and age). Hence Mangwe communities are in no sense undifferentiated and homogeneous and the differing social positions entail rewards, influence and power on a differentiated basis. A person's specific social positioning (and scope of activity) in the community is thus shaped by his or her location in the kinship-based web of social relations, with duties, relationships, responsibilities, identities and practices being inscribed and deeply engraved in these locations.

The institutionalisation of marriage and the customs underlying this is perhaps the foremost example of the ways in which social relations are regulated, in this case the economic and social gains vested in the interactions between men and women and their respective households which are meant to serve the collective interests of the communities. The satisfaction of the collective interest is meant to accommodate, at least potentially, the needs and interests of the weaker and less privileged members of the communities. This would be the case in particular with resource-poor households with daughters but no sons. The marriage-sanctioned payment of bride-price provides a key economic transaction for the benefit of these households, as the bride-price is paid to the parents of the daughter at the time of

marriage of the daughter. In this way, marriage becomes a livelihood strategy for many Mangwe residents. At the same time, in the context of the AIDS pandemic, a disturbing trend is discernable in which young girls are forced into marriage by their poor guardians for purposes of acquiring bride-price (Chireshe and Chireshe, 2010). In the case of Mangwe, this often entails the AIDS orphans. This becomes a survival mechanism for both the AIDS orphan and the elderly guardian as the latter benefits from the bride-price and the former from integration into the household of the husband.

On top of paying the bride price, the son-in-law has further obligations which continue indefinitely throughout his new status as husband and household head (in fact, it is regularly a lifetime obligation). This involves offering free ploughing and harvesting services to his parents-in-law or, in the case of AIDS orphans, the elderly guardian of the orphan. This in fact becomes highly necessary, particularly when the parents-in-law or guardian are failing to meet the physical demands of the required services due to sickness or ageing. In this way, to emphasise, the availability of a son-in-law becomes a livelihood strategy. In the same way, a woman is socially obliged to keep the mother of her husband readily attended to in terms of the provision of domestic chores and social interaction. These arrangements are not coercively imposed or enforced in and through serious sanctions, as they are embedded within the institutional setup of marriage and marriage rituals within the Mangwe communities. But, insofar as the responsibilities and duties of the new husband and wife are not enacted, they may be ostracised socially.

In addition to this, the kinship relations recognise the need for the provision of counselling and psycho-social support services. These services are offered to bereaved spouses and orphans and as a form of social guidance for teenagers within the kinship circles, as well as when marriage problems arise. The services are normally offered by senior blood members of the family to the younger ones. For example, aunts (sisters of fathers) are expected to provide counselling to the female children of their brothers, and they are expected to socially instruct them in the cultural practices of the community

Kinship though is ultimately a system of governance focusing on the chieftainship system, and therefore it entails political transactions and the existence of power relations and their regulation. Chieftainships are established across the Mangwe communities, and they incorporate the chieftainships of Sangulube, Hobodo, Tshitshi and Bango. Chieftainship succession, and any disputes around succession, is settled with institutionally-accredited measures – notably the traditional courts. The chieftainships are meant to protect the sovereignty and territory of the Mangwe communities in various ways. This includes regulations pertaining to access to local resources, such as restrictions on the extraction and use of local resources by outsiders (and sometimes complete denial of extraction). For

example, under these regulations, the collection of Mupani worms in the bushes of Mangwe territory is institutionally reserved for the members of the respective communities. But the chieftainship system is not simply about regulating relationships between Mangwe and the outside world, as it also involves differentiation internal to Mangwe. In this light, the chieftainship systems regulate the manner in which different families interact with each other, based on the formation of clans with specific totems as a means of self-identification.[1] Often, voluntary support groups exist and work within the confines of clans.

6.7.2 Voluntary Support Groups

Voluntary support groups also exist within the rural communities of Mangwe founded on the basic principle of freedom of association. Residents are allowed to group themselves freely in ways which do not infringe on the basic institutional and kinship layout of the communities, though at times these groups may stretch beyond Mangwe. Of particular significance is the grouping of individuals or households experiencing similar levels of suffering in the face of a certain long-term or short-term shock or crisis, therefore coming together (if only infrequently) as a group formation to cope collectively in a supportive manner. The inherent problems of the communities like perennial droughts have caused the Mangwe communities to form a range of informal and formal structures as supportive and coping mechanisms. Or, in other cases, groups are formed in mobilising various forms of support to victims of various tragedies (such as death) who will be failing to cope with the post-tragedy effects. These support groups take the form of cooperative work groups, garden cooperatives, churches and burial societies (Mutangadura, 2011; Mtetwa et al., 2013). The capacity of the Mangwe communities to accommodate the operations of these support groups is therefore a key basis for major coping mechanisms by local residents, and they reflect the values and interests of the Mangwe communities as united and cohesive social formations.

6.7.2.1 Cooperative Work Groups

The Mangwe communities possess an inherent interest in joining hands during times of mounting domestic and agricultural workloads. Different families staying close to each other team up to work on their croplands, the repair and maintenance of their homesteads and other related tasks which concern their well-being. The families are brought together because of the shortage of adequate

labour to perform the tasks on an individual family basis. The inadequacy of labour is in large part caused by the widespread dying of young people of working ages in the communities (due to the AIDS pandemic) as well as massive border jumping practices by young people to neighbouring countries. Consequently, the elderly and the AIDS orphans who are left in the communities find themselves being left with no option other than pooling their limited capacities together (and sometimes with the help of households not directly affected by the pandemic). This regularly entails taking turns in the performance of the tasks up until the entire work is complete. This most notably takes place with respect to agricultural activities, such as work groups in the weeding of fields and the harvesting of field crops. In the case of young children with deceased parents, the members of the extended family team up in tilling the land for the children of their deceased brother. They continue to assist the orphans up until the crops are harvested and brought into the home granaries.

This shows that, in Mangwe, a family is not perceived as complete at the nuclear level as the nucleus family exists as an integrated component of a larger grouping – namely the extended family. The death of a married couple automatically transfers the caring responsibilities to the brothers of the deceased male spouse and thus the brothers assume all the familial obligations for the orphans to the best of their abilities. Again, the extended family becomes a coping instrument. However, the intactness of the extended families in Mangwe has been subjected to forces (including the AIDS pandemic itself) which have been undermining the extended family. In this context, there have been adjustments at local level in terms of the ethics of obligation, leading to the coming together of families unrelated by kinship in promoting collective well-being. This adjustment, as a compensation for the undercutting of cohesive extended families or the absence of the sheer presence of viable extended families, diffuses the stresses and risks experienced by individual households in Mangwe as these become shared and handled at a higher scalar level through group formation. These group formations act at times as collective work groups for agricultural and domestic purposes.

In the end, cooperative work groups represent a means through which the livelihood practices of Mangwe capture and accommodate the welfare concerns of resource-poor Mangwe households through ingenious home-grown mechanisms in times of social strain. In this sense, the groups become arenas of activity through which outside shocks and stresses are handled and regulated at local level.

6.7.2.2 Cooperative Gardening

Garden cooperatives are prevalent in Mangwe. The local residents organise themselves into small groups in line with their shared garden objectives. These groups pool their efforts and minimal resources together to construct small gardens along the few rivers flowing through the communities or at nearby wetlands. In some cases, groups hire people to dig a deep well and then they construct a garden around the well. The gardens are enclosed and protected from wild animals by fences made of the branches of wild trees and hedge plants freely obtainable in the Mangwe area. The vegetables grown in the gardens are not of high commercial value and therefore they tend to be used to serve the family needs of the group members, though at times sold to other community members. The main vegetables grown are the traditional leafy vegetables such as cove, rape and tsunga, which grow quickly with regular watering despite the overall adverse climatic condition in Mangwe. Again, this entails considerable innovativeness on the part of Mangwe residents in simultaneously drawing upon their indigenous and cooperative traditions in meeting food consumption needs.

Within the gardens, land use is organised along familial lines. Each family assumes responsibility over a piece of land in agreement with other families, with the proceeds from the piece of land belonging to the respective family. However, the duty of fencing the gardens and maintaining the fences are the common obligations of all members of the group. In this respect, the gardens are symbolic of a communal spirit and collaborative practice which not only allows for home-grown vegetables for own consumption but facilitate the consolidation of local social networks in times of dire need. Thus, though the AIDS pandemic has brought significant challenges in maintaining traditional family arrangements and the community's social fabric more broadly, community members have been able to rise above these challenges in and through the formation of garden cooperatives. It is a group formation which comes to the surface particularly at times of crisis and which reflects the mechanisms of adaptation almost inherent in Mangwe communities. In this way, the collective gardens facilitate social bonds beyond traditional family boundaries and reinforce intra-community social ties.

6.7.2.3 Churches

The significant psycho-social stress for AIDS orphans and others arising from the deaths of parents are handled in part by the structures of the independent Christian churches which claim a large following in the communities. Though Christian in focus, the independent churches are sensitive to the cultural values and traditions of the Mangwe communities and therefore they adjust their practices accordingly in the form of a mix between Christianity and traditional African spirituality. The churches

with the largest following include the Zionists and the Apostolic sects. In addressing the local needs of the Mangwe communities arising from the AIDS pandemic and other personal crises, these churches regularly link emotional stress to the existence of evil spirits. In the case of the AIDS pandemic, the causes as articulated by the churches are not consistent with mainstream thinking pertaining to HIV infection and the transmission of HIV, and the solution is not rooted in mainstream modern medicine. The individuals experiencing stress undergo counselling sessions organised by the church elders. From there, all members of the congregation are asked to partake in spiritual practices and rituals in aiding their members, such as committing themselves to days of fasting. The use of free healing water is also prescribed for various diseases in place of the more expensive hospital medicines which the poor cannot afford.

More broadly, the churches provide support for the poorest members of the church. Some special days of voluntary service in ploughing the fields of the members is a typical example. The significance of the special roles of women in familial care, based on the legitimacy of patriarchal arrangements, is stressed. In this regard, women's assemblies and sessions are organised through the churches to try and give women a platform for discussing their concerns and making sure that women's voices are heard by male congregation members through the church structures. Likewise, youth assemblies are observed with a similar purpose. The void left by the death of aunts and the movement of others out of the community into towns and abroad, are taken over by church elders. Under normal circumstances of an intact community, the aunts provide advisory and counselling services to the teenage members of their families. The new set-up allows the church elders, with their considerable social experience to guide the youths in a manner consistent with the social values of the communities (including respect for the elderly and traditional values). The HIV/AIDS orphans belonging to the particular religious sects form an integral constituency of the youth whose supervision is delegated to the elderly congregants through church protocols. In these ways, the independent churches generate supportive forms of social relations in the Mangwe communities. Overall, the churches see their role as ensuring collective social responsibility as a community-based support network as a bulwark for familial care provision for the weaker community members, including the HIV/AIDS orphans.

6.7.2.4 Burial Societies

In addition to churches and other social networks, the rising occurrence of deaths in the Mangwe communities due to the AIDS pandemic has led to the widespread presence of burial societies. The burial societies are organised along village lines and are membership-based organisations. They

are formed to take care of burial costs which are regularly beyond the reach of a particular household. In particular, they assist very poor households which, because of the death of middle-aged parents, consist quite often of only orphans and the grandparents acting as guardians for the orphans. The specific assistance provided under the burial society schemes includes free food, labour in the digging of the graves, the provision of scotch carts for the carrying of grave stones, firewood for cooking and other related funeral services. The societies entirely survive on the contributions of members. A register of the names of members is kept by the secretary of the organisation. It is through the checking of the presence and contributions of members at funerals that the activities of the societies are maintained. Material contributions are specifically done at funerals. However, some meetings to review the running of the societies on periodical basis are carried out. The contributions largely comprise locally obtainable products (animals and crops). Each member in his own capacity keeps his stock ready for any death situation which may arise at any time.

This assistance is provided with the prerogative placed on all burial society members that they must contribute materially towards the funeral within the given society. More so, the members must share in the grief of the bereaved family by giving up their daily domestic tasks on the day or days of the funeral and be gathered at the home of the bereaved family in order to provide emotional support. Thus burial societies absorb at least some of the emotional and financial shocks and pressures which befall households within Mangwe on the death of a household member. Funeral arrangements are conducted quite often in accordance with the values, customs and practices of the independent Christian churches discussed earlier. Given that membership of the burial societies is regularly the most resource-deficient households in Mangwe, and considering the frequency of deaths (including from AIDS), the capacity of the burial societies in supporting funerals with dignity is severely compromised. Clearly, then, burial societies are a mere coping mechanism under conditions of severe crisis.

The sphere of influence of local institutions is geographically restricted within the communities of Mangwe. As young people move out of the communities in search of greener pastures abroad, they become adulterated by other cultures in the neighbouring countries. When they come back, their conduct becomes stinking to the social institutions.

6.8 Conclusion

To round up the discussion, the Mangwe communities devise various means of sorting out themselves in difficult times. Their needs and interests are absorbed by their web of social interactions which they transform into strong supportive mechanisms. Their culture forms the indispensable base

for the realisation of their familial links. The collective nature of the livelihood patterns serves to embrace the well-being of the least performing subsections of the Mangwe communities. It proportionally recognises various needs and interests in a manner which promotes the survival and intactness of the communities. Through the existing social institutions, the social opportunities, hardships and the vulnerability effects are broadly distributed to evenly maintain the entirety of the social entities of Mangwe. The poor balance and deduce the rationale of their social practices by using the value of their local assets.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
ELDERLY GUARDIANS AND HIV/AIDS ORPHANS IN MANGWE DISTRICT

7.1 Introduction

Having laid out the research approach and various data collection techniques, the fieldwork was practically carried out in the research site of Hobodo rural locality. The Hobodo rural locality was found in Mangwe district of Zimbabwe. The elderly's caring obligations on the orphans who comprised child mothers were scientifically examined. The caring roles were examined in light of the elderly's strained resource budgets and the limited survival mechanisms of the Hobodo locality. The data obtained circled around the social obligations of the elderly and the socio-economic challenges they incurred in performing the caring duties. The elderly's involvement in the collection of firewood, making of crafts, knitting, cutting of grass-thatch and Brick-making to earn a living was explored. Various forms of government assistance to the elderly and the HIV/AIDS orphans as well as the non-presence of NGOs in Hobodo were looked at. The different forms of physical and sexual abuse encountered by orphans during border jumping and in the neighbouring countries were investigated. The contact between the female teenage orphans and the truck drivers and cowboys with regards to its contribution towards the increase in the numbers of the orphans and suffering of the elderly guardians came under spotlight. The relations between the orphans and their elderly guardians were also examined.

7.2 Social obligations of the elderly

The elderly guardians under study (42 in total) unanimously agreed that the void left by the death of their children (the parents of their grandchildren) was creating new caring roles for them. All the elderly under study had some orphans under their custody, with the number of orphans varying from one to six. More specifically, the situation was as follows:

- 10 percent of the elderly guardians (all women) had 6 orphans each under their custody. 2 percent of the elderly guardians (male) cared for 5 orphans. 17 percent of the guardians (all women) had 4 orphans each under their care. 14 percent (all women) cared for 3 orphans each. 43 percent of the elderly guardians (all women) cared for 2 orphans each. 14 percent of the elderly guardians (male) cared for a single orphan each. When all these figures were put together, it became clear that most elderly guardians were women (comprising 84 percent); with the men making up 16 percent of the elderly under study. Though there were some guardians

with large numbers of orphans (4-6), about 43 percent of the guardians had only two orphans each.

The study clearly revealed that women dominated the new familial responsibilities of caring for the orphans. In many cases, the elderly women as mothers (prior to the death of their children) were more inclined and more knowledgeable than men in providing care for the orphans. Being so, the orphans were more inclined to the female guardians because of the cultural roles of women in Hobodo in the socialisation and training of infants. In this sense, caring for the orphans became an extension of their motherhood. Therefore, the relationship between the elderly women and the orphans was intimate. In some instances, the elderly women were widowed. In traditional African communities like Hobodo, women were culturally expected to be married to men older than them, such that the husbands died or became frail earlier than their female counterparts. Therefore, the elderly widows were central to orphan care in Hobodo. In the case of the male guardians (16 percent), various circumstances forced them to take up the caring responsibilities for instance; the physical incapacitation of their female spouses.

Having established the extent of the involvement of the elderly in the care of the orphans, the study further explored the viewpoints of the elderly guardians in taking on this crucial responsibility given the crisis of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in their community. All the guardians indicated that they cared for the orphans out of obligation (as they had nowhere else to send them). Their involvement in orphan care was divorced to particular passion for the task. In other words, they were compelled by desperate circumstances to care for the orphans. All the elderly guardians unanimously expressed that they lacked the means of providing proper orphan care.

71 percent of the elderly guardians were particularly troubled by their new social roles; and they insinuated a degree of distaste for the roles. In their old age, they had expected to be cared for by their children (now dead). In contrast, the crisis was challenging their increasingly frail condition and recycling them back into caring demands. The guardians found this development very stressing. In some cases, this was compounded by the fact that the orphans were difficult to control as respect for the elderly guardians was not forthcoming. The orphans at times refused to perform domestic chores and engaged in juvenile delinquent activities. When the orphans were arrested for small crimes, the police would call the guardians to the police station during the questioning of the orphans. The elderly guardians were expected to be present during the sentencing of the orphans at the magistrate court in Plumtree town; some 143 kilometres away from Hobodo. The payment of bus fares to attend the court sessions in Plumtree town strained their limited budgets. For the elderly guardians, their care roles

caused considerable grief as the cared-for orphans failed to appreciate their desperate cause and the significant efforts of the former. Overall, these elderly (71 percent) experienced orphan care as an almost hell-like condition which brought suffering to them on a daily basis. They longed for some humane way of escaping from this dire predicament.

