RURAL LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN FORMER BANTUSTANS OF POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF CALA, EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE

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This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, Ginnety, who did not only raise and nurture me but was a source of inspiration and encouragement especially in times of hopelessness. I will forever cherish her motherly care and support.

ABSTRACT

Communal areas in contemporary South Africa (that is, the former Bantustans of apartheid South Africa) continue to bear and endure, albeit in new forms, socio-economic and political vulnerabilities which are negatively affecting household livelihoods. Current studies on rural livelihoods have failed to keep pace in exploring and analysing the lived experiences and ever-changing challenges faced by these rural households. This thesis provides an understanding and explanation of the livelihood activities of specifically *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households in the former Transkei Bantustan, with a specific focus on villages in Cala. This is framed analytically by feminist theories with their emphasis on systems of patriarchy and by a rural livelihoods framework. It uses a multiplicity of research methods, including focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, life histories and survey questionnaires.

The major findings of the thesis show that the female-headed households in Cala depend upon agricultural-based activities and non-agriculturally-based activities and income (including social grants) but that they exist under conditions of extreme vulnerability which are subject to fluctuation. In the end, the livelihoods of female-headed households are precarious and unstable as they live under circumstances of poverty. However, the female heads are not mere passive victims of the rural crisis in post-apartheid South Africa, as they demonstrate qualities of ingenuity and resourcefulness including through a range of coping mechanisms. At the same time, rural communities continue to be marked by patriarchal norms and practices, including systems of chieftainship, which disempower women (including female heads), though this affects *de jure* heads and *de facto* heads differently.

The thesis contributes to an understanding of rural livelihoods in communal areas (or former Bantustans) of present-day South Africa by way of 'thick descriptions' of the everyday lives of female heads in Cala. Further, in examining rural livelihoods, it highlights the importance of bringing to bear on the livelihoods framework a feminist perspective in pinpointing the additional livelihood burdens carried by rural women.

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
ARV	Antiretroviral
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative-South Africa
CALUSA	Cala University Students Association
CASE	Community Agency for Social Enquiry
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSG	Child Support Grant
DG	Disability Grant
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ESTA	Extension of Security of Tenure Act
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFSS	Integrated Food Security Strategy
LRAD	Land Distribution for Agricultural Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PLAS	Proactive Land Acquisition Strategy
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SLAG	Settlement Land Acquisition Grant
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In developing countries, there has been a sharp increase in the number of female-headed households and the majority of these households are impoverished (Posel 2001). The reasons for such an upsurge are geographically and historically contingent and determined (Schatz, Madhavan and Williams 2011). In the case of South Africa, 41.9% of all households in South Africa were headed by females by the year 2001 (Venter and Marais 2005). Rural post-apartheid South Africa is a common site for the presence of female-headed households (particularly in the former bantustans or homelands). Rural marginalisation and underdevelopment continue to affect the former bantustans through endemic poverty, limited employment opportunities, and poor access to health and welfare services (Coovadia et al. 2009). Women are the most deeply affected, but they often show innovativeness and courage under thorny conditions to secure household socio-economic well-being (often in the absence of males) through a range of livelihood strategies. One of the pressing issues in livelihoods debates about South Africa concerns how female heads and the general rural populace secure livelihoods in the context of rural underdevelopment. Fundamentally, the need to understand and analyse rural livelihoods and how female heads survive and counter challenges they often face on a daily basis is what propelled the thinking behind, and the rationale for, this thesis. In this light, the thesis seeks to understand and explain the rural livelihood strategies of female-headed households in the former Transkei bantustan, specifically Cala communal areas near Queenstown.

1.2 Background to Study: Understanding Livelihoods of Female-Headed Households

Female-headed households may exist on a *de jure* basis where a woman is widowed, divorced, unmarried or has no partner, but the existence of *de facto* female-headed households is also prevalent where the woman is married but the husband is almost permanently away from the homestead or away for extended periods (Martins 2008). In the *de facto* scenario, the wife becomes the head by default and may preside over crucial household decisions when the husband is absent. Female-headed households – both *de jure* and *de facto* – have existed on a significant scale historically for a range of reasons. Certainly the increasing entry of females into the labour market in recent decades, though admittedly often in the less privileged market segments, has provided a potential condition for the rise of viable *de facto* female-headed households by giving women a degree of economic

independence if and when marriages falter (or even lessening the need for and occurrence of marriage in the first place) (Dreze and Srinivasan 1997, Budlender 2003). Challenges to patriarchal relations (in which men are by definition invariably posited as heads) have reinforced this trend. The migrant labour system, which has been a worldwide phenomenon for some time and regularly involves movement across national boundaries, has been critical to the existence and reproduction of *de facto* female-headed households.

In southern Africa more specifically, the same and other factors have come into play. A large number of men from reserves (bantustans) in South Africa and from nearby countries (such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi) migrated to mining cities and towns of South Africa from the late 1800s in search of work, and internal male migration within South Africa remains prevalent today due to for instance particularly high rates of unemployment in certain areas and depressed economies in the former bantustans. Under these conditions, women have been left behind to look after the households, and they have pursued different activities to supplement male remittances and support their often rural households (Ngwenya 2008). Furthermore, the emergence of female-headed households in the sub-region can be attributed in part to so-called traditional customs and practices whereby women who are involved in polygamous households are accustomed to taking full responsibility for their own homesteads and children in particular (Mencher and Okongwu 1993). More recently, programmes implemented by non-governmental organisations which target the empowering of women specifically and invest in their income-generating capabilities have led in many instances to self-reliance on the part of women at the household level (Burns and Scott 1994). Another factor which has accounted for the rise of female heads is the incidence of terminal diseases such as HIV and AIDS. For example, ten years ago Zimbabwe had an estimated 33% of 15-49 year olds infected by the disease which regularly left grandmothers heading households and looking after their grandchildren due to the death of parents (ZNVAC 2002: 27). The increasing lifespan of women in southern Africa has also resulted in widows becoming household heads (Simkins 1993). These factors are of great significance with respect to the rise of female-headed households in South Africa specifically. In South Africa, women continue to head nearly half of all households (Department of Health, Medical Research Council, OrCMacro 2007).

There is a discernible link between poverty and female headship in many countries (Chant 2007). Indeed, numerous national and regional studies have demonstrated this linkage (Barros et al. 1997, Bibars 2001, Gangopadhyay and Wadhwa 2003, Horrell and Krishnan 2007). A frequently cited review of the literature conducted by Buvinic and Gupta (1997) also clearly reveals this. Out of 61 studies investigating the association of poverty and female-headed households in developing nations, 38 studies found that these households were over-represented among poor households, 15 studies found that poverty was associated with some types of female-headed households, and only 8 studies found that there was no association between poverty and female headship. Similarly, the World Bank's poverty assessments show that poverty is higher in female-headed households than in male-headed households in 25 out of 58 selected countries. In a further ten countries, some types of female-headed households were poorer than their male counterparts (Lampietti and Stalker 2000). On the whole, evidence for the association between female headship and poverty is not fully conclusive, but a strong overall claim can be made (based on existing literature) that female-headed households are the 'poorest of the poor' in developing countries (Narayan et al. 2000:67, Chant 2003).