The balance of the elderly guardians (29 percent) found their orphan care roles cumbersome but they showed some appreciation due to the roles' embodiment of some familial aspects. The elderly stressed the importance of keeping the family intact over generations such that, by providing orphan care, they envisaged that the orphans would grow into adulthood and make their families. Despite the personal stress of social care provision, they cherished the company of the orphans as it reduced the loneliness of old age. More so, the orphans performed the household chores expected of them in the home and reduced the pressure of domestic responsibilities on the elderly. The elderly's semi-positive spin on orphan care was mainly facilitated by the non-involvement of the orphans under their care in juvenile activities. Receiving remittances from children working abroad was a morale booster for some of the elderly guardians. 11 percent of the 29 percent had their children (single parents of the orphans) working in South Africa and Botswana. In their understanding, taking care of the orphans socially defined their being-elderly members of the community. An elderly man (Nleya) with 5 orphans under his custody expressed:

> *We are ageing and need to be addressed as grandfathers and grandmothers. Without the orphans who happen to be the children of our children, such senior social titles will never be conferred on us (July 2012).*

Thus, orphan care became an affirmation of what it meant to be elderly in Hobodo and of the respect and dignity that was attached to the elderly.

7.3 Socio-Economic activities and challenges of the elderly guardians

Understanding the economic position of the elderly guardians was of major significance in appreciating the manner in which they copied with the AIDS crisis; and the specific measures and tactics they adopted to address the crisis.

All the elderly guardians participating in the study had communal access to some small plots of land for crops and grazing land. The pieces of land which they possessed for the purposes of both occupation and crop-farming were part of the land belonging to their respective households. As in many scenarios of communal household property ownership in Zimbabwe, the elderly guardians under study merely possessed temporary usufruct rights. After their death, the land was subject to re-

allocation to the members of their respective families. In this sense, the private ownership of immovable property was problematic for the elderly of Hobodo in the context of the AIDS crisis. In other words, the elderly could not convert their communal ownership of property into money capital for sustaining their livelihoods and the well-being of the orphans. Simply expressed, the communal ownership of land could not provide the elderly guardians with collateral security for accessing funds from financial institutions to meet the costs of caring for the orphans. Though access to natural capital was advantageous for the elderly in pursuing livelihoods under difficult times, the communal status of the natural resources somehow undermined their vibrancy in mechanising their caring strategies.

Important though, were the possessions of the elderly, including cattle, goats, sheep, poultry and donkeys. While donkeys provided draught power for agricultural activities, cattle and the rest of the animals were kept for meat and milk for home consumption. The elderly guardians also owned basic agricultural implements such as ploughs and scotch carts. Overall, access to these assets by the elderly was very minimal. In addition to that, there was considerable variation in the extent of asset ownership. In this respect, the elderly were asked to rate the extent of their ownership of the above in terms of good, poor and non-existent; with these categories indicating, respectively, a comparatively high degree of social security, an unstable position of social security and a particularly exposed, fragile and vulnerable position in the face of the HIV/AIDS crisis. No guardian identified himself with the degree of high social security (good response). 95 percent of the Hobodo elderly in the study indicated that their ownership status was poor. In the case of cattle and donkeys, they owned at most 5 animals. The donkeys were mainly kept for the provision of draught power; while the cattle provided some meat and milk for the elderly's households. Individuals in this category owned around 10 sheep and goats each and some few chickens which provided meat; and strictly dispatched of in form of distress sales.

Individuals in the same category (95 percent) owned a single plough each. These were ox-driven ploughs which they bought a number of years back. The ploughs were no longer functioning well due to lack of proper servicing. The ploughs needed new parts but the new parts could not be bought due to the unavailability of adequate cash resources on the part of the elderly. However, the elderly continued to use the decrepit ploughs for there were no plausible alternatives. In this sense, their agricultural activities were hampered despite having good rainy seasons. Thus the bad state of the ploughs symbolically portrayed the food insecurity and the socio-economic exposure of the Hobodo elderly.

5 percent of the elderly guardians had no significant assets of their own. They did not own any cattle and donkeys. They had 1 goat or sheep, a few chickens or had nothing at all. Their fragile and

insecure economic base largely caused them to live at the mercy of kin and relatives. This category largely comprised elderly widows who had returned to their natal homes due to increasing destitution in the families of their deceased husbands. At the time of their return to their families of origin, the elderly widows brought some orphans (their grandchildren) along. The orphans depended on them for survival; as their parents had died. These widows found it extremely difficult to obtain a share of the family land or to purchase any immoveable assets. More so, the elderly widows discovered that it would be almost impossible for them to independently operate some pieces of land sustainably even if they were given a share due to decreasing physical fitness. Rather, they decided to stay under the control of their brothers. Mandlovu an 81-year old lady said:

> *I no longer have the energy of clearing the land or ploughing it to get some food. I see it being better for me to stay under the control of my brother* (July 2012).

Such an arrangement avoided conflicts with their brothers on the redistribution of the family land. Consequently, such returnees survived on the goodwill of their brothers and other members of the extended family. The arrangement left them in a less pathetic but dependent and vulnerable position given that they had no disposable cash or moveable assets. Though the lives of the other elderly (95 percent mentioned above) were under serious strain, the well-being of this small grouping of elderly (5 percent) was more problematic.

Thus the 5 percent category was socially positioned at the margins of the Hobodo locality. The members of this category saw themselves (and were seen by others in the community) as almost belonging to some second class category of some sort. Their lives seemingly worsened with each and every passing moment due to the absence of adequate social and economic opportunities for their survival. As one elderly woman lamented:

> *I am cursed. Life was bad at my late husband's home; so is it here where I was born. I will die suffering badly like this and that is when I will probably get some rest* (August 2012).

This was Madlamini who echoed the above remarks pointing eloquently and sadly to her mounting disillusionment with her life situation in Hobodo.

In this regard, it is critical to highlight that old women (marriage returnees) were not fully recognised as significant social agents in Hobodo. They lived at the social margins of the Hobodo community. The Hobodo community was profoundly patriarchal in nature. Women were entitled to property ownership only in the families and communities into which they were married. At the deaths of their husbands, the male members of the husband's family (mainly the more senior male members) took over the household and agricultural assets of their deceased relative (husband of the elderly

widow). In returning to their homes (communities of birth) the elderly widows' lives turned into daily struggles. Such pathetic elderly widows were in the 5 percent category of the extremely vulnerable elderly under study.

5 percent of the elderly guardians (same category mentioned above) were unable to adequately provide for their daily needs now that they had orphans under their care. This was understandable given the serious contraction of the Zimbabwean economy; and the unavailability of sound social safety nets for the elderly as discussed in Chapter 4. This general trend cast a grey cloud on any variations in livelihoods between individual guardians for the variations were overshadowed by the stressing infrequent situation. However, this did not deny the fact that some differences in livelihood and coping strategies existed in the securing of daily necessities; for instance, differences in the number of orphan dependents, local kinship-based support and remittances from family members abroad were important variables for understanding the different extents of the socio-economic stresses of the elderly guardians. However, these differentiations in the living conditions and coping strategies did not entail extreme differences in the socio-economic status of the individuals belonging to either of the 2 categories mentioned above. In this context, I examined the key features pertaining to the lives and livelihoods of the elderly and the orphans in Hobodo.

7.3.1 Shelter and Food

One of the key factors which led to the bitterness of the elderly regarding their caring roles was the unavailability of adequate and decent shelter to meet the needs of the orphans. This was particularly the case for the 71 percent of the elderly who found orphan care as increasingly problematic. Most of these elderly guardians lived in grass-thatched huts. Most of their huts were leaking during rainy seasons because of the problem of obtaining grass to re-thatch the roofs. The thatching exercise was conducted on regular bases. This was stressful to the guardians. The leaking roofs negatively affected the comfort and health of the orphans due to exposure to rain and dampness. Typically, there was no grass-thatch available in the year of the fieldwork (2012) due to poor rains. As the guardian named Thahwa said:

> *The roofs are leaking and there is no grass in the bush for thatching our huts. The rains were not good this year (August 2012).*

The Hobodo community is situated in a dry semi-arid zone constituting region 4 of the hydrological zones of Zimbabwe. Region 4 is characterised by perennial droughts at approximately 3-year intervals, leading to an acute shortage of grass thatch in dry years.

For this reason, only the hut with the best roofing in a given homestead (among the homesteads under study) was used for sleeping purposes. This sometimes resulted in boys and girls sharing the same bedrooms due to inadequate accommodation. Culturally, this was taboo as boys and girls were supposed to have separate bedrooms on the basis of gender with bedrooms considered as spheres of privacy. In the bedrooms, for instance, the girls were taught to understand the biological changes of their bodies in relation to the social institutions of the community as taught by the elderly women guardians in the absence of men. This entailed the onset of menstruation; the avoidance of the company of boys; and the formation of breasts with regards to their future duties of motherhood. The shortage of accommodation altered the conditions under which this gendered-based knowledge transmission took place.

In extreme cases, the sleeping arrangement of boys and girls sharing the same bedrooms led to the occurrence of sexual relations (incest) between the orphans. One female orphan interviewed had a child belonging to her biological teenage brother. The temptation for the two to engage in sex emerged out of sharing the same bedroom. This incident created massive stress for their elderly guardian named Masibanda) who became burdened not only with her orphaned grandchildren (now teenage parents) but also with the rising care demands for her great grandchild. She expressed her frustration:

> *I don't know how to define the incestuous act of my grandchildren. How it will fit into the social relations of the community I really wonder. The moral fabric of our community is tearing apart. Our social relations and values are being spoiled. Soon, they shall vanish to the detriment of us all (August 2012).*

Masibanda expressed these feelings with tears trickling down her face.

In response to these challenges, the elderly guardians with accommodation problems pooled their shelter facilities together with their neighbours. In the arrangement, the orphaned girls from 2 homesteads shared a bedroom in one of the homesteads. Likewise, the male orphans were housed in a separate hut belonging one of the 2 homesteads. This was an important adaptation strategy in separating bedrooms along sexual differences between the orphans. It ensured living up to the taboos on gendered sleeping arrangements. On the other hand, it resulted in reduced closeness between the elderly guardians and the orphaned child sleeping in a neighbour's homestead.

In a bid to determine food consumption variations between families along this variable, the number of decent meals per day which each elderly had came under scrutiny. 77 percent of the elderly (and their orphans) had 1 decent meal a day; which they preferred to take in the evening. During the day, they would eat when and where possible but this did not entail any substantial food consumption.

In most cases, it simply involved consuming wild fruits like *Matamba* and *Matobge* and various roots from the forest. The evening meals involved the consumption of (staple food) *Hadza*. 5 percent of the elderly had 1 decent meal per day. usuallly in the mornings. This was Marula porridge (derived from the freely obtainable Marula fruit in the nearby forests). At times, some home-baked bread along with tea replaced the Marula porridge. The tea could be accompanied with rice or some potatoes sent by relatives working in South Africa and Botswana. For these elderly (the 5 percent), the securing of *Hadza* was inconsistent. However, they would have it in the evening whenever access became possible. The balance of the elderly guardians (18 percent) could afford 2 decent meals per day; in the morning and in the evening. Hence, the fieldwork inquiries revealed a 100 percent inability of the elderly to afford 3 decent meals per day on a consistent basis. Under normal circumstances, the diet of the Hobodo community consisted of 3 meals per day (in the morning, afternoon and in the evening).

In my study, all of the elderly (along with the orphans) rarely had an afternoon meal. Hence, reduced meals and changing meal patterns was a key way in which the elderly sought to cope with the care of the orphans in Hobodo under strained food reserves. In the afternoon, the orphans would in most cases be away from the homestead, carrying out some domestic duties like herding the cattle or being at school. The non-availability of the orphans in the home during the afternoon caused the elderly guardians to avoid decent meals. Therefore, decent meals were scheduled for mornings and evenings to accommodate the outdoor activities of the orphans. As Mangulube said with deep concern:

> *If I eat Hadza in the afternoon, my grandsons will have nothing heavy to eat and keep them well through the night (August 2012).*

There was a common tendency among the elderly to design their diets around what they possessed. For those who received some groceries from relatives abroad, having 2 meals was affordable. For the 18 percent of the elderly affording 2 meals per day, the likelihood of receiving some cash remittances for buying maize (staple food) was common above the groceries received from relatives outside the country. For the 5 percent eating breakfast only, their orphans of school-going age was enrolled at Hobodo Primary School and Khalanyoni Secondary School. Hence the importance of a morning meal to orphans. The need to meet the educational expenses of the orphans posed serious budgetary constraints on their meals.

7.3.2 Gardening and Remittances

The households of the elderly depended quite often on the small homestead gardens for their vegetable needs. The gardens became particularly important during the dry seasons when alternative options were limited. Some edible weeds (served as vegetables together with Hadza) were not

available in the dry seasons. As a result, the households in Hobodo (like households more broadly in Mangwe) developed the skill of growing vegetables which were cooked and served together with *Hadza*. The main vegetables grown at the homesteads included leafy vegetables like Tsunga, Rape, Cove as well as tomatoes and onions which were mixed with the leafy vegetables in the preparation of meals.

The homestead gardens required a water source for watering the vegetables. However, the distribution of the open water sources in the Hobodo locality was uneven and subject to fluctuations. The open sources of water were only accessible to the households living near the rivers and streams in the ward. The households living near the rivers and streams category constituted 20 percent of the elderly under study. In contrast, the households living far from the water sources reduced the water challenges by digging dip wells close to their homes. This category comprised 25 percent of the elderly under study. Some households had no such wells at their homesteads. This category formed 55 percent of the elderly under study. The reasons behind the unavailability of water wells at their homesteads varied from the shortage of cash resources on their part for contracting some men to dig the wells; to the distant location of underground water within the radius of the given homesteads of the 55 percent category. The digging of the wells was an arduous exercise. Thus was out of question for the elderly's involvement. These differences between households with respect to water availability and homestead gardening resulted in the local commercialisation of vegetables. Consequently, 40 percent of the elderly under study were able not only to grow vegetables but to sell vegetables to some homesteads located far from the open water sources. Intriguingly, the commercialisation of vegetables led to some forms of social interaction between the households of the elderly in a manner which facilitated the deepening of social ties and some sense of mutual dependence. They recognised their common obligations of caring for the AIDS orphans and the importance of interdependence in pursuing their household-based livelihoods.

The elderly made fences around their homestead gardens from the branches of the wild trees in the forests. The awareness of the best forest bushes most suited for hedge-fencing round the homestead gardens was rooted in indigenous knowledge. As the male orphans grew into their teen ages, their manhood was tested through their ability to make the homestead gardens. Not only did the fenced gardens possess some masculinised qualities; as they also embedded some broader familial significance in symbolising the vibrancy of the household and the presence of a responsible household head within a given homestead. Because of this, the elderly guardians made sure that their male orphans were well versed with the constructing and maintenance of the gardens.

In this respect, the skills and capabilities of the orphans were put into good use. Typically, the faecal matter of poultry and small ruminants was collected and used as organic fertiliser in the gardens. The anthill soil was used in the gardens to strengthen the soil structure. Various diseases and pests were controlled in indigenous ways like through the sprinkling of ashes on to the leaves of the vegetables; and the sprinkling of water-hot paper mixture on to the leaves of the vegetables. The orphans and their elderly guardians were eager to pursuing all these activities at minimally affordable costs. In this way, the gardens presented the elderly with opportunities of managing their resources sustainably by recycling what they locally (freely) accessed in order to reduce their dependence on external inputs beyond financial reach. The gardens, as with other livelihood practices, became a symbol of the innovativeness of the elderly in not treating orphans merely as victims but as agents capable of contributing to household livelihoods. Gardening enabled the orphans to be culturally mentored with regards to the required diversification of skills in the provision of household supplies locally. Importantly, the production of vegetables in the small gardens culturally defined the familial value of the resilient capabilities of the elderly in managing their concerns despite the strain of the AIDS pandemic and the caring of the orphans. It was through gardening that the fallacy surrounding the crippling of an individual's capacities through the advancement in years was socially discredited.

After fencing the gardens, the actual management of the vegetables was largely handed over to the women. The elderly women and the female orphans handled the day-to-day running of the gardens. This promoted the women's management of the homes since the vegetables were taken from the gardens straight to the kitchens in the homesteads. In this sense, the homestead gardens were a spatial extension of the socially-defined engendered roles in Hobodo. The activities in the kitchen were run by women in the Hobodo locality. Hence, the gardens facilitated and reinforced the division of familial roles along gender lines.

Gardening presented the women with an opportunity to interact freely; outside the intrusive presence of men. It was through gardening that the elderly women got the space to explore the social concerns of the female orphans who no longer had their biological mothers to socialise with for copying the gender values of the community. Some matters of privacy like menstruation and inquiries by the female teenage orphans on issues regarding their bodies and culturally-defined sex-related conduct expected of them by the community were discussed during gardening; in the absence of men. It was during gardening activities that the importance of marriage, managing the private sphere of the homestead, motherhood and motherly roles were inculcated into the female orphans by their grandmothers.

In this way, the procurement and planting of the vegetables became associated with women and girls in Hobodo. Vegetables like Cove were planted from suckers taken from adult plants. The elderly women freely distributed the suckers to each other across households and kinship relations as a form of reciprocity. This de-commodified exchange relationship enhanced some social bonds across homesteads with the elderly women rediscovering their relevance to the broader community in the face of mounting stress. The collapsed household structures and community linkages in the face of the AIDS pandemic were revitalised through this mutual reciprocity centred on women and homestead gardens; with the pandemic not simply tearing communities asunder but also (through practices of local adaptation in Hobodo based on social engagement) creating the conditions for reinventing the community.