In this regard, disaggregating the notion of female-headed households is critical to recognising social differentiation between groupings of female-headed households in terms of the feminisation of poverty. For instance, marital status and class are particularly important, such that these factors are good predictors of household well-being and access to formal employment amongst female-headed households (Appleton 1996, Chant 2007). The work of O'Laughlin (1997), in her comparative analyses of Malawi and Lesotho, is especially revealing with respect to marital status. She argues that *de facto* female-headed households (where the man is often a migrant labourer) are better off economically than (non-married) *de jure* female-headed households.

In the case of South Africa, segregation and later apartheid were configured socially, politically and economically along racial lines (Benjamin 2005) though it is regularly argued that the system of racial domination served the specific interests of white capital (Terreblanche 2002). The South African economy expanded at the expense of the social, economic and political rights of particularly poor blacks, including the rural black population – notably with the development and consolidation of the bantustan system as initially

legislated by the infamous Natives Land Act of 1913. This process included forced relocation of blacks to increasingly poverty-stricken reserves/homelands with severe restrictions on permanent outward spatial movement because of the pass and influx control systems (Coovadia et al. 2009). Homelands provided limited livelihood opportunities for rural households (Siedman 1993), so that rural livelihoods were mainly based on subsistence farming, intermittent remittances from migrant labourers, making and selling of crafts, beer brewing and barter trading (Woolard 2002, Goodlad 1996). Female heads in particular lived under grinding conditions of poverty though, for *de facto* female heads, migrant remittances catered for some forms of consumption. As a result, a vicious cycle of sustained poverty and dependency developed (so-called 'poverty traps') (May et al. 1998) for women. In this regard, though segregation and apartheid were founded on racial categories, they served to hide and mask the prevalence and significance of a system of patriarchy which reproduced female subordination and poverty.

The apartheid era in South Africa officially came to an end in 1994, but racially-based inequalities continue. Faced with tremendous challenges and pressures emanating from the need for historical redress and broader global neo-liberal economic restructuring, the new African National Congress (ANC) government initially introduced a seemingly progressive and coherent socio-economic framework called the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The ambitious goals of the RDP included for example employment creation through public works programmes, redistribution via land reform, a massive housing and infrastructure programme and an inclusive social security package (Benjamin 2005). Later, though (in 1996), the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme was introduced, which was a more conservative macro-economic strategy informed by mainstream neo-liberal principles focusing on 'anti-inflationary policies, including fiscal restraint, continued tight monetary policies and wage restraint' (Leibbrandt, van der Berg and Bhorat 2001:16). This neo-liberal agenda reduced nation-state autonomy and the right to question the global structures of accumulation, as the South African economy became increasingly integrated into global economic flows. More recent state initiatives, including the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative-South Africa and the current National Development Plan, do not undercut the broad neo-liberal trajectory despite claims about moving towards a democratic developmental state.

The pursuance of neo-liberalisation in South Africa has brought to the fore tensions between the goals of fiscal discipline and those of poverty alleviation. In such a context, the government has struggled to pursue the more social rights-based strategy embodied in the RDP, though there is evidence of such a strategy in terms of for example the social grants system and a massive state-driven housing programme (in urban centres). But the overwhelming evidence suggests that the neo-liberal thrust has increased social inequalities and has exacerbated black poverty (Kallis and Nthite 2007), especially in the former homelands. The state's ongoing insistence on a market-led land reform programme and its failure to address problems pertaining to customary tenure and chieftainship regimes in the former bantustans are particularly telling in this regard.

For the late 1990s, Forgey et al. (2000) note that approximately 70% of households in former bantustans practiced farming, but only 2.7% of these households relied on this as a reliable source of income. More contemporary evidence indicates that this trend still exists (Westaway 2012). In fact, social welfare grants (mainly child support grants and old age pensions) provide the main source of survival for significant numbers of rural households (Oberhauser and Pratt 2004). Today, former homelands such as Ciskei and Transkei are characterised by 'pervasive chronic poverty, low levels of economic activity, a dearth of employment opportunities and high levels of dependency on welfare' (Westaway 2012:117). Female-headed households, particularly *de jure* female-headed households, are exceedingly marginalised in these rural spaces, and are dependent upon insufficient and irregular remittances from migrant labourers, informal trading activities, social grants and very minimal subsistence farming. Livelihood diversification is often a tactic employed out of necessity by rural women but the opportunities for diversification in former homelands are scarce and unreliable, regularly pushing female-headed households to the outermost periphery of socio-economic existence (Benjamin 2005). Indeed, new forms of rural marginalisation are arising and, because of state failures and incapacities, the responsibility of social reproduction is often laid on the shoulders of rural households, which regularly means women.

The feminisation of poverty in South Africa clearly has a rural, racial and class dimension; in the end, poor rural black women are the most affected. Black female-headed households, notably in bantustan areas, are faced with a greater risk of deprivation of resources in seeking

to attain a socially-acceptable minimum standard of living and they generally live under abject poverty. Recent studies by Bhorat and van der Westehuizen (2008) and Posel and Rogan (2009) conclude that poverty has in fact intensified in post-apartheid South Africa and has a clear gendered dimension. This is demonstrated by a poverty rate of 62% amongst female-headed households compared to a poverty rate of 33% for male-headed households. In explaining such poverty rates, Rogan (2011), May et al. (1998) and Dungumaro (2008) indicate that rural female-headed households specifically are more vulnerable to poverty because of larger household sizes (and heightened consumption needs) as well as a reduced number of economically-productive adults. Further, female heads are more likely to be unemployed or earn meagre incomes. The growing misery of female-headed households in rural South Africa clearly indicates that post-apartheid South Africa has failed to reach the Millennium Development Goals for 2015 (including eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and empowering women) by a large margin.

1.3 Theoretical Frameworks

For this thesis, two complementary theoretical frameworks are utilised to understand and explain the livelihoods of female-headed households in Cala communal areas. The frameworks are the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and a feminist perspective, which I now outline briefly in turn.

A key theoretical framework which underpins this study on rural livelihoods of women is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). One of the key strengths of the framework in the context of this thesis is that it places a strong emphasis on productive assets or capitals in supporting rural livelihoods (Carswell and Jones 2004). The SLF thus focuses on assets owned, controlled, claimed or accessed by households (Ellis 2000). Assets are important in the livelihoods framework as they enable households to pursue livelihood-based strategies, to engage possibly in labour markets and informal economic activities, and to participate in reciprocal economic and social exchanges with other households (Moser 1998). Therefore, for female-headed households to cope with and handle conditions of poverty and vulnerability, they turn to various assets (capitals) – no matter how insignificant – such as human capital, financial capital, social capital, physical capital and natural capital. The SLF acknowledges that trends and processes in the broader national political economy create general social conditions which may provoke, facilitate or inhibit livelihood diversification (Ellis 2000) and households respond to these broader conditions in different ways due to

different factors (which vary between households) such as income diversification, reduced consumption and asset sales (Carney 1998). Of particular importance as well is the role of formal and informal organisational and institutional factors which limit or enhance livelihood outcomes. In this respect, Scoones (1998:12) argues that, for livelihood studies, 'an understanding of ... institutions, their underlying social relationships and the power dynamics embedded in these is ... vital'. Overall, the framework is 'an analytical structure for coming to grips with the complexity of livelihoods' and for 'understanding influences on poverty' (Farrington et al. 2004:91). But it is not beyond criticism.

Of specific relevance to this study is the sustainable livelihoods framework's marked gender blindness and the need to bolster the framework through the incorporation of feminist insights about patriarchy. A feminist perspective allows this thesis to examine patriarchy and traditional structures which establish men's and women's role in society and legitimise male power within socio-economic and political institutions. Such feminist insights highlight for instance the relationship between patriarchy and land and – critically for this study – unpack and dissect analytically the relationships and power imbalances which exist between men and women within households (Preston-Whyte and Nene 1991). Feminist theories examine patriarchy as an everyday system of discourses, identities and practices to better understand gender difference and the multiplicity of forces which oppress (and sometimes open up spaces for the empowerment of) women (Jackson 2001, Liddle and Wright 2001). This literature also highlights that 'women' as a social category is heterogeneous and it places emphasis on the intersection between class, race and gender. This is crucial because of the great diversity which exists amongst female-headed households, including along marital lines.

1.4 Significance of the Thesis

The livelihoods literature is quite substantial globally and in relation to Africa. In the case of South Africa, existing empirical studies on livelihoods highlight women's participation in informal and formal employment, the activities of female-headed households in contending with HIV and AIDS-related hardships, causes of vulnerability in female-headed households, and socio-economic determinants of poverty amongst female-headed households (Francis 2000, Siedman 1993, Sekhampu 2012, Schatz et al. 2011, Rogan 2011). In the main, such studies do not focus on rural female-headed households' livelihood strategies (and intra-household gender relations) from a feminist-informed livelihoods framework. In this context,

the thesis seeks first of all to contribute to addressing meaningfully the ongoing and complex questions about livelihoods and intra-household dynamics in rural post-apartheid South Africa. At the same time, and secondly, it seeks to make a theoretical contribution to the further development of a more gender-sensitive livelihoods perspective.

1.5 Thesis Objective

The main objective of the thesis is to understand and explain the livelihood strategies of *de facto and de jure* rural female-headed households in the former Transkei bantustan in South Africa, more specifically in *Cala* near Queenstown.

The subsidiary objectives are:

1. To analyse the sources of livelihoods and the livelihood strategies pursued by female-headed households.
2. To examine the various factors that affect female-headed households' access to and control over resources and the impact of this on their livelihoods.
3. To understand the various challenges faced, and coping mechanisms adopted, by, female-headed households in the face of poverty.
4. To investigate how intra-household relations, and particularly those along gender lines, affect distribution of resources, decision-making and authority.
5. To examine the diversity of female-headed households in terms of for instance marital status and the ways in which this diversity influences household livelihood activities.

1.6 Research Methodology and Methods

The research methodology and methods adopted in this thesis were chosen in order to address fully the main thesis objective. In the following sections, I discuss the research methodology and methods, including the ontological and epistemological foundations underpinning the research, the research methods, research ethics and fieldwork challenges.

1.6.1 Ontological and Epistemological Foundations

Ultimately, all research is underpinned by specific ontological and epistemological commitments (Gialdino 2009). Ontology relates to what can be said to exist in the social world while epistemology refers to questions around how this world becomes knowable, examinable and explainable. Epistemological claims regularly arise from prior ontological claims such that ontology affects epistemology. Therefore a sociologist's view on the very character of social reality impacts significantly on his or her way of gaining knowledge of

reality and indeed on what constitutes knowledge. A constructionist-informed ontology, by highlighting everyday inter-subjective meanings and interpretations-representations of reality (or multiple realities) as the foundation of 'the social', leads to an epistemology based on *understanding* the social world and the context-specificity of meanings and interpretations. A more realist ontology, and there are different versions of this (such as critical realism and positivism), tends to focus on *explaining* the social world through some notion of causality (Joniak 2007). Research methodologies and methods tend to derive from ontological and epistemological claims and clearly these claims are open to considerable variation and contestation within sociology. I have no intention of getting bogged down in philosophical debates about ontology and epistemology, but it is important to set out briefly my philosophical position. Indeed, the main objective of the thesis shows sensitivity to both understanding and explanation.

Quantitative research is linked to the positivist school of thought in the natural sciences which has an objective and atomistic view of the world. In this regard Schell (1992:7) claims that, for positivism, 'replication, causation and objectivity are considered as minimum conditions for production of knowledge'. While I do not deny the possibility of establishing causal relations in the social world, the positivist position of 'hard' causality based on statistical analysis is deeply problematic. Lindlof (1995) notes that, to the contrary, qualitative researchers (based often on constructivism) are more concerned about deep understandings of the social meanings inherent in the world and that they regularly eschew any notion of causality. Extreme versions of constructivism conclude that social reality is entirely meaning-dependent such that reality has no existence outside meaning-laden interpretations (Joniak 2007). While I stress the importance of inter-subjective meanings as animating the social world, I would argue that the social world has a reality independent of such meanings and that differing everyday interpretations are in fact interpretations of this 'outside' structured world (Roth and Mehta 2002). Additionally, the existence of social meanings and interpretations need to be not only understood but also explained, and they can only be explained by reference to this structured world (and positions within the world) through a 'soft' notion of causality in which the structured world conditions (or shapes) meanings and interpretations. This is a view of causality perhaps more consistent with critical realism (Searle 1995, Perry 2002).

In this context, the thesis is underpinned by both quantitative and qualitative methods (but mainly the latter). This entailed a pragmatic research methodology (Bryman 2001, Cavaye 1996) which considered carefully the merits and demerits of qualitative and quantitative approaches in addressing the thesis objective. Consistent with my epistemology, the reason for triangulating these methods was driven by the need to provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and livelihoods of female heads in the Cala case study but to do so in a manner which captured the socially-structured context of their existence.

1.6.2 Case Study Design and Sampling Techniques

For this thesis, a case study research design was used with Cala being the main case study, and three areas within Cala (Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi) as more specific studies. According to Mills et al. (2010:255), a case study involves the following: an 'investigation of actors' discourses and negotiated meanings; concern to set specific social processes in context, both within and surrounding the case; and attention to the sequencing and dynamics of social processes over time'. Such a design is consistent with the ontological and epistemological claims discussed above, focusing as it does on both context and meaning (or structure and agency). With this in mind, the thesis seeks to understand and explain the livelihood experiences and strategies of female-headed households in Cala in the context of broader social processes within South Africa and their specific effects on Cala, and by examining household livelihoods in a natural setting with the necessary historical depth. In this sense, the case study of Cala with reference to livelihoods, tells what happened when, to whom and with what results (Patton 2002).