The sharing of suckers epitomised a broader process of reciprocity (a kind of moral economy) in Hobodo centred on the free movement of basic goods and services at a time of deep crisis. Thus, some elderly guardians who received remittances were able (when affordable) to share groceries through the garden-based social networks (based on goodwill and locally-rooted sense of solidarity) with those who had been economically and socially exposed by the pandemic; thereby widening the web of sociality. This overcoming of particular interests and the asserting of a more general interest was not a rigid strategy on the part of the elderly in Hobodo. Rather, it was contingent on the ups and downs of lives and livelihoods in Hobodo as the elderly sought to manoeuvre their way through the crisis in a fluid and reactive manner.

33 percent of the elderly guardians received remittances (in cash and kind) from their relatives working in Botswana and South Africa. Many of the individuals who worked in the neighbouring countries were teenagers. They primarily engaged in manual work. Most of these were orphans who would have dropped out of school due to financial constraints. The teenagers were subject to significant exploitation by unscrupulous employers in Botswana and South Africa who paid them below-minimum wages on contractual bases and in kind. The kind payments included basic foodstuffs. This in turn influenced the type and value of the remittances which the labourers (orphans) would send home to the elderly guardians. Nevertheless, the staple groceries like rice and potatoes were deeply appreciated by the elderly guardians. The kind remittances assisted the elderly for instance, to afford 2 decent meals per day. However, the foodstuffs were received on sporadic bases. Hence, the remittances did not amount to a substantive form of food security.

The groceries were brought across the border into Zimbabwe by some truck drivers popularly known as *Malaichas*. At times, the truck drivers did not deliver all of the remitted goods. Malaba explained:

> *My granddaughter phoned me and told me that she had sent some rice, soap and sanitary pads for her siblings. However, I only received the rice. The malaicha said that the soap was soaked in the rain. For sanitary pads, he said he would trace them at his girlfriend's place but never brought them (August 2012).*

In this sense, the transportation channel of the remittances was marked with many flaws. One elderly guardian (Mr. Ncube) expressed his situation:

> *I have to take the torn packets of rice and beans for I will receive no refunds for the damaged grocery. My grandchild will suffer a huge loss if I don't accept them (August 2012).*

He was afraid that he would suffer more with the orphans staying in his homestead if the one in South Africa became disillusioned by the misconduct of the truck driver in handing over breakages and his denial to take them. For the elderly, the flaws in the remittance process were overweighed by the big gap filled (if only erratically) by the remittances. The gap was socially expressed in the unavailability of effective alternatives in providing for the material needs of the orphans. These elderly guardians (as with all the guardians) were not in a strong position financially to buy the few groceries found in the shops located within their community (as the local selling prices were exorbitant). Thus the flow of remittances held the families together as intact social units.

The remittance strategy redefined the social linkages and social values of the Hobodo locality. The elderly guardians became in part dependent on the remitting grandchildren to survive. In other words, the prevailing situation in which the orphans (grandchildren) depended on the elderly guardians for almost everything was being reversed.

At the same time, the familial gap left by the dead parents was being significantly reduced through the remittances. This occurred as the orphans and the elderly grandparents became closer and more intimate in their social relations though physically apart on regular basis. The direct sharing of social concerns and responsibilities between the remitting orphans and the elderly guardians increased the confidence of the orphans. Any fear or trepidation of the orphans to confide in the elderly was remarkably minimised in the open expressions and discussions which occurred by way of the feedback processes linked to the movement of the remittances between the 2 groups. Based on this, the familial care-giving by the elderly no longer took a one way dimension. Rather, it was being reciprocated through the remittances. The reciprocal stands of the orphans continuously renewed the familial

commitment of the elderly in their care roles. The remittances marked a foundation for restructured familial arrangements and social relations in responding to the desperation of the orphans and the elderly in Hobodo. As noted earlier, only a minority (albeit a significance minority) of elderly guardians had access to remittances. This reflected in part the age composition of orphans in particular households. On another note, it also served to illustrate the complicated character of becoming employed outside Zimbabwe (as an undocumented foreigner) and ensuring the safe delivery of remittances to Hobodo in either cash or kind.

7.3.3 Firewood, crafts, knitting, grass-thatching and brick-making

The widespread use of forest resources by the elderly guardians notably wood for fire was significant throughout the fieldwork in Hobodo. Firewood was one resource which certainly embodied some vital cultural and social meanings pertaining to the adaptive and coping practices of the elderly in the Hobodo locality. In a ward where electricity was only accessed by businessmen at Cross-roads and Khalanyoni business centres, firewood assumed some major functions for Mangwe rural households (elderly headed households included). The guardians used firewood to meet their various energy needs in terms of cooking and for ensuring that the orphans were kept warm in the chilley night temperatures. Additionally, wood was used for making fires for the brewing of beer; and for providing the heat needed for drying meat, *mopane* worms and other foodstuffs reserved for future consumption.

Importantly, fires provided the platform for get-together functions for the orphans and their elderly guardians; especially during the evenings when the orphans were back in the homestead after school and from herding livestock in the bushes. The elderly took these opportunities to identify and assess the development needs of the orphans in terms of spotting their strengths and weaknesses through informal conversations. This enabled them to explore the necessary correctional measures based on the peculiar needs of the individual orphans. The orphans were conscientised on the inevitability of shocks and stresses and about the need to be resilient and innovative in challenging situations.

The get-together functions were regularly organised along gender lines within the households of the elderly. The elderly men lit their fires outside the kitchens. They discussed masculinity matters and mentorship with the male orphans. Some lessons on the management of homestead were imparted during these sessions. The lessons included the intricacies of cattle herding, ploughing the land; and the conduct expected by the community when young men (male orphans) got involved in love relations with young ladies. In the process of preparing suppers in the kitchens, the elderly women took the

opportunity to mentor the female orphans on the culturally-expected womanly roles within the Hobodo locality, including cooking for the family. The female orphans' capabilities were culturally gauged through their performance in preparing food for the family.

At times, all the elderly and orphans of both genders gathered around the fires after supper to reflect upon the activities of the day before sleeping. Their formation of an unbroken circle around the fire symbolised their shared interests and needs which arose in the context of the AIDS scourge. It was this spirit of togetherness which was kept alive to socially bind the orphans to their grandparents in times when they moved to faraway places like neighbouring countries. The atmosphere at these fire-gatherings was emotionally powerful in that it cemented the closeness of the orphans and the elderly despite the ravaging crisis. Thus the affordability and usage of firewood represented the hope and continuity of the resource-stricken rural elderly guardians through the difficult economic crisis situations bedevilling their ward. So did the burning flames of the fire in the chilly evening temperatures sociologically symbolised their undying zeal to forge ahead through the hazardous crisis.

The duty of gathering firewood from the bushes was a female responsibility. The female orphans' cultural status was defined through their performance in gathering firewood. The specific skills involved in the choice of quality wood; the bundling of the firewood on the head by the female orphans; and carrying them home were culturally acquired. In this respect, the firewood contributed to defining femininity within the Hobodo ward. The standards of responsibility met by the female orphans were measured by their ability to estimate the correct amounts of firewood in terms of the consumption levels of the households. In this regard, some help to elderly guardians by neighbours was detected. 14 percent of the elderly under study admitted to receiving free support from neighbours and kin in the gathering of firewood. Mamulalazi related her experience:

The young women from my neighbouring homestead provide some firewood to me and my little granddaughters whom I take care of. My granddaughters are still young; not even reached the school-going age; and I am too old to carry anything heavy on my head. The ladies from my neighbourhood are sympathetic with me in my desperate situation (August 2012).

Commercial wise, the selling of firewood among the elderly guardians in Hobodo did not occur to any significant extents. Only 4 percent of the elderly placed under study sometimes engaged in the selling of firewood. The engagement of a small number of the elderly in firewood-selling was caused by the fact that firewood was seen as such a critical livelihood source for home consumption among Hobodo households. Thus the commercialisation of firewood was not viable under the social and cultural controls over the extraction of natural resources in Hobodo. The limited firewood sales were

locally conducted (within Hobodo). More specifically, the teachers from the local schools sometimes failed to set aside some time to gather their firewood due to the high volume of teaching-related work in the schools. This was the only instance in which the sale of firewood presented an economic opportunity to the elderly guardians of Hobodo.

Apart from that, 34 percent of the elderly guardians under study in the Hobodo locality engaged in the making of various types of crafts. Yokes, kitchen utensils, wrist bangles, door mats and children's toys comprised the list. The creativity of the elderly was demonstrated in particular by the use of locally-obtainable materials in the making of the crafts. The decorative identity of Hobodo women in general was defined socially for example through the beauty of grass wrist bangles. Thus the elderly sought to invent symbols of beauty for the female orphans through art in line with their cultural heritage. Likewise, the toys for young orphans were made out of freely-obtainable wood and mud, as store-purchased toys were beyond the financial capacity of the elderly. Therefore, the art work for the toys entailed some considerable improvisation on the part of the elderly. Beyond this, yokes were made for use by both cattle and donkeys in ploughing operations. Various home utensils were locally produced from the leaves and fibres of wild trees. The elderly, in their positions as local custodians of culture drew upon their extended experiences and skills of adaptation in ensuring that their households remained embedded in the arts and crafts of Hobodo-based traditions. The elderly maintained this objective with a particular concern for the AIDS orphans under their care. At times, particular crafts were sold by the elderly. More important though was the fact that the exchange of skills in the construction of cultural artefacts took place across households. Again this acted as a form of reciprocity in rejuvenating the beleaguered web of social relations within Hobodo.

11 percent of the elderly women under study practised knitting. Knitting was specifically practised by the women in line with the engendered practices of Hobodo. It was practised by only a minority of the elderly women. The elderly women engaged in knitting to provide for the clothing needs of their orphaned grandchildren. The knitted items included jerseys, hats, gloves and leg warmers. Additionally, knitting was an extra-curriculum subject for girls (orphans) at the local schools. The orphans then exploited the skills in assisting the elderly women in household-based knitting activities at home. The knitting material used by the elderly women was obtained as part of the remittances from South Africa and Botswana. Through their engagement in knitting, the elderly women made a tangible contribution towards the well-being of the orphans. In the process, the activities heightened the participation and visibility of the elderly women within the Hobodo community. In this way, the elderly women's culturally-stereotyped status as dependent on others was reduced. This

occurred as knitting capacitated them in occupying a social space as providers for the orphans in the midst of the crisis.

The Hobodo locality widely used local grasses for roofing their houses. The grass-thatch was gathered by individual households in accordance to need. Hence, there was no significant local market for grass-thatch. The 'poorest of the poor' elderly guardians, who mainly comprised the elderly widows returning from their dead husbands' homes constituted the group which engaged in the selling of the grass-thatch (5 percent of the elderly under study). The elderly widows desperately needed some source of cash to survive together with the orphans under their care; no matter how small it could be. Arguably, the widows' dependence on kin for their livelihoods was slightly reduced by their involvement in the cutting of grass for selling. All the elderly guardians highlighted the utmost significance of grass for home consumption in thatching, such that there was no need on their part to purchase the expensive roofing material from the shops. The elderly also revealed that their kitchens needed grass-thatch for improved ventilation facilities to cater for the smoke emanating from the fires during the cooking activities.

Grass-cutting and roof-thatching in Hobodo tended to occur along gender lines. The cutting of grass from the bushes was largely but not exclusively done by women as this activity was considered to be light and compatible with womanly roles as defined locally. More so, the use of the grass was centred on the homestead itself which fell within the realm of the elderly women and hence they tended to spearhead the activity. The physical labour of roofing the homesteads with grass was done by men because of the risks entailed in working off the ground. The elderly, depending on their age and frailty, relied to varying extents on the assistance from their orphaned grandchildren in grass-cutting. It was not unusual for them to receive help from younger community members in the thatching of roofs.

This seemed to undermine the status of the elderly guardians in the eyes of the Hobodo community in the caring of the orphans as it was a sign of dependence on others. However, in continuing to engage in grass-roofing of their homesteads, the elderly reaffirmed their social and cultural identity in Hobodo. The wide use of the grass-thatch in the ward, as recorded from the narratives of the elderly, effectively transformed the practice into a cultural artefact. A proper and fit rural homestead in Hobodo was identified by the presence of a symmetrical grass-thatched roof. In this sense, using local grass for homestead roofs was not simply associated with the cutting down of homestead construction and maintenance expenses, as it carried with it the social connotations and meaning of acceptable standards of accommodation within the boundaries of Hobodo, including culturally-developed health and safety standards emanating from the ventilation provided. Overall

then, the elderly ensured the retention of the cultural knowledge and skills of grass-thatch in Hobodo. The skills included the setting of grass in a compact and effective way to maximise the dryness of the grass, aeration and warmth. This was in part reinforced by their appreciation that the orphans needed constant care (including proper shelter). This gave the elderly unwavering resilience in the constant maintenance of their homesteads.

Only 12 percent of the elderly guardians placed under study engaged in brick moulding to meet the needs of the orphans. Brick-moulding was an arduous activity. Hence, it was largely unsuitable for the elderly. For those who engaged in it, it was based on teamwork across households. This team-based work involved digging the soil for it to be loose; heaping the soil together and mixing it with water; and then taking the mud and moulding it into bricks. When the bricks dried, the team members placed the bricks into neatly-organised structures popularly referred to as ovens. The ovens were then covered with mud. Some thick and highly inflammable Firewood would then be loaded into the ovens and fire lit to burn the bricks. After that process, the bricks would be red and strong; thus ready for construction purposes. The elderly did not form an entire brick-making team given the arduous nature of the activity. Rather, the elderly guardians got involved as part of some piece-work granted to them by younger community members involved in brick-making to perform part of the many tasks involved. In return, the elderly received some cash.

The involvement of this small grouping of elderly guardians in this collective activity not only benefited them directly and brought them closer together through complementary effort but, given their position of moral authority in Hobodo, it helped to revitalise the collective spirit of the community which was being undercut by the AIDS pandemic and the broader socio-economic crisis. The brick-moulding activity (through the monetary gains of the elderly) provided for the indirect involvement of the whole community in the advancement of the welfare cause of the orphans. Arguably, the teamwork character of brick-moulding broaden out the orphan care pressures over the whole Hobodo locality. Thus it eased the stress levels of the elderly.

Once again, the elderly demonstrated the resilient and undying spirit which enhanced their innovativeness. In this way, the elderly demonstrated their determination and ability to ‘squeeze out’ some opportunities from the crisis situation. Through brick-moulding, the familial care efforts of the elderly became tangible and verifiable. Through the cash received, the elderly bought some food and other necessities for the orphans. This was consistent with the cultural values of the Hobodo locality, which stressed the care of vulnerable persons (including the orphans) at community level despite the household unit being their primary custodian. The moulding of bricks by the elderly symbolised their

central role in the re founding and the re shaping of the broken familial ties, social networks and relations as well as household links in Hobodo.

7.3.4 NGO Activities

In order to enhance understanding of the socio-economic predicament of the elderly and the seriousness of the disturbance of their livelihoods in the context of the AIDS pandemic, it is important to make reference to the absence of NGOs in the Hobodo area. With the Zimbabwean state in its capacity to provide social protection measures (including basic welfare services) in large part compromised by the economic and political crisis, it was expected that development NGOs would fill the void. However, this was not the case; with all elderly guardians under study stressing that they had not received any NGO support over the previous few years.

The increase in the numbers of the AIDS orphans in the rural communities and the negative implications this had for the grandparents in terms of orphan care was known to the Zimbabwean government and NGOs since the 1990s. In terms of the government's AIDS policies, strategies and programmes, there were systematic national efforts to tackle the AIDS crisis in relation to prevention, treatment and care. However, these efforts never reached the Hobodo locality in any meaningful manner. In the year 2008, the social situation in Hobodo worsened as the externally-driven safety social nets in place for the orphans disappeared in their entirety in the face of rising political tensions. In that year, the economic crisis in Zimbabwe reached its zenith. The only NGO operating in the Hobodo area (the World Vision International) moved out of the community and never came back. This made the crisis tougher and less bearable for the elderly guardians and the orphans. Though the World Vision International was not a pure AIDS services organisation, it offered some support and welfare programmes for orphans and other vulnerable children in the Hobodo locality.

According to the elderly guardians, The World Vision International moved out at a time when the number of orphans in Hobodo was increasing sharply and when external support was needed the most. From the World Vision International's perspective, political tensions were thwarting and compromising its work; with the ruling ZANU-PF literally labelling NGOs in the rural areas as agents of the MDC opposition party and targeting them accordingly. The government claimed that the food relief programmes of NGOs were focused on supporters of MDC. It must be remembered that 2008 was an election year in Zimbabwe which saw a wave of violent activities and intimidation occurring in the rural communities (Hobodo included). The fact that Mangwe district is in Matabeleland, a region historically aligned to political parties (such as ZAPU and MDC) opposed to ZANU-PF, made the

work of NGOs like the World Vision International particularly difficult. It was accused of materially assisting opposition parties' strongholds.

During the operations of the World Vision International in the Hobodo community, various forms of support were provided. The services included counselling which related to the psycho-social problems of the orphans. Furthermore, the material needs of the orphans were addressed to make the situation of the elderly guardians more manageable. The rolling back of the World Vision International made the elderly more exposed to the socio-economic crisis. The elderly experienced increased food shortages after the departure of the World Vision International. To this note, Madumani said:

> *We are suffering. We never received any food parcels since the time when that organisation closed its offices in that year when people were being beaten and its staff being stopped from giving us some food* (August 2012).