The case study, by using multiple evidence collection tools (or research methods), provides the research underpinning the thesis with significant levels of reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the consistency of an instrument over time and space, while validity refers to the extent to which the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. The diversity of research methods used, as discussed below, was expected to provide sufficient grounds for ensuring validity and reliability of evidence collected as these methods were capable of providing checks and balances during the data collection processes. In this respect, the fieldwork facilitates and incorporates an extensive and intensive chain of evidence for purposes of internal validity. In seeking internal coherence, I was able where necessary to cross-check any apparent inconsistencies between, on one hand, subjective and inter-subjective meanings seemingly animating household livelihood strategies and, on the

other hand, actually-existing livelihoods and strategies as they occurred when considered independently of these meanings. Broadly speaking, this allowed for the identification of inconsistencies between what Cala communal area residents think, say and do (or between different levels of reality) in their everyday lives and to posit reasons for any existing discrepancies.

Cala was selected using the purposive sampling technique which is a type of non-probability sampling. Using this type of sampling, I subjectively and deliberately aimed to study a certain geographical area, namely, Cala. I acknowledge that non-probability methods such as purposive sampling (used for this thesis in selecting the case study) are not free from bias, because an area is selected often on grounds of convenience or based on recommendations from others. Cala as a possible research site was suggested by my supervisor because of contacts he had in the area. Entry into the Cala area was sought through a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) called Cala University Students Association (CALUSA) which works on land and local government issues in the Cala villages. The selection of Cala as a case study was reaffirmed by the CALUSA Director, who also recommended sub-units (villages) based on his intimate knowledge about the villages surrounding Cala town.

Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi were selected as sub-units of the case study using the purposive non-random sampling technique. I do not attempt to provide a comparative analysis of the sub-units (villages), but rather use the sub-units to determine if any significant differences exist in different areas of Cala. Cala town has a number of surrounding villages and I took a number of considerations into account in selecting three villages. Fundamentally, and after a significant review of the relevant literature, I realised that there was an absence of sociological research in these villages and particularly on female-headed household livelihoods. A cursory understanding of the Cala area at the start of the thesis process suggested that the three villages shared common social characteristics with other nearby villages, including inadequate road networks connecting one village to another as well to Cala town centre, ethnically homogeneous (Xhosa-speaking) populations and livelihoods centred on a mix of farm and non-farm activities. On this basis, generalising beyond the three villages to Cala communal areas as a whole is highly probable.

Overall, Wamahui and Karugu (1995) credit the case study design with the ability to provide the research with an emic (insider's) as opposed to etic (outsider's) view of the phenomenon under study. Further, Merriam (1988) argues that this design has the ability to penetrate a complex social entity (such as female-headed household livelihoods) that consists of equally complex variables resulting in deep illumination of hitherto hidden meanings which enrich both sociological understanding and explanation. Of course, this is not to say that the case study design is problem-free, particularly the challenge of generalisation (Lincoln and Guba 1985). In this regard, I do not argue that Cala is statistically-representative of all former bantustan areas in South Africa, but the prevailing literature on communal areas in South Africa is highly suggestive of common trends within these areas such that my thesis findings and conclusions about Cala no doubt provide provocative initial insights into other former homeland areas with specific reference to the livelihoods of female-headed households. My thesis thus provides a useful basis for further similar research on female-headed household livelihoods in other former bantustan areas.

In relation to sampling more specifically, a sample is a portion of a larger entity which is intended to be representative of the larger entity (Abrahamson 1983). This sample is obtainable by going through a process called sampling. Schaefer and Lamm (1992) define a representative (random) sample as a selection from a larger population (or universe) that is statistically said to be typical of that population. The fieldwork for this thesis used, as noted in the case of the selection of the case study and its sub-units, a purposive non-random sampling technique. Purposive non-random technique was also used in the main for sampling of households at village level in Cala. The random sampling technique needs a complete list or universe of all female heads in the villages, which I was not able to obtain despite my best efforts. In using purposive sampling, I carefully selected households with my thesis objective in mind, and thus with the expectation that each household selected would provide unique and rich information of value to the thesis (Bernard 2002, Lewis and Sheppard 2006, Polit and Hungler 1991). In this light, I was able to select female-headed households in each of the three villages based in large part on the recommendations of my fieldwork interpreter and research assistants. This was the case with the survey questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussions and life histories. Eventually, the overall sample (for the survey) was made up of sixty-five female heads from the three selected villages. In the case of all research methods used (as discussed below), both *de jure* and *de*

facto heads were included. There was not equal representation though as most female heads in Cala, as reflected in the 65 heads for the survey, are *de jure* heads.

1.6.3 Data Collection Methods

Studies such as the current one (on livelihoods in Cala) call for a multi-method research strategy which is capable of collecting an array of both quantitative and qualitative data. According to Ulin et al. (2002), combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in the research process is heuristically helpful and beneficial in building a more complete picture of the social world of households. Therefore, by combining methods, 'each one is modified and used with others, producing a hybrid of methods which gives the research multiple sources of evidence with more relevant evidence to give a complete picture of the subject' (Yin 2003:98). This strategy, often called triangulation, therefore forms a cornerstone of my research methodology. It is used in this study to develop 'converging lines of inquiry' (Yin 2003:98) and to deploy diverse sources of evidence in coming to fieldwork-based findings and conclusions.

I aimed to provide rich and robust evidence to pursue successfully the main objective of the thesis and the subsidiary objectives, including with reference to livelihood strategies, livelihood vulnerability, intra-household dynamics, and the coping and adaptive mechanisms of female-headed households in Cala. But because of a strong emphasis on 'understanding', my research methods are predominantly qualitative. In this light, my intention was to develop a deep understanding of what Patton (1990) describes as 'inner perspectives' which, in my case, involve the livelihood strategies of female heads as they make sense of the structural vulnerabilities faced and the coping mechanisms possible. Such qualitative methods, to emphasise, provide 'a more in-depth description and understanding of events or actions and this helps the researcher to gain insight into why and how these events or actions take place rather than just presenting a phenomenon' (Babbie and Mouton 2001:39). I pursued this though without denying the importance of the social-structural context in conditioning livelihood options and activities.

My fieldwork was conducted in October and November 2014. I specifically planned my fieldwork for this time as it is just before the start of the agricultural season when households are not particularly active in agricultural activities and thus are available for research purposes. It was an appropriate time as well because it allowed me to observe land

preparation by households (including size of land ploughed particularly for arable fields as well as homestead gardening). Though agriculture may not be the predominant livelihood activity for female-headed households in Cala, undertaking the fieldwork during these months would certainly highlight the extreme vulnerability of these households. This is a time when agricultural stocks have run dry and female heads may be literally scavenging for income sources through whatever means possible. However, the fieldwork evidence collected relates to the entire calendar year and it thus shows ebbs and flows in the livelihoods of female-headed households in Cala throughout the year (and even within months).

1.6.3.1 Survey

Quantitative data was gathered through a structured questionnaire (see Appendix 1) which was administered to sixty-five female heads (twenty-nine administered in Lupapasi, twenty in Mnxe and sixteen in Sifonondile) using a purposive non-random sampling technique, and this evidence was used to identify and describe the social context in Cala as well as the various livelihood resources prevalent or absent in the Cala area. The survey questionnaire was the first research method administered in all the villages. Of the sixty-five female heads, fifty-four were *de jure* female heads and eleven were *de facto* female heads. The central purpose of the survey questionnaire was to provide a broad and extensive profile of the female heads in Cala communal areas, such that the questionnaire addressed the following issues, amongst others: biographical information, socio-economic status, livelihood strategies, income generation, savings and assets (of the kind raised by the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework). All this was critical in trying to establish the fundamentals pertaining to the construction of livelihoods by the female-headed households. Despite the advantages of household livelihood surveys and the breadth of evidence collected by means of them, serious challenges relate to the availability of respondents and their willingness to cooperate (an issue which is in many ways out of the researcher's control). I sought to minimise the possibility of this by explaining in full the importance of the research to the participants and by following research ethics protocol.

Another challenge concerns the character of the evidence generated through a survey. Surveys are unable to come to terms with the nuanced and in-depth complexities of contemporary socio-economic and historical contexts within which the phenomenon being studied is located. In this respect, Martens (1998:2) posits that positivistic research methods

(such as a survey) need to be complemented by research methods capable of providing more holistic, contextual, descriptive and in-depth data that is rich in detail. In my study I sought to address this through, as noted earlier, mixed-methods research including both qualitative and quantitative evidence. For the survey, three research assistants (each one based in one village i.e. Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi) were rigorously trained to administer the questionnaire and minimise any errors in interpretation. All of the assistants were Xhosa-speaking. The survey questionnaire was in English, and research assistants translated the questions into Xhosa (the local language understood by the majority of female heads). I was personally engaged in field supervision of the assistants and I was involved in continual verification of the data collection process to minimise room for error or bias. The information gathered from the survey assisted in selecting households and individuals for in-depth interviews, life histories and focus group discussions.

1.6.3.2 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews followed after the survey questionnaire administration. Qualitative data was thus gathered in the first instance through in-depth semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 2) with a selected group of thirty-five female heads (fourteen were interviewed in Lupapasi, twelve in Mnxe and ten in Sifonondile). The selection of interview participants was based on the socio-economic conditions of the female heads informed by my interpreter's knowledge of the female heads. This selected sample of female heads (*de jure* and *de facto*) was chosen from the sixty-five surveyed female heads. In interviews, it is important to record as much detail as possible (Deem 2002) and, therefore, during the interviews (as for the focus groups and life histories) a recorder was used (interviews were later transcribed) in order to enhance the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data collected. However, on several occasions, female heads refused to be recorded even after assuring them that the study was for academic purposes only. At times, a camera was used during the interviews to capture visually some of the heads' livelihood activities (such as petty commodity trading). The in-depth interviews captured themes including livelihood strategies, decision-making authority and conflict, land use, agricultural production and resource availability. All the in-depth interviews (along with the life histories and focus groups) were conducted by me but with the help of the interpreter (from the Cala University Student Association). Though I speak and understand Xhosa, it is not my home language and I am not entirely fluent in it, and thus the importance of the interpreter. The questions were asked by me in English and the interpreter translated them into Xhosa and relayed the responses to me in English.

The strength of in-depth interviews is that 'respondents are active participants whose insights, feelings, and cooperation are essential parts of a discussion that reveals subjective meanings' (Neuman 1997:371). Similarly, Gubrium and Sankar (1994), and Mouton and Marais (1990), claim that in-depth interviews facilitate the collection of meaningful evidence as viewed through the eyes of the participants (or the insider perspective). Such subjective meanings are critical to making sense of the lives and experiences of female heads as they undertake livelihood activities. The interviews were flexible and allowed probing on my part, and this stimulated conversations which produced insights not considered initially before the start of interviews (Miller and Glassner 1998). Despite this flexibility, the interview guideline provided a thematic consistency across interviews and therefore offered the basis for comparative analysis across interviews (May 1997). The interviews with the female heads allowed for an internal validity check as I was able to clarify matters or correct misunderstandings on my part during the course of an interview.

Given the levels of poverty and the personal and sometimes traumatic events experienced by some of the female heads, it was at times a highly emotive and sensitive encounter as some of the discussions recalled very painful experiences (for example, death of a breadwinner, or domestic violence and abuse). It was under such circumstances that I sometimes decided on my own to write notes rather than record the interviews given the emotions of the interviewees. These in-depth interviews, because of the degree of rapport established, proved to be of utmost significance.

1.6.3.3 Life Histories

Following the in-depth interviews, life histories of five female heads were conducted to account for historical depth and social change in the lived realities of the female heads. Life histories were recorded and transcribed. Life histories provide a wealth of evidence about people and their experiences rather than mere aggregated classifications, categories and characteristics (Kothari and Hulme 2004). In using purposive sampling for selecting the five heads (from amongst the 65 heads), there was a subjective evaluation of the contribution that the female heads would likely make to an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. This was mainly informed by a preliminary examination of the questionnaire survey results, but their selection also entailed a willingness to co-operate and offer sensitive and private information concerning their lives.

Kothari and Hulme (2004) claim that life histories enable a complex and nuanced understanding of social realities while simultaneously revealing common themes and trends which reflect wider social characteristics and processes. They also provide an understanding of the ways in which the past informs and shapes present realities (in this case, the rural realities of female heads). Thus are able to track changes and therefore, in this study, life histories enabled me to trace changes in female heads' livelihoods and to understand why such changes would lead to coping strategies adopted at a particular time. This entails examining 'what' happened for a specific household to engage in particular livelihood activities, 'what' challenges arose, 'how' the household responded through coping strategies and 'why' it (or the female head) responded in such a way. Further, these life history interviews were used to identify critical moments in the lives of female heads (including particularly challenging times and transition points). Life histories in particular allow women the chance to speak out on issues that directly concern and trouble them (Mahlase 1997). A general life history guide was used (see Appendix 3) to ensure I captured all themes contained in the thesis objectives.