She clearly expressed the deep stress and strain she was experiencing over the food insecurity. The guardians revealed that the organisation met the educational expenses of a large number of orphans; far greater in number than the few who were currently having their fees paid by the government. The prevailing politics in Zimbabwe had some negative implications on the care of the AIDS orphans in Hobodo. For more details on the politics, please refer to chapter 4 of the thesis. In this sense, all the elderly and the orphans under study were detrimentally affected.

7.4 Government Assistance

At this point, I move on to look more specifically at the role of the Zimbabwean government in terms of various support mechanisms (direct and indirect) which it availed to the elderly guardians in their quest to care for the AIDS orphans. Though the economy was down on its knees, the government remained committed to offering some welfare programmes to the rural communities. The government programmes existed in various forms in the case of Hobodo: Food-for-work, Grain Loan Scheme, Public Assistance, and the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). The programmes were rolled out to the public through the government department of Social Services. The district offices of the Social Services department were based in Plumtree town, some 143 kilometres away from the Hobodo community. With the road between Plumtree and Hobodo being unpaved and dusty, the delivery of government programmes to Hobodo got negatively affected. It was not unusual for government trucks delivering assistance to break down on their way to the Hobodo community because of its failure to properly service and maintain its vehicles. This resulted in frequent delays in the servicing of the community; with goods on their way to the community from Plumtree sometimes becoming soaked in

the rains on open vehicles. A typical example cited by the elderly guardians was grain for the Drought Relief programme.

7.4.1 Food-For-Work Programme

In investigating the extent to which the elderly received support from the government, and the form this support took, the elderly guardians brought to the fore the significance of the Food-For-Work programme. However, they claimed that the programme largely missed the really deserving cases of the elderly guardians within the community due to oversight in the programme planning in capturing the highly marginalised elderly. A closer analysis of the situation in the community showed that the food for work programme was being manipulated. It was being used by the ruling party for political mileage rather than covering up for food insecurity among the less privileged like the orphans in the ward. Consequently, the plight of many elderly fell through the cracks.

Overall, the Food-For-Work programme was available to the Hobodo ward on sporadic basis. In order to receive food through this programme, the local residents were required to engage in some projects for maintaining the public infrastructure in their ward. This entailed much physical labour which most of the elderly guardians no longer possessed. In return, they received small sums of cash which they were then required to use in purchasing subsidised grain from the Grain Marketing Board (GMB). The GMB was the government department responsible for the storage and the distribution of food (mainly grain foodstuffs) to rural communities. The programme was open to everyone in the community, thus the elderly competed with the younger members in being considered for the programme. Not everyone would benefit at the same time. For an individual to benefit, he/she had to be chosen by the ward supervisors in charge of the project. As such, the elderly found it hard to be fully accommodated into the programme due to their decreasing physical fitness which interfered with their productivity in the project.

In this respect, 70 percent of the elderly indicated having no access to the programme at all. Nearly all of these elderly guardians explained their inaccessibility in terms of the lack of physical fitness needed to work in the projects. The balance of these elderly was physically fit to engage in the programme but it indicated that it stood no chance for those in charge of the programme invariably selected young Hobodo community members over the elderly. The discriminatory practices in the programme increased the suffering of the guardians and the orphans. This was clearly problematic, as the programme was designed to address the food insecurity of the most rural households, which mainly consisted of households marked by the presence of orphans. The 30 percent of the elderly who were

able to squeeze into the programme complained that the payments received in return were insufficient to meet their needs and were not equivalent to the amount of energy expended in the Food-For-Work projects. Another frustrating factor for these elderly regarding the programme was that they were not always chosen when the programme came to the ward. On average, an individual in Hobodo was chosen once out of 3-4 rounds to ensure some degree of equity in the involvement of all the interested individuals. While the elderly accepted that there was some logic in this selection process, the intermittency and indeterminacy of their participation created great uncertainty and insecurity. This served to minimise the significance of the programme in addressing their suffering with the orphans. This was particularly the case given that alternative sources of livelihoods in Hobodo were exceedingly limited.

A general observation on the manner in which the programme was being run in the ward showed that it favoured some villages at the expense of others. About 33 percent of the 70 percent of the elderly who were not covered by the programme came from Khalanyoni village. The village was much bigger than others in terms of the numbers of individuals who needed the government programmes. Khalanyoni village always appeared to have fewer people benefiting from the programme as compared to other villages like Lumawo which were much smaller in size. More so, Khalanyoni village was geographically located far from the chief's village. The chief's village was Thekwani and that is where most of the main decisions for the whole ward originated from. Accordingly, the Food-For-Work programme was most prevalent there. In this sense, the national government's Food-For-Work programme followed the lines of hierarchy and created inequality across villages in the ward. The elderly guardians (30 percent engaging in the programme) simply fell into this ward pattern. Thus they had no substantive capacity to influence the even distribution of the programme in their favour and the orphans because they held no leadership posts in the ward.

The Food-For-Work programme was supervised through the established ward administrative structures. Some of the individuals in the ward administration did not qualify for the programme for their socio-economic conditions were better on average than those of the elderly guardians. Their involvement in the ward administration in the coordination of the Food-For-Work programme gave them significant leeway in incorporating some undeserving cases into the programme. More so, they were accused of tempering with the programme to boost their personal gains. Mr Ndlovu who cared for 1 orphan commented on the shortfalls of the administration of the programme:

> *We are not visible to the selectors for they do not recognise our plight. They are young parents with enough supplies for their families* and they selfishly feed themselves (August 2012).

Many corrupt practices happened at the expense of the deserving poor elderly. Furthermore, there existed no feedback channels for the programmes independent from the ward administration which selfishly capitalised on the programme. In the main, the Food-For-Work programme did not specially consider the familial obligations of the elderly nor did it target the particular circumstances of the AIDS orphans. This may be understandable given that other vulnerable social groups in Hobodo (besides the elderly and the orphans, depended upon the programme for a living.

7.4.2 Grain Loan Scheme

Besides the Food-For-Work programme, some grain was brought to the community for sale. It was sold at a subsidised price by the GMB on behalf of the government. The subsidised grain fell under the Drought Relief programme of the government supplied to all the rural communities in Zimbabwe. All the elderly guardians under study had access to the subsidised grain, however only 25 percent of the elderly had sufficient cash to purchase the grain while the rest did not. More so, the delivery of the grain to the Hobodo community was inconsistent; arriving sometimes after 6 months. When the grain came, a household was not allowed to buy more than 1 bag. 1 bag was not sufficient for an elderly guardian and the orphans under his/her custody to last them 6 months. In many instances, the elderly had no cash to buy the grain.

With all community households having access to the cheaper grain from the GMB, the grain could be sold out before the elderly guardians could purchase a single bag. Insofar as the government sought simply to consolidate its legitimacy amongst the rural population, without targeting particular households with critical food security needs, the delivery of such assistance to the community and the measurement of success of the subsidised grain programme was simply the selling out of all the delivered bags. What was emphasised then was performance duly performed by the government officials through reaching out to marginalised rural communities such that logistics pertaining to who got what and how much did not matter significantly. In this sense, efficiency ruled over equity concerns; and the programme was deemed successful insofar as the written returns completed by the GMB officials indicated the presence of its activities in the Hobodo ward. Thus there was insensitivity on the part of government to the specific plight of the elderly guardians and the AIDS orphans.

7.4.3 Public Assistance

A Public Assistance scheme was directly operated by the government's Department of Social Services; with its offices in Plumtree town serving the entire district of Mangwe. The programme

catered for particular vulnerable social groups who struggled to cope with the prevailing adverse socio-economic conditions in the country. By definition, the elderly and the orphans fitted well into this programme. For the individuals to benefit from the programme, they had to present themselves to the Social Services district offices in Plumtree. Their household circumstances would be assessed by the district social services officer. If found deserving, their details would be captured for purposes of incorporation into the Public Assistance programme.

In terms of this programme, only 14 percent of the elderly guardians under study had access. It became paradoxical that the Public Assistance programme proved to be the worst of the 3 programmes inclusive of the (Food-For-Work programme and the Grain Loan Scheme) in terms of inaccessibility to the elderly when in fact it appeared to be the best suited for the elderly guardians as they would likely be targeted as vulnerable and in need of public assistance in terms of the criteria used. An inquiry into this revealed that the programme was the most difficult for the elderly to access due to some stringent measures of the programme. Those left outside the programme (86 percent) claimed that it was extremely difficult to travel to the Social Services district offices in Plumtree town on the grounds of high transport fares. Apart from that, getting transport to and from Plumtree was challenging. For those who were part of the programme, the money collected from the Plumtree offices as public assistance had to be used towards payment of bus fare.

There was one bus which passed through the ward during the dark hours of early morning at around 2 am. The elderly (like all residents) were forced to walk to the bus stop and wait for it. They risked being attacked by night beasts. The bus travelled all the way to Bulawayo and back the same day. It did not supply a daily service for both routes simultaneously. Therefore, the elderly guardians travelling to the Social Services office needed to organise their sleeping arrangements in Plumtree prior to their departure from Hobodo. This scenario scared them away from travelling to Plumtree to present their cases at the district office. Mankomo, an elderly lady said:

> *Life is very tough these days in town. People do not properly welcome visitors for fear of having their budgets strained (July 2012).*

If ever the elderly dared to travel to Plumtree for the Public Assistance programme, they were required to submit the photocopies of their identity cards and the birth certificates of all the orphans under their custody. This was an extra cost which they had to consider before making the application. More so, the requirement of identity cards for orphans was difficult for 56 percent of the orphans they cared for were born outside Zimbabwe.

A further complication was that the forms which needed to be completed were written in English, such that the elderly (mainly illiterate) needed considerable assistance in filling in the forms. After filling in the forms, they were issued a letter by the Department of Social Services which they took to the Post Office Savings Bank in Plumtree town together with their particulars to open a bank account. The money would then be deposited into the account from Harare. The head office of the Social Services Department was based in Harare. this office was the one which carried out the disbursements of the Public Assistance funds. Some two months would lapse before the first amount reflected in the bank account of the elderly, as the documents had to be sent from the Plumtree office to Harare through the provincial office of the Social Services department in Gwanda town with all the various data capturing processes involved. For the elderly, the time, energy and financial cost involved in applying for the Public Assistance (including gathering together the necessary supporting documents) was hugely problematic. An elderly man Mr Dube noted:

> *We are not learned. The forms are written in English. Filling in the forms and clearing the whole process is cumbersome. Sometimes, no assistance comes after we travel and spent the little we have to Plumtree (August 2012).*

In the case of this particular guardian, his application for Public Assistance had flopped. Hence a successful application was not guaranteed and considerable cost would be possibly expended without success. Even if successful, and the funds started flowing, the elderly needed to travel all the way to Plumtree to receive their Public Assistance funds.

The assumption in the implementation of the Public Assistance programme was that the deserving cases were captured by default. However, this was not the case. The opposite was true in that the majority of the elderly targets of the programme were being left out. In this regard, Mankomo uttered the following words in frustration:

> *I travelled to the offices with my identity card after being told by my neighbour that it was the main requirement. However, I was returned home by the officers to collect the birth certificates of my grandchildren. Upon my return home, I failed to raise enough money for the bus fare back to Plumtree and just ignored the issue (August 2012).*

Thus, the elderly and the orphans under their custody were failing to benefit fully from the programme because of the strict conditions the elderly needed to follow in making the applications and the unavailability of adequate information to them regarding the programme.

7.4.4 Basic Education Assistance Module

Another significant government programme in Hobodo was the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). This was a programme through which the orphans (and other vulnerable children) received some limited funding from government to cover their educational expenses. The orphans covered under BEAM were selected by a programme committee composed of the local residents. In the case of Hobodo, the activities of the committee were co-ordinated at Hobodo Primary School.

The loose control measures in the programme caused the local committee members to be bribed through various means in the selection of the beneficiaries of the programme. Some elderly guardians interviewed claimed that these irregularities worked out to their detriment as their orphans were more deserving cases for BEAM but were being excluded. One elderly guardian who confided in me on conditions of anonymity for fear of reprisals from the accused persons explained:

> *We are always shocked that some orphans with single live parents working in South Africa continue to be beneficiaries of BEAM yet the orphans of old Mancube who doesn't possess any animal to sell are being neglected. In many instances, we see some men in the selection committee repairing leaking roofs and broken-down fences at the homes of the single parents* (July 2012).

My efforts to obtain the responses of the individuals who had been fingered in the alleged scam yielded nothing for the BEAM committee disagreed with the allegations. The committee claimed that many individuals in the community were living on piece-works. Hence, the involvement of committee members in piece-works was unrelated to the BEAM programme.

The study found out that 55 percent of the 44 orphans under study were going to school. Of the 55 percent, only 20 percent received government assistance through BEAM in meeting their educational expenses. The rest of the orphans were being assisted by their elderly guardians to go to school. 30 percent (on top of the 55 percent) of the orphans under study was not going to school. Financial constraints on the part of the elderly guardians hampered its enrolment in school. The 30 percent category orphans loitered in the community; yet these were young children of school-going age. The dire situation of many of these orphans drove them into considering border jumping to neighbouring countries in search of the means of survival as an alternative. In this sense, the orphans fell through the loopholes of the BEAM programme. The BEAM programme was initially introduced in the 1990s to provide assistance to the children of working people who could not withstand the negative effects of the failed Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) of the 1990s. In the

face of heightened social insecurity of the early 2000s, it became clear that the dilemma of the AIDS orphans was beyond the capacity of the BEAM programme.

For the elderly guardians, the education of the orphans under their care was critical. The elderly stressed the academic training, psycho-social skills and life skills training of the orphans at school. 62 percent of the elderly under study had orphans attending primary school. The guardians prioritised education within their limited and constrained household resources. In extreme cases, they used remittances from relatives working abroad to pay for the school-related expenses. Additionally, the passing of time with orphans at school gave the elderly some time to rest from attending to the orphans thereby refreshing them emotionally.

Despite the high attendance rate at primary school, 80 percent of the orphans dropped out after finishing primary education. For many elderly, putting the orphans through primary education was all that they could afford. For 38 percent of the elderly under study, the cash resources for sending their orphans to school were not available.

7.5 Locally-based orphan familial care practices

Besides their academic needs, the orphans above had some social and psychological needs to be catered for by their elderly guardians on daily basis. In a bid to clearly examine the involvement of the elderly in orphan care, the study divided the elderly into 2 categories: those who cared for 4-6 orphans (29 percent of the elderly guardians) and those who cared for 1-3 orphans (71 percent) of the elderly guardians under study. The total number of the orphans being cared for by the elderly guardians under study was 130. 44 percent of these orphans were cared for by the first category of the elderly (29 percent); while 56 percent was cared for by the second category of the elderly guardians (71 percent). The circumstances surrounding these orphans were largely established through the data which was given by their elderly guardians who were under study. Some of the data was derived from the 19 orphans who were purposively sampled from this group (orphans catered for by the elderly) into the category of 44 orphans placed under study. The findings showed that there was unevenness in the demands placed upon the elderly depending upon the number of orphans under their care, with the second category of guardians with a maximum of 3 orphans having a more cumbersome task. The demands placed upon these elderly by the orphans were more than could be reasonably expected of ageing individuals living under stressed socio-economic conditions.

In addition to orphans of school-going age, there existed another sub-grouping of orphans which was below the school-going age. This subgroup constituted 15 percent of the 44 orphans placed

under study. For the infants (15 percent below school-going age), they mostly needed psycho-social support and company of the elderly guardians. The school-going orphans needed school fees and other material support (such as pocket money and packed lunches) to motivate them in their academic work. The HIV positive orphans needed appropriate counselling pertaining to their illness as well as the management of their medication schedules. Additionally, the female teenage orphans had their peculiar set of problems. They required careful monitoring by the elderly to prevent them from engaging in detrimental love affairs. For the child mothers, they needed skills-training in the upkeep of their babies. The male teenage orphans needed regular guidance to deter them from engaging in juvenile delinquent activities. Balancing the varying needs of the orphans was a difficult responsibility for the elderly guardians. The caring obligations demanded knowledge, experience and skills which the elderly fell short of.

In pursuing the needs of the orphans, the elderly sought to develop some close linkages between themselves and the orphans. To achieve this, they relied on their culturally-defined positions of being respected in Hobodo. The quest to gain the respect of the orphans (and to bring about livelihoods which entailed the most basic level of household subsistence) invariably entailed a process of negotiation and compromise for both the elderly and orphans. Within the scenarios above, a new set of social relations was emerging in Hobodo (the elderly-orphan relationship). It was as if a new sub-community (of orphans and the elderly) was emerging in the context of the AIDS crisis.

For the Hobodo community, effectively dealing with the magnitude of the AIDS crisis required some sort of targeted intervention from beyond the community. However, this intervention was nowhere to be found. Hence the elderly sought to comprehend the changes taking place in Hobodo by crafting some responses rooted in some locally-grown strategies and experiences intrinsic to the Hobodo community. In this sense, the handling of the crisis became embodied in the practices and skills of the elderly guardians as they engaged in familial care for the orphans. Thus the elderly sought to stand out above the crisis through various efforts. In re activating their parenthood, the elderly came to the aid of the orphans. They reduce the social gap left by the orphans' deceased parents. They created some space in devising some local coping strategies of adaptation in limiting the effects of the AIDS crisis. With time, the familial care activities of the elderly towards the orphans' guardians became widely acceptable within the institutional boundaries of the Hobodo community.