1.6.3.4 Focus Group Discussions

The primary aim of a focus group is to describe and understand meanings and interpretations of a select group of people to gain an understanding of a specific issue from the perspective of the participants of the group (Liamputtong 2009). According to Kitzinger (2005:57), the focus group method is an 'ideal' approach for uncovering and examining the stories, experiences, points of view, beliefs, needs and concerns of individuals. Five focus groups (see Appendix 4 for guideline) were, as the last method used, conducted with female heads and these sought to understand livelihood strategies and various constraints faced including those embedded in patriarchy. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Each focus group, involving one from each of the three villages, consisted of five female heads and the group participants were selected purposively from the 65 heads. I conducted all the focus group discussions with the help of the interpreter. The groups allowed for a free, lively and constructive exchange of ideas between participants and they corroborated some of the evidence collected through the household survey and other research methods.

The focus groups provided 'thick' descriptive accounts of 'how' some livelihood challenges arose and developed and 'what' caused the challenges, as well as allowing for important insights into the formulation and pursuit of actions by heads to avert at times such challenges

or to cope with them. In this respect, the collective exploration of ideas and perceptions in understanding livelihoods, adaptive mechanisms and challenges in the Cala area were mainly acquired through these group sessions. The strength of the focus group method is that the researcher is therefore provided with a key opportunity to appreciate the way that people, as a collective, see their own reality and hence 'to get closer to the data' (Ivanoff and Hultberg 2006:126). Fundamentally, the groups also provided an understanding of diverse thinking processes about livelihood strategies which varied between the *de jure* and *de facto* female heads and across their age sets.

1.6.3.5 Transect Walks and Observation

A transect walk entails walking along a pre-determined route with one or more respondents in the area the study is conducted and exploring various issues including for instance, in my study, land use, vegetation and physical assets such as roads and boreholes. For the thesis, I undertook one transect walk of approximately one hour in each of the villages under study, that is, Mnxe, Lupapasi and Sifonondile. The routes undertaken were mainly guided by the positioning of the key physical and natural capitals in the respective areas (notably homestead gardens, arable fields, rivers, houses and roads). On all the transect walks, I was accompanied by the research assistant who had been responsible for administering the survey questionnaires in the village where the transect walk took place. The research assistants helped me to understand more fully the observations I made during the walks. The transect walks assisted me to gain a deeper understanding of the assets in the villages, the community dynamics regarding issues such as demographic increases (seen through the destruction of trees for fuel wood), and issues around land use crop production across the different villages.

Observation was the main technique used during the transect walks and was also important during the entire course of my stay in Cala. General observations were made on the different crops grown and the various livelihood activities in which the female heads spent most of their time. Data that was collected by observation enabled verification of information gathered through other methods and for the checking of discrepancies between actual activities and what people said in questionnaires, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews and life histories. Over and above all this, the observation and transect walks led to the breaking down of communication barriers and built trust, which helped in obtaining honest perspectives from the female heads under study.

1.7 Analysis of Data

The end product of a case study and of research more broadly can be primarily descriptive, interpretive or evaluative. Merriam (1988:27) points out that a descriptive intent involves a detailed account of a phenomenon under study, while interpretative work involves in addition the pursuit of understanding and explanation and even the development of revised concepts which may challenge theoretical views which existed before the study was undertaken. An evaluative positioning involves description, understanding/explanation and judgment. Given these three purposes, the end product of the case study for this thesis is both descriptive and interpretive. The fieldwork-based evidence is presented descriptively (in the empirical chapters of the thesis) but this evidence is subject to both understanding and explanation based on the theoretical frameworks used.

The data collected through the survey questionnaire was analysed using the computer-based software, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is a very powerful tool in quantitative data analysis and is particularly useful for larger data sets (Quinlan 2011). All the survey questionnaire responses were coded on excel spreadsheets and then imported to the SPSS package for analysis. The presentation and analysis included descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and averages.

According to de Vos (2005), qualitative data analysis transforms evidence into findings, and this involves reducing and managing the volume of raw information, examining significant patterns, and constructing a thematic framework for organising and communicating the findings in a coherent and systematic manner. Qualitative evidence tends to be voluminous and less easily summarised (compared to quantitative data) in numerical form, such that the evidence is distilled and presented in a thematically-arranged descriptive form (Denzin and Lincoln 1994:261-265). Thus, in relation to the qualitative research methods used for studying female heads in Cala, the qualitative data collected was analysed through identifying themes in the evidence and the various relationships between the themes. In doing so, I tried to ensure that the themes spoke as directly as possible to the different subsidiary objectives of the thesis. This was a long drawn-out process which involved examining all the evidence derived from the various qualitative methods. I began the process with familiarisation, which involved immersion in the raw data by listening to the evidence on the tape recorder and transcription of the evidence, reading my research diary, and sorting notes and other pieces of

data in order to detect key ideas, concepts and themes. Following that, I started building and reworking themes until all the emerging themes across all the data collection methods were identified. The main themes provide the structure for the empirical chapters of the thesis. Having gathered all the information, I interpreted the evidence with reference to my main thesis objective and subsidiary objectives.

1.8 Research Ethics and Fieldwork Challenges

In upholding basic research ethics, all the research participants were given full details about the study before they agreed to participate in the study. Should they wish to withdraw from the research at any time, they were assured that they may willingly do so. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed unless individuals consented to be quoted. During the entire fieldwork I also continually asked for the permission of respondents to take photographs and to use an audio recorder. Additionally, respondents were assured of confidentiality in the use of the tape recorder and camera, and I gave them the chance to refuse their use. Hence, on occasion, I had to write notes in my research diary because female heads did not consent to use of the tape recorder. It was made clear at the outset that no monetary benefits to the research participants were involved, and that people had nothing tangible to gain (nor did they have anything to lose in taking part in the research). They were informed that the findings were primarily for PhD study purposes, but could be used in the publication of journal articles and other related academic material. Participants were informed of their rights to seek clarifications on any questions. False names (or pseudonyms) were used in the writing of the thesis, so as to protect the privacy and identification of respondents. During and after the research, all data was and has been stored with security safeguards against loss, unauthorized use, modification or disclosure.

A number of challenges were experienced during the fieldwork. Firstly, the usage of the tape recorder during the course of the fieldwork was a major challenge. A sizeable number of female heads were clearly against being recorded even after explaining to them that the rationale of the study involved a purely academic motivation. Having stayed in the Eastern Cape for more than seven years, I was able to speak Xhosa though not fluently but still female heads were suspicious of my identity. I therefore had to suspend using the tape recorder in the initial stages of fieldwork and this complicated the fieldwork greatly because I had to engage in manual note-taking. In that light, some of richer data might have been lost. Additionally, using the tape recorder caused unnecessary uneasiness among female heads

thereby diluting their final input into the research. Nonetheless, many female heads accepted me as a student after having shown them my student card, and allowed me to record them and aired their views accordingly.

Given my study focused on female heads (who generally live in conditions of poverty), some heads thought I was coming to intervene and offer local people such advantages as jobs, school fees and food parcels. At one point during the initial days of the study one female head asked the translator in vernacular, *'uyeza yaseRhodes ngibona imoto…wazazi indodakazi yami a busary yenezele imfundo yakhe'* which translated means 'he is coming from Rhodes University. I see the car…he can get my daughter a bursary to further her education'. As a result of this problem, there were some indications that female heads exaggerated their life situations (i.e. painted it as worse than in actual fact) so that they could get help from the researcher.