The elderly guardians made use of the social and cultural qualities of the Hobodo community to handle their new familial responsibilities. The elderly in the Hobodo community had the will, fortitude and independence of mind to identify, frame and develop their own approaches which best fitted the

local situation. Though the approaches were subject to variations across households, it is possible to claim that a locally-based and community-wide system of orphan familial care was founded and practised within Hobodo.

The elderly took the notion of orphan with all its meanings and qualities and framed it within the Hobodo perspective. In general, the term 'orphan' conjured up all sorts of negativity in the face of AIDS, including sexual promiscuity, the abandonment of children (through death), lost childhoods, social marginalisation and reduced access to social opportunities. The elderly, despite the unavailability of robust social safety nets; sought to dignify the orphans under their care by providing some semblance of decency and ordering in their (orphans) lives.

The Hobodo elderly, beyond being grandparents, were also versed with the ways of exploiting local resources like various cultural components to devise some interventions into orphan care. A typical example was their immense knowledge in the use of traditional medicines to cure various ailments of the orphans. In this regard, 62 percent of the orphans in the study admitted to having received some traditional herbs from their elderly guardians to cure the recurrent flues and headaches which they experienced.

The elderly had the ability to understand the actions of local animals and the conditions of local plants in relation to changing weather patterns. During my fieldwork, the elderly guardians asked me one day to change the venue of our interviews for the following day, from an open place to the community centre where there was a community hall. They foretold that the next day would be cloudy and windy. I waited to verify whether their prediction would come true and it exactly happened that way. I asked one of them to explain.

Nyoni explained:

The big birds which were hooting yesterday in the afternoon signalled that today there would be a cloudy and cold weather. The sounds of our local birds and animals transmit some social meanings to us (July 2012).

The elderly said they used such knowledge of birds, soils and other dimensions of nature to cope with their changing social circumstances in the crisis. The old woman named Manyati, in pointing to a certain wild grass which was growing in the bush near the community centre, indicated:

> *We use that grass for washing the clothes of our orphans in many instances when we will be having no soap* (July 2012).

She went and took a small piece of the grass and placed it in some water, and the grass to my surprise started to dissolve in the water and behaved exactly like soap.

7.6 Mounting challenges of child mothers

The study explored the ways through which the crisis was regenerating itself. Exploring the various dimensions of the crisis with particular focus to how they impacted on the elderly and the orphans assisted in the appreciation of the terrible magnitude of the crisis in Hobodo. It also assisted in identifying and understanding the various responses of the elderly to the crisis. The ongoing regeneration of the crisis was examined by way of examining the activities of some community groups who moved in and out of the Hobodo community, the examination extended into activities which were not strictly sanctioned by the community. The positioning of the elderly (in caring for the orphans) with respect to these groups and the ways in which the elderly handled these groups, is discussed below. The discussions reveal in the activities of border jumpers, illegal migrants, truck drivers and local cowboys.

7.6.1 Border Jumping

As economic conditions severely deteriorated in Zimbabwe from the year 2000, life became very hard for the common Zimbabweans. A drastic deterioration in social services and the acute shortage of food left people crossing the borders to neighbouring countries through illegal means. The most notable countries to which the Zimbabweans illegally crossed to were South Africa and Botswana. In studying the border jumping activities, the main focus was on the ways in which the involvement of minors in the trend impacted on the familial well-being of the rural households in terms of orphan-hood and increased suffering of the elderly. In many cases, the orphans were involved in border jumping largely after falling through the cracks of the social safety nets such as the orphans who were not covered by the BEAM programme.

Some 16 child mothers were chosen for the study out of a total of 37. However, 21 of them did not wish to partake in the study. Of those who took part in the research, none of the orphaned child mothers had substantive means of survival. Together with their babies, they stayed under the care of their grandparents. 70 percent of the 16 female teenage orphans admitted to have at some stage illegally crossed the Zimbabwean border to neighbouring countries. At the time of crossing, they were as young as 12 and 13 years old.

The female teenagers conducted border jumping in search of greener pastures soon after finishing grade seven. With their elderly guardians lacking the financial means of taking their education to high school level, border jumping in search of manual work became an alternative means of survival. At the time of their illegal border crossing to Botswana and South Africa, they had no babies under their care. They became pregnant through various forms of sexual abuses on their way to

South Africa. Some of the abuses took place in South Africa and Botswana on the farms and in houses where they worked as housemaids. On the way to South Africa, 52 percent of the 70 percent of the child mothers revealed that they were sexually abused by gangsters popularly referred as (*magumaguma*). *Magumaguma* were notorious gangsters who operated in the thick bushes along the rivers covering the no-man's-land at the geographical boundaries separating Zimbabwe from South Africa and Botswana. These were the illegal entry points which the young ladies used. The child mothers would be raped in the process of being assisted to pass over for instance the Limpopo River and the thick forests between Zimbabwe and South Africa. After raping the young ladies, the *magumaguma* would simply disappear leaving the young ladies stranded.

The young teenage orphans would soon realise that they were pregnant and, further, that they had been infected with the HIV virus by the *magumaguma*. One teenage orphan (Nokuthula), in deep sadness, told her horrifying story:

> *I and my 2 friends set out for South Africa. When we were at the border town of Beitbridge, we found some men who promised to help us cross the crocodile infested Limpopo River between Zimbabwe and South Africa. The two men charged us 100 Rands each for the job. We agreed that we would pay them after crossing the river to the South African side. While we were in the bushes just after crossing the river, the men changed the amount and they said they needed 1000 Rands per person. We did not have such big amounts of money. They then took turns to rape us for failing to raise the big amounts. We could not cry during the rape incident for the men had big knives which they threatened to cut our throats with if ever we would resist the rape. After raping us, they disappeared into the forests leaving us alone. We had no option other than proceeding with our journey. A month after the rape incident, two of us discovered that we were pregnant* (October 2012).

In the neighbouring countries, the teenage orphans were frequently rounded up by immigration authorities and deported back to Zimbabwe. The deportees included both male and female orphans who had illegally crossed the Zimbabwean border. 60 percent of the 70 percent child mothers who had engaged in border jumping revealed to have suffered some violent xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Some orphans died in South Africa as they disappeared without any traceable signs. In this regard, one old man named Sibanda, whose stress was easily detectable in his wrinkled face, lamented:

> *My grandchild left for South Africa. He did not come back and now this is the 5th year. Some say he was killed and some say lots of other things. I am now confused as to what to do with his wife which he had just married before his departure* (August 2012).

The elderly were fighting hard to contain such situations. In all these chaotic events, the elderly guardians were at the receiving end of the problems. They were left to handle the problems alone; problems which were normally addressed by the government with the assistance of NGOs.

7.6.2 Illegal Migrant Status

Besides voluntary border jumping, there was some form of trafficking taking place particularly among female teenage orphans including the child mothers. In such cases, the orphans would illegally cross the border without making any payment for the service in agreement with the truck drivers. The truck drivers, who were known to the Hobodo community would ferry the orphans across the border into South Africa under the pretext of employment with reputable businessmen (with the truck drivers themselves presumably being paid by the businessman for bringing the teenage females into the country). In the end, the businessmen in South Africa took advantage of the declining socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe to use the female orphans in prostitution rings. They exploited the young ladies' illegal migrant status and their fear of being arrested to abuse them in different ways. The child mothers' ineligibility to secure formal employment opportunities or any of the social grants in South Africa made them desperate and exposed to sexual abuse. Nokubonga, one of the teenage child mothers narrated her experience:

> *When I arrived in South Africa, I was handed over to a certain man who took me to his tavern. At the tavern, I was welcomed by some Zimbabwean ladies and was incorporated into the prostitution ring. I found it difficult to resist for I had no money to come back to Zimbabwe (October 2012).*

She further revealed that the businessman amassed huge profits from using the young ladies as commercial sex workers. She later gave birth to a baby boy whom she sent home with *malaicha (truck driver).* After a further year she fell sick and tested positive to the HIV virus. On that note, she decided to return home to Hobodo.

The female orphans revealed that, after their arrival in South Africa, the businessmen chose the ones whom they liked to use as sex workers. Those who remained were literally sold to men who came to the tavern in search of the young ladies. Most of these men, according to the orphans, were gangsters and social outcasts like robbers. They simply used the young ladies as sex slaves without any form of payment. They stayed with the young ladies as if the latter were their wives. Their unsavoury way of life and their seemingly undying thirst for sexual pleasures caused them to indulge in unprotected sexual activities. This made them carriers of the HIV virus. These female sex slaves eventually

became pregnant and HIV positive. After they became pregnant, the men relocated to other residential premises not known to the pregnant orphans. This left the young ladies stranded and eventually having babies without fathers. The orphans would then send the babies home to their grandparents while they struggled to find employment.

Those absorbed into prostitution rings were often released when they became ill from AIDS-related diseases. In most cases, they would return home to their grandparents to receive care, further stressing the grandparents whose welfare and living conditions were already exposed to the crisis. Caring for the orphans as AIDS patients exhausted the meagre resources and assets available to the elderly guardians.

20 percent of the 70 percent child mothers who had illegally crossed the border into South Africa experienced more rape situations. After getting some manual employment in South Africa and Botswana, they too were sexually abused by their employers but not in a coercive manner. Instead, the female orphans became abused through seeking some favours from their employers. One key way of them obtaining some favours (such as extra cash) from their employers was by offering free sexual services to their employers. In the process, they became pregnant. When they notified their employers that they were now pregnant, the employers reported their illegal migrant status to the police. The police came and bundled the young ladies into trucks for deportation without any attempt to understand the social circumstances surrounding the reports. The relatives of the orphans feared to approach the police on the matter to prevent their arrest for their illegal migrant status.

7.6.3 Truck Drivers

It was not unusual for the female orphans travelling between Hobodo and South Africa to make use of the transport provided by the truck drivers. These drivers were in the business of bringing groceries to Zimbabwe from neighbouring countries. Additionally, they received significant income by carrying people from and to Zimbabwe. This was a convenient mode of transport for the female orphans. The *malaichas*, as noted earlier, were tasked to transport the young ladies from Zimbabwe to South Africa for a fee, and they received payment from South African businessmen on the arrival of the female orphans. On the long journey to South Africa, the drivers made requests for sexual favours from the female orphans. At times, the drivers offered them small sums of money or stolen groceries like sanitary pads in exchange for sex. The truck drivers were renowned for their HIV-positive status and unsafe sexual practices (including multiple concurrent partners and non-usage of condoms). This

likewise exposed the raped orphans to the HIV virus. 10 percent of the 70 percent which had engaged in illegal border crossing indicated that it had been raped by truck drivers on the route to South Africa. All the child mothers unanimously agreed that situations of female orphans falling in love with truck drivers were rampant in their community. Some truck drivers regularly visited Hobodo and gave promises of free transport to South Africa for the young ladies. However, any romantic relations between the 2 would fall flat once the truck drivers discovered that the young women were pregnant. The particular driver caught up in the scandal would quickly depart and never return to Hobodo. Additionally, the contact details of the drivers possessed by the young ladies would be fraudulent; thus rendering the truck drivers untraceable. Repeated efforts by the female teenagers to report their cases to the police in Zimbabwe would be fruitless for the contact details of the truck drivers would be not known.

10 percent of the child mothers under study revealed that they had been tempted to sleep with the *malaichas* whom they accommodated them at their homestead in Hobodo. The drivers, when travelling to and from Hobodo, had no place to stay while carrying out their business. As such, they sought accommodation in the community. They paid for the accommodation in cash and groceries. The elderly guardians at times provided accommodation to the drivers as a sign of good gesture following the nice delivery of goods by the latter. The orphans became accustomed to the presence of the truck drivers. The drivers then capitalised on the loopholes in the regulation of the activities of the orphans by the elderly; and negotiated for sexual favours from the female teenage orphans. Again, unwanted pregnancies would arise, leading to feelings of betrayal on the part of the elderly. As the elderly Malunga expressed angrily:

> *I was kind to offer some accommodation to the stupid driver; only for him to impregnate my granddaughter* (September 2012).

It was generally assumed that the truck drivers were playing an important supportive role for the elderly guardians and other Hobodo residents by, for instance, transporting the remittances of South African-based family members to their stranded relatives back in Hobodo. However, the well-being of the female teenage orphans was being seriously damaged by the unintended outcomes of the uncontrolled movements and activities of the truck drivers in the Hobodo locality. The sexual activities between the truck drivers and the female teenage orphans escaped the control of the elderly guardians for they occurred secretly. One of the teenage mothers Thabiso said:

> *The man looked good. I loved him. He had promised to take me to South Africa and to stay with me as his wife. However, his attitude changed to be rude when he discovered that I was*

pregnant. He immediately disappeared while I was preparing to tell my grandmother (October 2012).

The 10 percent impregnated female teenage orphans were forced by these circumstances to abandon their high school education to raise their babies.

7.6.4 Cowboys and Local Employers

The child mothers under study knew some cases of some female orphans who were impregnated by the 'cowboys' who worked in the community. The cowboys included some Zimbabwean men who entered Botswana illegally but returned to Zimbabwe after failing to withstand the different forms of physical harassment like frequent beatings they experienced from the law enforcement agencies. The cowboys would engage in casual work along the Zimbabwe-Botswana border. The Hobodo community was situated along the border; and was one of the communities in which the cowboys settled temporarily. As victims of xenophobic persecutions across the border, they loitered around Hobodo in mapping strategies of a fresh return to Botswana.

One of their strategies was to hang around and herd cattle of Hobodo households (hence, the designation I give them as 'cowboys'). At times, their attachment to a particular household in Hobodo was based on contacts they had established with relatives of these households in Botswana. It was during the time of their local employment in the Hobodo community that they fell in love with the female teenagers. The mission of the cowboys was to obtain some cash to facilitate their return to Botswana, which could take as long as six months. The cowboys escape to Botswana after realising that their young female lovers were pregnant. In this sense, the impregnated female orphans were unable to trace the whereabouts of the cowboys. This highly stressed the elderly guardians who had no capacity to hold the employers (other households in Hobodo) accountable for the cowboys' abusive activities. They accepted the babies of the female teenagers out of social obligation.

Additionally, 20 percent of the child mothers under study became pregnant through the sexual abuse they suffered at the hands of employers in the city of Bulawayo which was about 243 kilometres away from Hobodo. The female teenagers looked for employment after finishing grade 7 (primary school) as their chances of going to Khalanyoni Secondary School were slim due to the serious financial constraints on the part of the elderly guardians. The orphans got employed as housemaids in Bulawayo. Some Hobodo young ladies who were already working in Bulawayo assisted them in securing the jobs. The employers in Bulawayo were married couples working in the city and requiring domestic help involving day-care for their children during mid week. Payment for the services rendered

by the orphaned domestic workers was exceedingly low. Recognising the precarious and fragile livelihood circumstances of the in-house workers, the husbands made some sexual advances towards the orphans. The men (employers) initiated some private love affairs with their housemaids (female orphans). The men would then pay the female orphans secretly in exchange for sex. When the female orphans fell pregnant due to unprotected sex, the orphans alerted their male employers who denied responsibility. The employers, in order to hide the evidence, advised the female orphans to resort to abortion. However the female teenage orphans found this to be a potential risk as it would entail a backyard abortion with possibly dire consequences to their lives. For fear of victimisation, the female orphans found it necessary to flee before the wives of their employers discovered the pregnancies.

After the departure of the pregnant orphans from their place of employment, the husbands (fathers of the orphans' impending babies) pressurised their wives to relocate to some accommodation far from the one known to the female orphans. This was conducted in a bid to escape fatherly responsibilities, troubles with their wives; and criminal charges for engaging in sex with minors. Later efforts by the orphans to track the men were fruitless. Eventually, the orphans were left alone to raise their babies. Luba a teenage mother related her experience with regards to her affair with her former employer in Bulawayo:

> *After he refused responsibility for my pregnancy, I thought of running away fearing that his wife would beat me up and I would gain nothing. I later asked a friend to talk to the man but the man was nowhere to be found* (October 2012).

The untraceable circumstances surrounding the former employers caused the burden of social care to fall on the ill-equipped elderly guardians in Hobodo. The elderly guardians of Luba found it necessary to locate the former employer of Luba in pursuit of some form of justice. However, their endeavour was severely crippled by their lack of resources to constantly travel between Hobodo and Bulawayo in pursuit of justice. In view of this, they sought the assistance of those in Bulawayo who had initially arranged the domestic work for their orphaned grandchild. However, efforts to locate the man were in vain. Consequently, the elderly guardians found their caring efforts eventually crushing under the weight of the rising demands for the social care of the multiplying orphans.

7.6.5 Reactions of the Elderly Guardians

The mounting crisis of the child mothers rested on the shoulders of the elderly guardians in Hobodo. The commitment of the elderly to the cause of the orphans was revealed by their responses to the crisis. However, the performance of the orphan care as an obligation meant that it was something

that they carried out of obligation; and not by choice. 84% of the elderly were against the involvement of the teenage orphans in border jumping activities. They revealed that the orphans engaged in the practice against their wishes by escaping from their Hobodo homesteads without prior notification. The female orphans usually joined the company of age mates already working abroad during their return from holidays. The elderly guardians only knew about the absence of the orphans during the evening when they failed to return home. The orphans would phone back home after some few days to inform their elderly guardians that they had left the country. This worsened the emotional stress of the guardians due to deep concern for the well-being of their grandchildren.

The elderly expressed deep concern about the problems that the female orphans would encounter in a foreign country such as South Africa. Concern for the security of the orphans was paramount as they knew that some orphans had reportedly died in South Africa; and some simply disappeared. For the orphans to leave the care of the elderly only to die mysteriously in South Africa was very disturbing to the resource-stricken guardians. The elderly bemoaned the desperate situation of the orphans in the neighbouring countries where they lived without adequate social and moral guidance.

The absence of moral guidance, the elderly claimed, was manifested in the numerous pregnancies arising through cross border activities, leading (in many cases) to the babies of the orphans being sent back to Hobodo to be cared for by the elderly without the necessary resources to bear the task. The elderly were thrust into the direct role of parenting. Firstly, the elderly cared for the parents of the child mothers; then they cared for the teenage mothers after the death of their parents. Thirdly, they were expected to care for the babies of the teenage orphans. The demands placed on the elderly were enormous. The elderly guardians revealed that many orphans eventually returned home at the peak of the HIV/related sicknesses. Thus at the peak of their illness, they returned home with nothing.

It was the elderly guardians who had to provide food, soap and other basic necessities in caring for the sick orphans as well as their fatherless babies. Any cash or in-kind remittances which their border-jumping orphans had supplied at month-ends (while working outside the country) would not compensate for the dire circumstances now facing the elderly. The current dilemma reversed the short-lived joys of the month-end groceries in the form of remittances. Therefore, the elderly thought it was best if the orphans could avoid engaging in border jumping activities, as it only yielded temporary benefits; and permanent stresses including the death of the orphans due to HIV-infections. The deaths of the teenage orphans would occur after the elderly would have sold many of their cattle and domestic assets to meet the sickness demands of the orphans such as the buying of medication. The orphans

would die leaving their babies behind. In this sense, the elderly would be in a more resource-stricken state with significant caring burdens on their shoulders

In addition to that, 84 percent of the elderly under study indicated that it was difficult to get the necessary registration documents like birth certificates for the babies as they were born outside the Zimbabwean borders. Their foreign birth made them to be not automatically considered for Zimbabwean citizenship. Consequently, the babies stayed without Zimbabwean identity cards. The recognition of the orphans as beneficiaries of the government welfare programmes was difficult. As an old man (Thangina) said in great dismay:

> *My grandchild came back from South Africa terribly sick and dying. I was compelled to sell all of my few beasts in trying to get her fine. She is now dead and my cattle are gone. The baby she left needs my attention; and I have nothing to raise the baby with. It was better if my granddaughter had just stayed here in the first place. I don't know how I will get a birth certificate for her baby since I don't have any information regarding the birth of the child* (September 2012).

Being in such a precarious situation, the elderly had nothing significant materially to rely on for relief; and they had no one to confide in regarding their mounding social worries.

16 percent of the elderly guardians understood all the pains which were being inflicted on them by the illegal border crossing of orphans under their custody. However, they were indifferent to the matter. They felt that border crossing was an inevitable survival mechanism undertaken by the orphans as, in Hobodo, there were severely limited avenues for them to make a living. These guardians appreciated the ability of the orphans to send groceries back to them at month'-ends. The admittedly miniscule remittances sent to the guardians by the female orphans (to care for their babies already back in Hobodo) did make some contribution to the capacity of the elderly to care for the orphans under their custody; and meeting some additional homestead expenses. These elderly were among the elderly guardians who were able to afford more than 1 decent meal per day). The guardians perceived the AIDS-related sickness of the orphans as inevitable. According to them, even if the orphans avoided the border jumping activities, they were susceptible to contracting the HIV/AIDS virus from the sexual offers of the truck drivers who roamed the community. Therefore, border jumping was the lesser of two evils so to speak, with this practice at least offering the opportunity (with risks) of pursuing livelihoods for the female orphans who otherwise would be simply loitering in Hobodo unproductively.

7.7 Familial Relations

In broadening the scope of the research, 44 orphans from the ward were placed under study: 19 purposively sampled from the households of the elderly under study; and 25 randomly picked throughout the ward. The 19 orphans represented 15 percent of the total number of the 130 orphans who were under the custody of the elderly under study. The choosing of 44 orphans was designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the practices of the elderly in the crisis. It was additionally done to explore and unpack the patterns of familial relations which bound the elderly and the orphans. Nevertheless, in focusing on the orphans, the study sought to have a more balanced portrayal of the crisis situation by not relying exclusively on the versions of the elderly guardians alone. The complex world of the orphans and the multifaceted problems they faced, were not fully identifiable through the narratives of the elderly guardians only. Moreover it became clear through focus on the orphans' perceptions that the familial relations between the two groups (orphans and the elderly guardians) were sometimes characterised by tensions.

55 % of the 44 orphans placed under study spoke about the serious trauma emanating from orphan-hood with which they were failing to cope with. The orphans were in some way tormented by the loss and memories of their deceased parents. Such memories usually became reinforced when their elderly guardians failed to obtain sufficient school fees for them and they were convinced that their parents would provide if the latter were alive. Instead of being politely informed about the unavailability of the money for educational expenses, some of the orphans claimed that their grandparents openly said:

> *We don't want to be given unnecessary troubles for nothing. Go and take the fees at your mothers' graves* (September 2012).

Their painful experiences were exacerbated by such seemingly verbal attacks from the elderly guardians. Other verbal abuses included being told to go back to their fathers (*magumaguma*) who impregnated their late mothers. These were orphans who were born out of the sexual abuses of their mothers by gangsters on the way to South Africa and Botswana. For this group, the lack of parental care following their own transportation from South Africa as babies haunted them, as their mothers had no time to be with them for many of them died there in South Africa and were brought home dead. As a result, their trauma rose as they saw some young children enjoying the company of their parents; while they battled to be contending with the inadequate material and emotional support from the elderly guardians.

Mbiisana, a 10-year old male orphan, expressed with tears trickling down his cheeks that his grandmother always shouted at him saying:

> *Your poor reasoning resembles that of wild animals in the jungles where you belong. Go and stay in the jungles where your parents slept together and you were born* (September 2012).

Such terrible utterances were lashed out at Mbiisana when he committed minor mistakes like forgetting to close the door of the kitchen after getting in from outside during cold evenings. In addition to that, what made the orphans deeply stressed was their discrimination with regards to many community programmes due to their lack of birth certificates. They could not proceed to high school for having birth certificates was a pre-requirement for entry. The means of obtaining a birth certificate involved considerable travels to the district offices in Plumtree town which their aged guardians could not bear due to financial constraints and decreasing physical fitness. In such moments of increasing demand for social care, the fragile bond between the elderly and the orphans succumbed to hidden disappointments on the part of both the elderly and the orphans towards each other.

A certain orphan from the research sample had both grandparents and both parents dead. Being the first born, he stayed with his younger siblings in his parents' home. He was deeply stressed with assuming the caring roles for his siblings at such an early age with much expectation for assistance from neighbours. Getting assistance all the time was difficult, for the neighbours had their own concerns to worry about. He was one of 2 orphans under study who headed a child-headed household. The 2 orphans formed part of the 30 percent of the orphans under study who were not going to school. The children from the child-headed households complained about being beaten by their neighbours when they refused to perform certain tasks. The neighbours took care of them at the request of the community leadership. Under the arrangement, the neighbours (guardians) were expected to report serious challenges regarding the children to the traditional leadership. In the end, the neighbours took advantage of the supervisory role delegated to them by the chief to abuse the children instead of giving them some social and emotional support. Overally, troubled relations existed for these orphans just as the situation was in the case of orphans being catered for by the elderly grandparents.

In addition to the stress emanating from the loss of parents, the orphans highlighted the strained social relations between them and their elderly guardians. The quest to survive as a household was bound to generate such strain. The expected mutual cooperation between the elderly and orphans in confronting the shared livelihood challenges was replaced by their embroilment in squabbles over who was responsible for the dilemma they were facing as a household. Both parties ended up pointing fingers at each other. The orphans alleged that they experienced frequent beatings from the elderly

guardians on no reasonable grounds. They sometimes became exposed to serious dangers after being chased out of the home in the night for losing cattle or goats while grazing them in the afternoon. Under such conditions, there was no one in the community to whom they could turn to for rescue. This caused them to feel dejected, isolated and insecure. At no stage, according to them, did anyone in the community (including the traditional leadership) bothered to investigate their well-being.

During the group interviews with the elderly, I raised these allegations as articulated by the orphans in order to get their side of the story. The elderly used this opportunity to express their disappointment with the misconduct of the orphans. The elderly guardians alleged that they found it difficult to socialise the orphans into the co-values and norms of the Hobodo community as the orphans were adamant in doing things their own way. The resistance of the orphans to follow the guidelines of the elderly resulted in considerable frustrations on the latter. The elderly further claimed that the waywardness of the orphans brought public disgrace on them. Besides the issue of premarital sex and unwanted pregnancies in the case of female orphans, other malicious practices of the orphans included the squandering of the money for school fees which the elderly would have given them to pay at school. In addition to that, the elderly cited the refusal of the orphans to carry out necessary domestic chores in the homesteads like the cleaning of dishes after meals. Instead, the orphans would stay at home watching televisions. In expressing her nasty experience with her difficult grandson, Mandazi said:

> *I am frequently told by my grandson to take the cattle to the river for them to drink some water; while he watches the television. I have never seen such misbehaviour of a grandchild who disrespects his granny like what my grandson is doing to me* (September 2012).

In spite of the stubbornness of the orphans, the elderly remained committed to their familial obligations. They devised various approaches of promoting the well-being of the orphans. One approach was spending time in the home assessing the needs of the orphans and providing them with emotional comfort; a point which 75 percent of the orphans also highlighted. Besides attending community ceremonies like funerals and rainmaking functions, the elderly stayed close to their homesteads as a sign of commitment to the orphans. Staying at home most of the time gave the elderly ample time to explore the hidden frustrations of the orphans. This reduced unnecessary confrontations between the 2 (elderly and orphans).

It was notable that some of the orphans were HIV-positive. I explored the impact of this on the guardian-orphan relationship. This debilitating health condition called for nuanced treatment and care. Sometimes the elderly were unable to provide this. It was during these moments of the failures of the

elderly to provide the necessary care demands that the HIV-positive orphans felt totally rejected by their guardians. During these moments, the guardians reached some far extents as to express openly to the orphans that they wished them (the orphans) dead so that they (the elderly) could have some rest. The expressions were a result of the fatigue and strain experienced by the guardians. In cases where some HIV positive orphans were not on HIV treatment, abnormal features appeared on their bodies which subjected them to social discrimination in the community. Some elderly guardians considered these orphans as mad and deranged because of being HIV-positive.

During the research, 40 percent of the orphans showed physical signs of ill-health. An additional 15 percent indicated that it experienced various pains in the body. Despite the criticisms made about the elderly pertaining to their care for the orphans, the orphans indicated that the guardians attended to their ailments. This included being given clinic-supplied medication by the elderly as well as the provision of traditional medicinal treatment. The traditional medicines were sometimes used as a substitute for industrially-made medicinse in cases where the price of purchasing medication was beyond the financial reach of the elderly. In this case, the elderly used their indigenous knowledge on herbs to respond to the needs of the orphans. The elderly had free access to the herbs in the bushes. The elderly guardians sought to ensure strict adherence to the HIV drug regimen of the orphans while trying to balance this with the homestead-based responsibilities.

For the child mothers, 65 percent revealed that they reported their psycho-social problems to the elderly guardians. On the other hand, 35 percent of the child mothers under study found it difficult to speak much about their problems to their elderly guardians. They indicated that they were embarrassed to raise their concerns. Furthermore, they did not want to burden their guardians with their personal concerns given the prevailing socio-economic challenges. There was no indication on their part that their guardians blocked them from presenting their problems. Rather, the orphans would decide to face their challenges headlong in spite of the availability of the elderly guardians. The orphans acknowledged the intense suffering of their elderly guardians as a result of trying to meet their multi-dimensional needs. Consequently, they thought it was best for them to devise some adaptive mechanisms. In this respect, Lihle (a teenage mother) expressed her sentiments with signs of a troubled soul in her voice:

> *My grandmother raised my mother. She went on to raise me. Now it's my child who needs to be cared for. She doesn't deserve another caring burden. I will care for my child for my grandmother is now exhausted and deserves some rest. It is better I die from the pressure of performing some piece-works than troubling my grandmother* (October 2012).

Based on this discussion, the elderly guardians experienced extreme difficulties in caring for the orphans; including strained relations with the orphans. In this dire situation, the elderly in Hobodo did not receive any significant support from external sources except from government. The elderly guardians unanimously agreed that they lacked a platform for voicing their social concerns to an audience beyond the local level. Any outside interventions tended to treat Hobodo as a homogenous community. The approach failed to target the specific and severe circumstances of the elderly and the orphans. Such generalised interventions failed to establish some significant social safety nets for the remote and crisis-prone Hobodo community. As with other rural communities across Zimbabwe, the elderly only saw politicians (policymakers) towards national elections when they visited Hobodo to campaign for votes. Thaziba, an elderly guardian in Hobodo expressed the general mood among the guardians:

> *We are no better than wild animals in the bush. No one bothers to come down to listen to our grievances and interests. They just give us what they think is right for us. They don't even bother coming down to observe our reactions. No one cares about the dilemma of the unfortunate individuals whose social situations are peculiar and calling for special attention (the AIDS orphans included)* (September 2012).

The non-recognition of the increasingly desperate situation in the Hobodo community highly disturbed the well-being of the orphans under the custody of the elderly. The elderly indicated that my fieldwork visits represented the most important presence of an outsider to Hobodo in many years. It gave them an opportunity to objectively express their peculiar community situation more resoundingly than ever before.

7.8 Conclusion

In summary, the toughness of the crisis situation in Hobodo correspondingly called upon the elderly to be more strategic and innovative in approaching their caring responsibilities. The need for the care of the elderly guardians increased with the worsening of the crisis. The intervention of the elderly sought to create a discord in the link between the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the increase of orphans. The elderly attempted to negatively influence the relationship by working towards changing the pathetic situation of the orphans. However, they found themselves being stress by the towering crisis which continuously challenged their inexperienced involvement in the provision of familial care to the orphans. Their efforts to contain the familial needs of the orphans were largely hampered by

their limited resource base. In this sense, the study successfully examined the manner in which the elderly guardians dealt with the orphans in the Hobodo community.

CHAPTER EIGHT:
CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

The study was carried out in the remote area of Hobodo some 143 kilometres from Plumtree town. The poor state of the rough and unpaved roads made the Hobodo locality inaccessible. The Hobodo ward largely possessed undeveloped infrastructure. The situation limited the success of the activities of aid agencies in the area. The thesis focused on the coping tactics of the elderly to crisis situations in the Hobodo ward. The investigations were carried out through the qualitative approach. The fieldwork research examined the research hypothesis in terms of the elderly's response to the needs of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The narrowing down of the subject to the needs of the orphans was done to make the research focused. Under a strictly focused approach, the study found out that there was an increase in the numbers of the HIV/AIDS orphans resulting from the death of parents in the Hobodo ward. When the female orphans grew into teenage stages, many of them migrated to neighbouring countries through border jumping. They got raped on the way and at workplaces. They gave birth to babies whom they would send back to Hobodo to their grandparents. Some ended up joining prostitution rings to make ends-meat after failing to get some employment in the neighbouring countries. All this was explored in terms of how it formed a die situation for the elderly and the manner in which they reacted in grappling with the situation. The male teenage orphans got injured or killed in the neighbouring countries due to xenophobic attacks and for engaging in various criminal activities. Some were killed by gangsters and crocodiles in the bushes and rivers along the boundary lines of Zimbabwe and the neighbouring countries. Under such circumstances, their bodies would be returned to Hobodo to be buried. The funeral costs were met by their grandparents. The study explored the various mechanisms which the elderly resorted to for facing the crisis. It was observed that the elderly largely depended on various livelihood activities like crop farming and livestock rearing. Collection of forest products and the use of wild medicinal plants were discovered among the elderly and the orphans. The philosophical and cultural bases of their coping mechanisms were explored to understand the nature of their coping activities. In addition to that, the place of the remittances and neighbourhood ties as well as social relations in the advancement of the familial roles of the elderly guardians was scrutinised.

8.2 Crop Farming

Mangwe district was characterised by dry climatic conditions. The dry climatic conditions impacted on the crop farming activities of the elderly guardians in the Hobodo ward. The elderly grew some drought resistant crops which served two-fold purposes: as food for the orphans and as cash cows for their basic needs. They resorted to the multi purposes crops because of the limited budgets and vast cultural experiences in the cultivation of the crops. Their inability to buy the pesticides for spraying some more pronounced commercial crops like cotton confined them to the growing of millet, rapoko and sorghum crops. The crops were less vulnerable to pest attacks which damaged the stalks or leaves. The main pest to the crops was the red billed quella bird which the Hobodo locality had culturally developed various effective tactics of dealing away with it. In the various tactics, the elderly guardians scared the birds away by making noise in the crop fields and sometimes sending the orphans to play noisily in the fields of corn. The elderly erected some scare crows in the fields of corn using their tattered clothes and sticks freely obtainable from the bushes of the ward.

In the night, the birds were caught in large numbers from the river and bush places. The free provision of such highly nutritious meat boosted the diet of the elderly and the orphans. In this way, the elderly preyed on the pests of their crops for food. So was the case in the event of the outbreak of locusts. They contained the locusts by catching them for the provision of food. The troublesome crickets in the fields of leguminous crops which included groundnuts and round nuts were dug out of the soil and eaten by the elderly and their orphans. The orphans as young as nine had the skill of tracking down the crickets from the underground using simple hoes and sticks from the local bushes. The traditional skills which the elderly possessed and their adapted approach to their surroundings helped them to sail through the unavailability of adequate food and the unaffordability of purchasing some of the basic commodities from the shops. From their little economic resources, the elderly could manage the maintenance of their simple tools like hoes and hand axes. The tools restricted them to subsistence farming in which they were viable in terms of providing for their household needs. In the years of good rains, the groundnuts and sorghum had some market out of the Hobodo locality. The presence of the government grain marketing board and some private buyers of the crops boosted their capacity through the injection of some cash into their household coffers. The cash defined their innovative skills in diversifying their needs over the variety of possessions at their disposal.