As well, some of the initially-identified female heads were not willing to partake in the study because they saw no benefit in giving me information in exchange for nothing (especially in Mnxe village). Two factors contributed to this. First of all, there was ongoing tension in Cala (and notably in Mnxe) with villagers fighting against the imposition of a village head. Resultantly, some female heads were suspicious about the information I was collecting, particularly the theme around tribal authorities in the in-depth interview guide. These female heads often simply refused to answer questions relating to the tribal authorities given the tensions that were happening in Cala reserve. Secondly, as I have already highlighted, some female heads expected to be handed food parcels and money and refused to be part of the fieldwork. The research interpreter ended up rescheduling and selecting other female heads for incorporation into the study. This affected the study in that the initially-sampled female heads were chosen on the basis of their value to the study; whereas the responses of the later sampled female heads were likely not as rich as anticipated particularly because these heads felt they were used as a back-up to the study. Nonetheless their involvement in, and contribution to, the fieldwork process was immense, with their responses providing deep insights into the livelihoods of female heads in Cala.

1.9 Thesis Outline

The thesis is structured into six chapters, including this introductory (first) chapter.

Chapter two of the thesis discusses the two theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. In this chapter, I first discuss different feminist perspectives and the ways in which these perspectives contribute to an understanding of patriarchy. This is crucial because of the thesis focus on female-headed households and the challenges around patriarchy these women may face in constructing household livelihoods. I then discuss the sustainable livelihoods framework because of its pertinence to household-level analyses, but I highlight the need to incorporate a gender dimension into the framework for purposes of the thesis.

Chapter three examines, historically, the political economy of land in South Africa. I start off with the continuities from segregation to apartheid, and then go on to critically appraise political and economic restructuring in South Africa since 1994, a process which tends to reproduce the dual land structure of apartheid South Africa. Given the focus of the thesis, of particular concern is the situation in the former bantustans which continues to marginalise rural households and undermines their capacity to construct sustainable livelihoods, with women in the former bantustans regularly carrying additional burdens.

Chapters four and five present and discuss the fieldwork-based results for the female-headed households in Cala. Chapter four examines in detail the kinds of livelihood activities pursued by female heads, including agricultural-based and non-agricultural based activities. It also, in focusing on the various assets drawn upon by the female heads in constructing their livelihoods, seeks to analyse these activities with reference to the livelihoods framework. Importantly, and additionally, the chapter demonstrates the differentiation and diversity amongst the female heads by presenting cases of thriving, struggling and surviving households. Chapter five, as a continuation of chapter four, focuses on the multiple challenges faced by female heads in pursuing livelihood activities, involving economic, social and political challenges. But it also explicates the various coping mechanisms used by the heads to counteract these challenges and the factors inhibiting these mechanisms. The chapter ends by discussing the ways in which intra-household and gender relations in Cala affect the lives and livelihoods of female heads, and raises questions around for instance decision-making processes in households and domestic violence.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter. It seeks to show the ways in which the thesis addresses both the main objective and subsidiary objectives of the thesis and, further, it highlights the

contribution of the thesis to existing academic knowledge by revisiting the case study of Cala in the light of the theoretical perspectives used for the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical frameworks used to analyse the livelihoods of female-headed households in the Cala communal areas of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi. Two theories are used, namely, feminist theory and the sustainable livelihoods framework. While the livelihoods framework is of crucial importance in describing and understanding the lived experiences of female-headed households as they go about constructing their rural livelihoods, it has an analytical weakness with respect to questions around gender and specifically the system of patriarchy. In effect, the framework is gender-blind and, given the focus and objective of this thesis on female household heads, it becomes critical to ensure a feminist input into the overall examination of their livelihoods. I first discuss feminist theories and highlight their significance in terms of understanding the system and practices of patriarchy and then go on to present, albeit critically, the sustainable livelihoods framework.

2.2 Contemporary Feminist Theories

In this section I discuss a range of feminist theories in order to come to an understanding of patriarchy. These theories differ in their very understanding of what patriarchy entails as well as in their analyses of the causes underlying women's subordination. Feminist theory from its inception has been pluralistic in nature. As Tong (1989:2) notes, 'feminist theory is not one but many theories or perspectives and each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation'. At the same time, there is diversity within each theory and the theories have changed over time, with even cross-fertilisation between the theories. For this reason, the overview I provide must be seen as somewhat schematic (as almost Weberian ideal-types).

Liberal feminism focuses primarily on equal access for women (and men) both politically and economically, including historically the right to vote as full citizens in the public sphere, such that it became known as 'equal-opportunity feminism' or 'equity feminism' (Campbell 1989, Walby 1997). This leads to a legalistic and formalistic conception of patriarchy in which women need to advance themselves (or be advanced) in the political and economic realms through a programme of liberal reforms (Wollstonecraft 1972). The theory fails to root the challenges faced by women in the deep-seated structures and practices of female

subordination and gender inequality, and hence it overplays the prospects of gender-based change based on a voluntarist argument (Mandell 1995). This stance, in general, does not question in a strong sense the association of women with femininity and of men with masculinity, or the supposedly innate connection between women and social reproduction (at least not as significantly and rigorously as other feminist theories). However, some liberal scholars appreciate the importance of power in the male-female equation including the unjust distribution of benefits and burdens amongst husbands and wives within the domestic sphere (Okin 1989).

Marxist feminists provide a more structuralist analysis than do liberal feminists and they believe that the subordination of women developed historically with the emergence of private property under capitalism (Holmstrom 2002). With the burgeoning of capitalism, women's housework also became insignificant and devalued compared to the central significance of men's productive labour in the capital accumulation process (Bhasin 1993). These feminists, often with considerable unease, sought to draw the connections between economic production and social reproduction: '[A]s Marxists it is essential for us to give analytic primacy to the sphere of production, as feminists it is equally essential to hold on to a concept such as the relations of human reproduction in order to understand the specific nature of women's oppression' (McDonough and Harrison 1978:28). In the end, though, they tended to overemphasise the significance of economic production, and under-privilege the sphere of social reproduction, in understanding women's subordination.

Though the focus on social structure is critical to an understanding of patriarchy, Marxist feminists have tended to reduce patriarchy to capitalist class relations such that patriarchy (as a gendered ordering of society) is not seen as having its own logic of existence (Hartmann 1979). In this way, they became unwilling to recognise patriarchy as a social system in-and-of-itself which co-existed with capitalism (Petty et al. 1987) but also existed prior to the rise of capitalism. At the same time, and to their credit, they highlighted how social reproduction activities by women (in the domestic sphere) served the interests of capitalism by contributing to the reproduction of (male) labour power, and the ways in which women become disadvantaged in the labour market under capitalism and existed almost as a reserve army of labour (Beechey 1979).