The low commercial value of the crops was a major setback in the elderly's efforts. In addition to that, the elderly collected the leaves of the pumpkin and the bean crops. The leaves provided some tasty traditional relish. The leaves could be cooked fresh from the fields. Alternatively, they dried the

leaves and stored them for future use. Likewise, the beans, groundnuts and roundnuts were dried for use during difficult times. In the above instances, the elderly managed their survival by devising some sustainable ways round the costly products in the shops. The diet of the HIV/AIDS orphans was kept balanced through the capacity of the elderly to relate their needs to the locally available resources. Thus the welfare of the orphans was kept within the confines of the elderly's vast indigenous knowledge. It is the vast knowledge of the elderly guardians which marked the benchmarks of redefining the pathetic situation of the orphans for the better within the socially defined boundaries of Hobodo. Thus the social life of the Hobodo communities circled around the above crops. In the thesis, it was established that the unmarried girls in Hobodo had the chance of hooking up with young unmarried men at the rocks where they waited in attendance during the grain processing alone. In this way, marriages were realised and families built. Thus the elderly devised the uptake of the orphans into the social structures of the community through the processing of the crops.

8.3 Livestock keeping

The study established the rearing of various domestic animals by the elderly. The animals included cattle, goats, sheep and donkeys. More so, poultry was also kept by the elderly. The breeds of the animals and poultry kept were the ones which possessed some cultural and familial significance. The elderly's choices on which breeds to keep were largely determined by the needs of the orphans under their custody. Under the determinants, the main considerations were: provision of food; provision of drafts power; high resistance to adverse conditions; and provision of manure.

The above factors were congruent with the elderly's increasing familial obligation of challenging their locality for the betterment of the living standards of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The toughness of their breeds cancelled out the repercussions of the dry climatic conditions and the unavailability of stock feeds. The dry grasses and leaves in the bushes maintained the livestock through dry seasons and droughts. In this way, the elderly got a survival option. They had the capacity to maintain the livestock with very minimal external support. On the contrary, the livestock breeds were of low commercial value. This provided a detrimental breeding space for chronic poverty. The little gains from the sale of the beasts and poultry could not adequately match the high costs of the needs of the orphans. Therefore, the elderly's creativity in facing the daunting familial obligation of caring for the orphans was on high demand.

8.4 Non mechanistic dimensions

In the thesis, it was noted that Mangwe communities possessed some non mechanistic components of facing their social challenges. This included their strong philosophical and cultural belief systems. The ancestral worship and the rainmaking ceremonies largely exploited the above mentioned crops. The rituals which determined the elderly's livelihoods were realised through beer brewing. Beer was also used for entertainment purposes in the local communities. The sorghum and millet were processed in to the traditional beer. Thus in the research site of Hobodo, the elderly's survival was sustainably anchored in their farming of grains. The cattle and goats were slaughtered to ordain the cultural rituals. The cultural values and philosophies offered an escape space for the elderly guardians whose innovative skills sometimes got stuck in the loopholes engraved in their livelihood sources like low marketability of their animals and crops. To them, subsistence farming was a way of social life rather than a commercial business. This expressed the continued existence of the elderly through various shocks. Their sound reliance on the cultural and philosophical spheres of the livelihoods helped them to operate beyond the level of the needs of the orphans. Most of the familial needs assumed the economic dimension due to the terribly shrunk Zimbabwean economy at the time. The broad coverage of the coping mechanisms of the elderly highlighted the impenetrability of the sustainable livelihood sources which formed the basis of the elderly's familial strength. The elderly's unwavering care for the orphans was rooted in the cultural beliefs defining the need for the continuity of the family unit. The flow of remittances from abroad to the elderly in Hobodo got expression in the children’s cultural roles of reciprocating the familial care provided by their elderly guardians.

8.5 Forest products

The low rainfall and high temperatures of Mangwe were bad for subsistence farming. However, they promoted the wildlife and the regeneration of bushes and grasses in the forest. In this respect, the Hobodo ward was rich in forest products. The limitations of the subsistence farming-related coping measures pushed the elderly and their orphans into the forests. Their encroachment on the forest products occurred under the auspices of adapting to the natural environment for survival. The elderly's vast experiences in staying side by side with the forests enabled them to engage in repeated observations on the uses of various forest products. In the thesis, the elderly collected Mupani worms, firewood and various wild vegetables and mushrooms. Some herbal and detergent grasses were discovered. This is just a small list of forest products which were covered by the fieldwork investigations. The broader mangwe scenario spelt out a lot of forest products which the local

communities (Hobodo) depended on for survival. The forest products grew side by side with some poisonous ones. The art of selecting the edible mushrooms from the poisonous was culturally acquired through the locally based indigenous knowledge systems of the Hobodo locality. So was the case with all the forest products. It was the elderly women and the female orphans who collected the mushrooms and wild vegetables. Related to that was the collection of firewood. The firewood was collected by women. The female teenage orphans reached out in the forests to gather the firewood in the company of their elderly grandmothers. Firewood defined some high cultural standards of feminity. The moral standards of young ladies and their marriageability were embedded in the collection of firewood.

The settling-in of a newly married lady into her brides' family as well as the rise of her status in the family revolved around her involvement in the collection of firewood. The capacity development of the female orphans was measured by their performance in the collection of the forests products above. Sociologically the collection and management of the products in the home embedded some gender roles. It was the duty of the women to manage the products right from their collection in the bushes up to their use in the home. The elderly had such expertise which they passed down to the orphans under their custody through socialisation. The two groups sought refuge in the forest products by way of maintaining them sustainably through the employment of unharmful collection techniques. The good collection techniques ensured the continued presence of the natural resources and the improved welfare of the elderly and the orphans. In this case, sustainability was denoted by the ability of the elderly to create a free social atmosphere which simultaneously promoted their interests and those of the wildlife in a mutually beneficial manner. The balancing of costs and benefits in the exploitation of forests within the confines of pure social practices reflected the sustainable livelihoods framework. Some of the social practices included the burying of the dead bodies on anthills in the forests. The insects and animals fed on the bodies. The elderly and the orphans then encroached on the forests to feed on the insects and the animals. A typical example was the collection of termites from the anthills. More so, the anthill soil was used as fertiliser in the crop fields of the chronically rural poor elderly guardians.

Another striking social feature of the rural technologies which regulated the livelihood sources of the elderly in the context of the forests circled around open defecation. 60 percent of the inhabitants of the rural communities of Mangwe practised open defecation. The group largely comprised the chronically poor who could not afford to buy the material for building some toilets. Among the group were the rural elderly guardians who took care of the HIV/AIDS orphans in Mangwe district. Some of the forest products which they relied on for survival fed on the human waste. Different birds and small

animals comprised the group. The forests were kept clean by the animals. More so, the chickens and the goats of the rural poor elderly guardians fed on the waste deposited in the bushes closer to the homesteads. The purpose of keeping their poultry under the free range system was to enable them to have access to the waste in the bushes. This sustained their poultry keeping activities under their tightly constrained economic situations. The practice highly hedged them from the buying of poultry feeds from the shops. In this way, their welfare and that of the orphans under their custody was safeguarded. The logic explains the ineffectiveness of the sanitation programmes carried out by some NGOs like the World Vision International in Mangwe district. The sanitation programmes did not receive the much anticipated support from the local communities because the building of toilets starved their chickens and also disturbed the ecosystem in the bushes. The conflicting interests between the livelihoods of the local communities and the externally driven development explained the chronic poverty of the elderly guardians who were placed under study in the Hobodo ward.

8.6 Other activities

The elderly guardians diversified their coping mechanisms in order to sail through various kinds of hardships. The other activities which the elderly depended on included crafts and brick moulding. In the research sample, the activities recorded 34 percent and 4 percent respectively. Knitting recorded 2 percent, gardening 40 percent, selling grass thatch 2 percent and piece jobs 25 percent. The activities were resorted to in accordance with a specific need at a particular season of the year. Brick moulding and knitting served to keep the elderly going through the dry season while most of the activities were viable during the rainy season. The individualistic nature of knitting served to cancel out the weaknesses of most of the activities which were carried out through teamwork. Being done by women, knitting reflected the overriding familial creativity of the elderly women over the male guardians. While the men favoured teamwork, the more suitability of the female elderly guardians to the familial obligations was philosophically expressed by their ability to employ some solo approaches which proved socially effective. The scenario showed the balance and the multiplicity of the opportunities provided for the coining of social links among the elderly guardians. The multiplicity of the coping avenues acted as a social mechanism of regulating clashes which could erupt if the options were too limited due to conflicting interests among the elderly guardians. The social conditions created a flexible and conducive atmosphere for the orphans to learn some new skills from their elderly guardians.

Apart from that, their lack of life skills training at school due to financial constraints and their incompletion of education schemes were compensated for when they engaged in the activities under the tutelage of their elderly guardians. The elderly's tutelage served to simultaneously impart the cultural values of the community to the orphans. Some important training benefits were in form of the gender roles and identity culturally expected on the orphans by the community. Through knitting, the female orphans were socially trained to innovatively respond to the clothing needs of the family. The involvement of the male orphans in fencing gardens and brick moulding culturally prepared them for the hard tasks of providing for the family. Furthermore, the activities enabled the elderly guardians to train the orphans to be versatile and dynamic in adapting to changing social circumstances. The elderly's lessons kept the orphans socially linked to the elderly as they travelled to neighbouring countries in search of greener pastures. It was the social bond between the two parties which provided the passage for the movement of remittances to the elderly in Hobodo from abroad. The remittances derived their cultural significance from the social relations which emerged between the different households as they engaged in the activities. Thus the supportive mechanisms of the two parties were socially kept reciprocal and efficiently responsive to the familial demands of the crisis situation in the Hobodo locality.

8.7 Economic collapse

The immediate event which sparked the need for conducting some investigations on the coping mechanisms of the elderly guardians was the terrible contraction of the Zimbabwean economy in the year 2000. The contraction highly disturbed the livelihood sources of the elderly which had a direct link with the economic base. Prior to the economic contraction, the elderly and the HIV/AIDS orphans incurred some hardships but they were not so huge to attract high scientific observation. The terrible contraction of the Zimbabwean economy left the elderly and the orphans desperate. In the year 2002, the economy eventually collapsed under the weight of several factors which ranged from political to economic. The grain handouts which the elderly and the orphans received from government became very sporadic up until they dried up. The severe erosion of the local currency nullified the role of the public assistance grant together with other Social welfare programmes which previously benefited the rural elderly. They all got wiped out as the economic woes heightened. For a full account of the events which brought about the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy, please refer to the full thesis chapter on the decreased livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The economic collapse was directly sensitised by the sustainable livelihoods structures which anchored the elderly and the orphans. The study traced the

developments with special regards to how the elderly copied to the crisis in responding to the rising need of the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans.

In the thesis, it was noted that the teachers embarked on long strike actions and some ran away from political torture at rural schools. The schools literally became closed for no serious business took place in the absence of teachers. At the same time, the inaccessibility of the basic commodities like food and sanitary wear for the female teenage orphans increased. All the problems combined to stimulate the elderly and the orphans into acting in some new behavioural patterns in a bid to secure some survival means. This was the very aspect of the whole saga which the study set out to explore. The female teenage orphans engaged in border jumping where they were raped and impregnated with the HIV/AIDS disease being spread to them. Some got babies through prostitution and premarital sex with some truck drivers and male teenagers. The male teenage orphans got killed in neighbouring countries and some got wounded as they devise some survival techniques. All these brought multivariate costs to the elderly. 84 percent of the elderly placed under study confessed their frustration with the border jumping activities. The instinct-driven capacity of animals to resist threatening situations prompted the resource stricken elderly guardians to devise some ways of handling the social challenges. Through the social links and neighbourhood ties, they received the much needed support for the orphans. Various community based groupings helped to sort out their psycho social challenges. Through the economic capital, the remittances send by relatives abroad helped them to care for the orphans.

The effectiveness of the remittances weakened their position in blocking the teenage orphans from joining the detrimental border jumping activities. Because most of the relatives sending the remittances were illegal immigrants in the neighbouring countries, the remittances were routed to Hobodo through some informal channels. Of all the informal channel components, the truck drivers (Njiva) had access to the Hobodo community where the elderly guardians resided. The truck drivers' presence in the locality had some bad outcomes on the female teenage orphans. The terrible socio economic circumstances forced the female orphans to get involved in love affairs with the truck drivers. In this way, most of the orphans contracted the HIV/AIDS disease. Despite being not directly involved in the dirty events, the elderly guardians occupied the receiving end of all the activities. The uncontrolled movements of people in and out of the Hobodo ward had a negative effect of increasing the care of the orphans by the elderly. Consequently, this stuck the elderly in chronic poverty. As the sustainable livelihoods structures struggled to find some new ground, way out of the operational zones

of the economic rubbles, the teenage orphans fell casualty. They got raped, killed and robbed of their belongings as explained in the chapter on the decreased livelihoods in Zimbabwe.

The remittances from the neighbouring countries were a promising sign of some hope. However, the remittances had to undergo the long process of adaptivity. They had to adjust to the social structures of the Hobodo locality in a manner which was agreeable with the set cultural and social standards of the locality. The process would then certify them as sustainable rural livelihoods of the chronically poor like the elderly. The generation of many orphans was one huge unintended social outcome of the process of the restructuring and realignment of the Hobodo locality to some newly founded sources of survival. This entailed a reshuffling of the organisational component structures of the Hobodo ward. The above occurred within the contraction and the expansion of the community structures like culture. Within the processes, the emergence of some social gaps was abused by truck drivers and other parties to the detriment of the economically fragile teenage ladies. Just as chemical reactions in the processing of iron ore in the blast furnace occurred under very high heating conditions, the social processes within the Hobodo community were taking place under a tense and unbearable social situation. Within the above philosophical theorisation of the Hobodo social circumstances, the study specifically set out to explore the various mechanisms in which the rural elderly adjusted to the critical situation. For the study to be in-depth and focused, the responsive mechanisms of the elderly to the welfare cause of the HIV/AIDS orphans were placed under scientific observation.

8.8 Methodological layout

The methodological basis of the research was embedded in the qualitative approach to scientific inquiry on inanimate subjects. The qualitative framework embodied the philosophical requirements needed for the employment of the sustainable livelihoods framework in operationalising the research. The operational exercise resulted in the unpacking of the coping mechanisms of the elderly guardians which existed in an abstract form. The philosophical make up of the qualitative paradigm detected the value components of the responsive approaches of the elderly. More so, it was the qualitative approach which comprised the case study model which specifically confined the study focus to the Hobodo ward. This allowed the conducting of an in-depth study. The case study model accommodated the precise inclusion of the sustainable livelihoods theory which was area-sensitive in its quest to scientifically extract the obscure coping techniques of the elderly in the Hobodo ward. The scientific operations of deducing the solid facts on the elderly's responses to the crisis were engineered by the specificity bias in the investigations. The bias was produced by the mutual combination of the case study and the

sustainable livelihoods components. The specificity bias brought with it aspects of clarity and exact identification of the subject under scientific scrutiny. The need for clarity and exact subject identification coupled with the scientifically biased inquiry approach combined to produce some conditions conducive for the introduction of a catch worm to enable the fishing out of the targeted vague coping traits of the chronically poor rural elderly in Hobodo. In the research, the HIV/AIDS orphans were introduced as the catch worm. The case study model brought about the measurability and the agreeability of different variables in producing a research conducive context. Various sampling and data collection techniques were used in the research to cancel out some detrimental bias in the extraction of the data. These included random sampling, interviews, questionnaires and observations. The triangulation of various research tools reduced the margins of error. The margins of error were directly related to detrimental bias. For a detailed account on this, please refer to the full thesis chapter on the research design.

8.9 Theoretical insights

The sustainable livelihoods framework was introduced to facilitate the hypothetical deduction of the philosophically grounded survival strategies of the elderly in the crisis situation of Hobodo. The crisis presented the elderly with a highly challenging scenario which provoked them to devise some new survival techniques for capturing the needs of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The devising mentality of the elderly found expression in the sustainable livelihoods framework. Under the guidance of the framework, the research sought to appreciate the structuring of the household unit under the supervision of the chronically poor rural elderly. The elderly relied on their varying forms of property which included their capabilities, material assets, social relations and neighbourhood ties and natural resources. Remittances also formed the category. The success of the elderly's coping mechanisms did not exist in a deterministic state. Rather, it was characterised by power dynamics and varying economic and social institutions which characterised property ownership. the trade-offs, contestations and negotiations combined produced some forces which continuously reshaped the grip of the orphans' needs by the elderly in the crisis situation. The prostitution activities by the female teenage orphans increased the numbers of the orphans and their chances of being victimised by the HIV/AIDS scourge. This impinged on the elderly's efforts to decrease the familial care demands. The use of the sustainable livelihoods framework sought to break through the complexities in pursuit of the elderly's capabilities.

In this respect, the sustainable livelihoods framework was adopted as a relevant perspective to extract the philosophically shaped coping tactics of the elderly guardians in the Hobodo ward. The framework provided the economic, natural and the social lenses of exploring the coping tactics of the elderly. The philosophical structure of the perspective was sensitive to the cultural values and social actions of the elderly. The framework highly matched with the economically fragile position and the miserable living conditions of the elderly. The elderly's ability to devise some options for the unavailability of decent accommodation pointed to their creativity. In the fieldwork, it was established that all the elderly guardians placed under investigation skipped the preparation of decent lunches for accommodating the absence of the orphans in the afternoons. Their ability to implement some rationing techniques in the little food they had for themselves and the orphans under their custody largely reflected a community biased capacity to operate within its means. The strategy was born out of the innovativeness and the familial concern of the elderly guardians. Much of the accommodation of the elderly comprised some dagga huts. These were built out of locally obtainable wood and grass-thatch. The effectiveness of the improvised tactic in sheltering them and the orphans borrowed some major philosophical qualities of the sustainable livelihoods framework.

The elderly's involvement in the cutting and storage of the grass-thatch for future use in times of need depicted their overriding control over the locally grounded dry spells like drought situations. The inconsistence of the rains also affected their food reserves which largely came out of the forests and from subsistence farming. On the other hand, the mounding of the familial needs of the orphans was consistent. It did not take into account the irregularities of the chief independent variable (rain) which determined the viability of the livelihood sources of the elderly guardians. The growing of relatively less perishable grain crops helped to counter the inconsistence of crop harvests. The elderly's matching of their nutritional needs to the leaves of their bean crops and various wild grasses (vegetables) defined their adapted knowledge to their locality. The sustainable livelihoods framework reflected the elderly's versatile tactics of weaving their way through the difficult circumstances. The tactics were embedded in the storage of the grass thatch, bean leaves and the less perishable grain crops. In spite of the unavailability of enough food to meet their requirements and that of the orphans, they had poultry and livestock under their care. The sustainable livelihoods framework provided the route into the unknown levels to scientifically explore the means by which the elderly sustained their poultry and livestock rearing activities with strictly limited material resources at their disposal. The diversification of the livelihood sources was meant to position their survival approaches within the dynamism of the institutions which governed their livelihoods.

The competing survival interests of the elderly with those of other social groups localised within the Hobodo locality caused the institutions to be continuously reshaped from time to time. Rooted in the property sphere, the elderly's capabilities and adaptive skills possessed some value and symbolic expressions. These caused the capabilities to be none fixed. The non fixed/bounded state of the institutions required the continuous process of negotiation. It is within the negotiation process that the study sought to find out the activities and strategies through which the elderly influenced the process to favour their familial obligations. The keeping of the livestock and poultry by the elderly under the free range system was calculated to expose them to freely accessible food resources. Various bushes, insects and grasses supplied food to their livestock and poultry. Their chickens and goats gained access to the human waste deposited in the bushes through the open defecation practices in the ward. Within this assertion, their concentration on growing cereals also covered the fees demands of their poultry when they fed them with the waste products of the crops after grain processing. The making of livestock pens out of forest wood and the poultry accommodation out of the local rock deeply lay in their adaptive capabilities. This served to illustrate their self designed means of managing their livestock. The study discovered 5 percent of the elderly who lived at the mercy of their siblings and kin. These included the female returnees who could not withstand intense suffering at their homes of procreation. Their performance of piece jobs in augmenting the help from kin reflected their exploitation of social capital.

The elderly widows' instincts were challenged to overturn their socially created forms of decreasing physical fitness in facing the familial demands of the orphans under their custody. Their adoption of a more passive approach in avoiding the aggressive calls for the redistribution of the family land was embedded in their in-built capacity to weigh the costs and benefits of demanding primary access to the family land. Their submissive approach managed to pick out some hidden support opportunities from their brothers. In this way, their coping mechanism cancelled out the vulnerability and exclusion which they used to experience at their former marital homes together with the orphans under their custody. Rather, the elderly widows became accommodated and their self esteem and security were boosted which accurately spelt out the sustainable livelihoods meaning. The widows' non aggressive approach transformed the patriarchal community structures to being sensitive to the well-being of the orphans under their custody and also their cause for survival. In this way, the centrality of the familial care provision for the HIV/AIDS orphans happening at the marginal social spheres of the Hobodo locality found expression in the sustainable livelihoods approach. The flexibility of the institutions of a social system which forms the core of the sustainable livelihoods approach to scientific observation was realised through the survival initiative of the elderly widows.

The elderly's activities above became sustainably robust and durable in cementing the adaptivity and guaranteed well-being of the orphans in the Hobodo ward.

As clearly denoted by the area specific and the disaster specific nature of the livelihood components, the livelihood sources largely assumed the fluid form. The fluid form subjected them to much controversy and inapplicability to certain shocks and stresses. This then resulted in the need for a process of weighing and the evaluation of the drafted means in assessing its suitability to a particular crisis. The sustainable livelihoods framework explained the capacity of the Hobodo elderly to mutually mix up the economic, social and natural forms of capital in coining a user-friendly social atmosphere which sensitised their remote and peculiar needs in the familial care provision. Apart from that, the gender and age roles were redefined by the elderly' strategic positioning in limiting the influence of the crisis. 16 percent of the elderly guardians placed under study were active in the domestic sphere which was culturally reserved for women. The need to care for the orphans led them into assuming the womanly roles in the home due to the death of their wives. The teenage orphans engaged in various wage activities within the Zimbabwean borders and abroad at a time when they were supposed to be undergoing social training through education and various institutions; the teenagers found themselves desperately fending for their survival. The changes in gender and age roles found expression in the innovative and coping components of the sustainable livelihoods framework.

8.10 Preferrability of the theory

With regards to expressing the Hobodo scenario, the sustainable livelihoods framework managed to go beyond the limitations of the mainstream sociological theories like functionalism of Talcott Parsons (1955). The functionalist perspective could not explain the phenomenon of communities which were in a state of collapse like Hobodo. It mainly explained the stability and the operations of a properly running community. In its definition, it likened the community to the human body; with different structural components of the community being likened to different parts of body which mutually worked towards the achievement of a common goal. The explanation could not fit into the chaotic situation of Hobodo in which almost all components were placed under siege by the HIV/AIDS crisis. The livelihoods framework became a sign of hope for it managed to pick out some uncorrupted social element (elderly) whose coping activities could be reliably studied to appreciate social progress in the community. It is one philosophical assertion which entirely focused on the behavioural dynamics of the Hobodo community in the release of some crisis-sensitive mechanisms. On the other hand, the sustainable livelihoods framework through its particular consideration of the

skills of the chronically rural poor managed to detect the hidden capacity of the elderly to save the die situation.

The dimensions which presented the familial roles of the elderly were so marginalised; way out of the coverage of the parent sociological paradigms. The only scientific model which reached out to such extremely marginal points of the Hobodo community was the sustainable livelihoods framework. Thus it offered a unique face to sociological inquiry. The severe discrimination and marginalisation of the weaker social groups (chronically rural poor) result in their visibility and their activities being criminalised in the community. Prostitution, border jumping and the transfer of money through informal means were some of the criminal activities of the rural poor established in the Hobodo ward. The framework was employed to enhance the penetration of the tough marginal points of the Hobodo community. A 100 percent response from the research subjects reflecting the non scientific coverage of their concerns peculiar to Hobodo was a typical indicator in the uniqueness of the sensitivity of the framework to disaster management among the poor. Thus the framework was more conveniently placed to operationalise the study than other scientific sociological schools of thought.

The framework's more relevant position to the study could also be illustrated by way of contrasting it with the Marxist perspective. Just like the sustainable livelihoods framework, the Marxist theory focused on struggles of the oppressed and less privileged social groups. According to Marxism, all the activities of individuals in the community were motivated by self based material gains. Under crisis situations, the shared economic interest to survive among the oppressed (poor) aroused their instinct-built power of agency to destroy the oppressive system in a joint force in restoring equality in the community. This was believed to characterise the nature of the struggles of the poor (elderly guardians) for survival. Positioning the theory in the Hobodo context, the elderly guardians were too weak to organise themselves into carrying out a forceful overthrowing mass action against the state which was shrinking their livelihood sources due to the mismanagement of the economy. The elderly's incapacity to organise themselves was mainly due to decreasing physical fitness yet their quest for survival sharply rose due to the increasing familial demands for the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans. Their situation found the best explanation in the sustainable livelihoods framework which recognised their non political means to coining some survival tactics within their locality and under minimal external contributions. The elderly's involvement in familial care provision for the orphans was not economically bound but welfare based as expressed in the sustainable livelihoods framework.

8.11 Key thesis arguments

The study clearly illustrated the continued significance of the elderly in the maintenance of the social fabric of the Hobodo community. This was a marked digression from the classical ageing theories which portrayed the elderly as miserable individuals helpless and confined to the home in preparation for death. Their involvement in the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans reflected the significance of the marginal social positions which they occupied with regards to the overall balancing of the community. The examination of the hidden social activities which occurred in the community was scientifically unveiled through the investigation of a crisis. The following points are relevant:

- The ability of the elderly to contextualise the crisis into their Hobodo locality served to illustrate the relativism of social phenomenon. The defining parameters of the HIV/AIDS crisis were determined by the physical and social context of the Hobodo ward. In this respect, the coping capacity of a community to an infrequent and threatening situation was taken to largely depend on its ability to redefine the event within its structural boundaries.
- The indigenous communities of Africa largely made a living out of the subsistence activities which were conducive to their geographical and environmental surroundings. This was portrayed by the exploitation of forests, firewood and various edible insects in different local communities of Africa referenced in the thesis.
- The resilience of the Hobodo locality was strongly reflected by the elderly's reliance on the cultural and value based components of their social structures. This formed the main distinguishing characteristic of the home-grown trends of coping to shocks. It was this indigenous knowledge which laid out the foundations of the rural technologies employed by the local communities to counter the force of the crises. In The Hobodo ward, the receipt of some remittances from neighbouring countries was mainly defined by the nature of the social relations which existed between the sending parties abroad and the receiving grannies in Hobodo. The cultural belief that failure to send some remittances home could bring serious bad omen forced the working individuals in South Africa and Botswana to send the groceries and cash remittances to Hobodo at any costs. It was these remittances which provided an escape route for the orphans and the elderly guardians to sail through the crisis situation. The strengths of the Hobodo active individuals were sustainably exploited by the weaker orphans through the well established community structures of Hobodo. Thus non conflicting means element was introduced as a defining element of sustainable livelihoods framework.

- The duty of caring for the weaker social groups was taken to be community based. This was reflected by the offering of some piece jobs to the elderly guardians of the orphans through neighbourhood ties in the Hobodo ward. The simplification of the piece jobs to be compatible with the decreasing physical fitness of the elderly guardians was meant to provide some contribution towards the familial welfare of the households which accommodated the orphans in the Hobodo locality.
- Chronic poverty and underdevelopment formed an integral component of the local communities. In the Mangwe district (Hobodo included), domestic livestock was kept under the free range system. This exposed the crop fields and vegetable gardens at risk. However, the free range system enabled the animals to look for their own food in the bushes. The poultry was also kept under free range and benefited from human waste deposited in the surroundings of homesteads through open defecation. This served the costs of buying some livestock feeds on the part of the rural poor elderly guardians. The elderly's livestock and poultry were of low commercial value. The elderly concentrated on the tough beasts for they were highly adapted to the Hobodo bad climatic conditions. The elderly also grew crops of low commercial value like millet, sorghum and roundnuts. Their choice of the breeds of livestock and poultry and varieties of crops were largely determined by the contribution of the crops and livestock towards the performance of various cultural rituals and social functions. For this reason goats though lowly commercial, were very popular and common in Hobodo and other referenced local communities in the thesis. The goats were widely used in different cultural and traditional ceremonies. This kept the elderly poor for the goats had a limited market and fetched small cash which did not match the mounding familial needs of the orphans.
- The collapse of the Zimbabwean economy hard hit the elderly. It dried up the little support they previously enjoyed from the social safety nets of the state thereby making their social position more exposed.
- The shaky structure of the state institution and its handicap in tackling new threats got exposed in the HIV/AIDS crisis thereby centralising the elderly in the performance of the familial care roles. Thus the need for the re organisation of the resource distribution in favour of the social significance of the marginalised (elderly) was denoted. The need for the discovery of some new home-grown approaches to solving crisis situations was brought under spotlight.

8.12 Gaps of data for further inquiry

The research was carried out for academic purposes. Being so, it was tightly narrowed down to specifically detect the coping of the elderly. Such confinement left some grey areas needing more inquiry:

- The gravity of the HIV/AIDS orphans crisis needed some more investigation. Its multi-faceted dimensions were not fully exposed for the examination of the crisis was done within specifically defined case study boundaries. In this respect, the crisis was explored in order to shade light on the responsive mechanisms of the elderly. Thus the research did not fully examine all the spheres of the crisis. A full appreciation of the structure and spread of the HIV/AIDS scourge could potentially reflect the general attacking trend of many crises on the social structures of the Hobodo locality.
- Various sources of indigenous knowledge and local resources were used by the elderly in shielding themselves and the orphans from the crisis situation. The availability and the sustainability of the resources were not deeply explored. Likewise, the testability of the local knowledge in terms of its effectiveness in addressing desperate community situations was not adequately subjected to empirical verification. The structure of the study only allowed the examination of the knowledge in the instances where the elderly in the Hobodo ward exploited it in their particular situation.
- The unavailability of decent sanitary facilities in the Hobodo ward was reflected as playing a pivotal role in the elderly's coping techniques. This was part of the major defining components of chronic poverty among the rural elderly of Hobodo. The elderly's adaptation to the poor conditions was shown. However, a deep investigation on the mismatch of the developmental definitions of poverty and their decent rural living standards in Hobodo was not done. The research only covered the essential elements of chronic poverty which the elderly exploited to their own good.
- An examination of the extent to which other social units within the Hobodo locality cared for the orphans was not investigated. This largely depended on the confinement of the study to the elderly guardians. However, an assessment of the involvement of other social units could accurately measure the security levels of the Hobodo locality in the crisis.

8.13 Conclusion

The study investigated the survival of the elderly and the HIV/AIDS orphans in the stressed Zimbabwean economy from the year 2000. The fieldwork of the research was contextualised in the Hobodo ward of Mangwe rural district. The coping mechanisms of the elderly were explored in line

with the rising familial care demands of the HIV/AIDS orphans. The lack of adequate government intervention and the non availability of NGOs in the Hobodo locality left the caring burden weighing heavily on the elderly. The desperate situation forced the orphans into many criminal activities like prostitution and border jumping in search of some survival means. This worsened the crisis. The costs of the death of the orphans and their contraction of the HIV/AIDS disease including teenage pregnancies and the unplanned birth of babies by the teenage orphans fell into the hands of the elderly. The school dropouts due to economic constraints and the nursing of the injured border jumping returnees were handled by the elderly guardians. The increasing volume of social problems redefined the Hobodo locality in ways which had never been experienced before. The elderly's lack of adequate knowhow on their new familial obligations and their resource stricken state caused them to resort to the local resources and indigenous knowledge systems in handling the crisis situation. For this reason, the sustainable livelihoods framework was employed to appreciate the elderly's social position and familial capabilities in the die social situation. The framework possessed the necessary properties needed to detect the sociological dimensions of the study. The qualitative paradigm was employed to extract the philosophically dimensional patterns of the elderly's coping techniques. The paradigm captured the socio cultural atmosphere which housed the crisis in the Hobodo locality. The case study model was used to inject the scientific procedures into the research. The case study model caused the fieldwork findings to be credible and verifiable. The model made the investigations deep and specifically focused on the elderly guardians. The use of the various data collection techniques and sampling methods reduced the margins of error and bias on the fieldwork findings.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire for the elderly

1. How many orphans do you have under your custody?

2. How many are going to school?

3. How many are not going to school and why?

4. How many decent meals do you have per day?

5. Are you able to adequately provide for your needs on your own.

6. What other sources of assistance do you have from NGOs?

(a) Is it adequate /poor?

7. What assistance do you get from government?

(a) Is it adequate /poor?

8. On the below items, Can you rate your accessibility to basic needs of life in terms of excellent/good/poor/non-existent

A. Decent shelter
B. Adequate food
C. Assets entitlement
D. Livestock rearing conditions
E. Crop farming conditions
F. reliability of the two above
G. Platform for voicing concerns.

9. What other forms of livelihood do you have?

(a)
(b)
(c)
(d)
(e)
(f)
(g)
(h)
(i)
(j)

10. To what extent do these meet your needs? greater/lesser

11. Do you enjoy looking after orphans in your old age? Yes/no

Yes: why?

No: why?

12. Do you support the border jumping activities by the teenage orphans? yes/no

13. Do you see the increasing need for the care of the HIV/AIDS orphans being solved in the near future? Yes/no

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Orphans

1. Whom are you staying with?
2. How regularly is the guardian available in the home?
3. Have you ever been sexually abused? Yes/no
4. Are you going to school? Yes/no
5. If no, why?
6. What do you like most which is done to you by your guardians?
7. What do you dislike most which is done to you by your guardians?
8. Do you have anything that you lost rights to following the death of parents?
9. Is there something that is stressful which you are failing to solve in your life?
10. How many decent meals do you have per day?
11. Do you sometimes have pains in your body?
12. How are you assisted by your guardians to reduce the pain?
13. Do you have adequate clothing and shelter?
14. What basic need of life do you lack?
15. Do you have any hopes for the future? Yes/no
16. What is the government doing for your survival?

Appendix C: Questionnaire for child mothers

1. Who is taking care of you?
2. How many children do you have?
3. What are the psycho social problems and abuses that you encounter?
4. Do you report them to your guardian? Yes/no

(a) If no, why?

5. Have you ever crossed the border to neighbouring countries? Yes/no

(a) Through which means? Border jumping/legal entry

6. Were you ever sexually harassed either during border crossing or in the neighbouring countries? Yes/no
7. What was the result of the sexual harassment?
8. How did you bring your babies back home?
9. What are you surviving on together with your babies?