Radical feminism, contrary to Marxist feminism, understands patriarchy independently of capitalism but, unlike liberal feminism, conceptualises it structurally. In doing so, it unpacks the relationship between sex and gender and examines the ways in which 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are socially-constructed and socially-reproduced ways of being in the world. What have now become common-sense ideologies, discourses and practices (found in all institutional arrangements), including those revolving around motherhood, entrench the oppressive power-system of patriarchy such that legal reforms do not bring about meaningful change for women. The social creation of feminine-women and masculine-men identities is linked to the separation between the private (domestic) and public (economic and political) spheres, and to the resulting invisibility of women and empowering of men in society.

The dominance of men is thus at the expense (of the subordination) of women such that systematic and not reformist change is a pre-requisite. Tong (1989:3) summaries this radical feminist claim as follows: '[I]t is the patriarchal system that oppresses women, a system characterized by power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition, a system that cannot be reformed but only ripped out root and branch'. Radical feminism tends to leave unaddressed the relationship between gender and class, but it does offer an explanation of labour market marginalisation for women in the context of the women-domestic-reproduction nexus. In this regard, the male-female hierarchal ordering of society, and gender roles, is perpetuated by the institutions of the family and marriage (Wittig 1992, Rowland and Klein 1990) as well as by implicit rules, customs and traditions. Sexuality and the centrality of women to biological reproduction (over which men tend to have control) animate and reinforce this gender hierarchy (Mackinnon 1982).

Socialist feminism tries to bring together radical feminism and Marxist feminism by highlighting the intersection between patriarchy and capitalism, and between sex-gender and class. For these feminists, patriarchy is not reducible to capitalism but neither is patriarchy necessarily the foremost system of power in capitalist society (Holmstrom 2002, Pratt 2006), as 'patriarchy and capitalism are independent yet are interacting social structures' (Hartmann 1979:11). This entails the existence of a patriarchal capitalism or a capitalist patriarchy. Thus, women's subjugation 'derives from both the class relations of production and the sexual hierarchical relations of society' (Eisenstein 1979:1) or, as Kuhn and Wolpe (1978:7) put it, 'women's positions can be located in terms of relations of production and reproduction at

various moments in history'. There is thus a dual emphasis on economic production and social reproduction without invariably prioritising one over the other, though many socialist feminists tend to emphasise the former. Broadly, women's subordination results jointly from the specific form of their integration into or exclusion from the labour market (with the traditional standard worker under capitalism conceptualised as male) and their roles as mothers, caregivers and domestic labourers in social reproduction.

Poststructuralist feminism is often said to provide a 'corrective' to some of the problems inherent in other feminist theories. Poststructuralists, as is well-known, consider the analysis of difference (for example, between men and women), power and subjectivity as central to understanding social life (Weedon 1987), at least those poststructuralists influenced strongly by the work of Michel Foucault. The peculiarly Foucauldian notion of power has been integrated into feminist analyses in invigorating ways (Yeatmann 1997). In this regard, Gaventa (1980:1) argues that Foucault's work marks a 'radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them'. In other words, power is not centralised as an 'it' in a particular site or group (for example, in capital or men) and wielded as a kind of instrument or object against those 'without' power. Power is intrinsically embodied in all social relations and, as such, power is relational and 'everywhere', a point which has been subject to significant criticism (Laclau 1996). It is in and through power relations that identities and subjectivities such as men and women are produced, enacted, maintained and possibly altered.

Insofar as power relations entail power differentials (for example, between men and women) it becomes difficult at times to conceptualise how for instance women are able to resist or manoeuvre their way through patriarchy if they are seemingly trapped in power (including, most importantly, within the materiality of patriarchal discourses). A way around this, for Foucault, is to argue that power relations do not only constrain or disable (women) but also facilitate and enable (women) despite if not because of the existence of patriarchy; again, a point criticised by other feminists, such as Fraser (1989), Hartsock (1990, 1996) and Benhabib (1992). Further, a critical significance of poststructuralist feminism is its capacity to examine patriarchy as a set of practices and discourses in day-to-day social relationships

including within the domestic sphere (Hartsock 1983, Mills 2003, Kelly 2009). Gendered-power relations, as enacted constantly through practices, would affect the distribution of resources, decision-making and authority between men and women, conditional on the specific circumstances of their existence. In arguing this, poststructuralist feminists do not prioritise a particular institutional sphere (for instance, the family) in making sense of patriarchy and its reproduction.

2.3 Feminism and Patriarchy

The previous section sought to provide a brief overview of key feminist theoretical frameworks and – in so doing – I raised the issue of patriarchy. After all, each feminist theory either implicitly or explicitly posits a particular understanding of patriarchy. The different feminist theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive as there is considerable overlap between them in addressing questions for example of the significance of gender and class and the relationship between these two forms of difference and inequality. Likewise, it is possible to develop an understanding of patriarchy which draws on the relevance of key points from the different feminist perspectives, which I now seek to do in this section. Patriarchy of course is a deeply contested and disputed concept analytically and the ways in which it is said to exist in social reality (or is operationalised) is also open to differing interpretations (Mitchell 1971). At its most basic level, patriarchy refers to 'male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways' (Bhasin 2006:3). Or, as Moghadam 1996:101) puts it, patriarchy 'govern[s] the position of women and the prerogatives of men within the family and household, in the sphere of production or the labour market, in the political system, and in cultural institutions' (Moghadam 1996:101). My intent in this section is simply to offer an understanding of patriarchy which is of relevance to the thesis focus and objectives, that is, in a manner which speaks to and provides insights into the lives of female-headed households in Cala communal areas.

Walby (1990:20) describes patriarchy in a very all-embracing way, as a

> [S]ystem of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women... [T]he use of the term social is important here, since it clearly implies a rejection both of biological determinism and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one... [P]atriarchy exists in six structures: the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work,

patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions.

This description of patriarchy as a social structure and system relates back to many of the claims made by feminist theories, including its existence in both economic production and social reproduction (within the domestic sphere) but also with reference to the state and other societal institutional (or cultural) arrangements. This includes the fact that: women are conceptualised as caregivers within the domestic work, the domestic work of women is highly undervalued in capitalism, women are either excluded from waged-labour or incorporated into it in an especially subordinated fashion, and patriarchy as a system is pervasive throughout society. This patriarchal structure, it should be added, does not rest on the existence of constitutional and legal frameworks which uphold patriarchy, as any patriarchal structure is deeply-entrenched in society. It is highly unlikely that Walby's particular claim about the key dimensions of patriarchy (as a system) is open to major debate.

But patriarchy is not only a system or structure, as it is also a set of everyday practices and discourses which act out and speak to patriarchal structures and reproduce them in the process. In this regard, patriarchy is a complex and interrelated combination of structures, practices and discourses. It is perhaps best to talk about patriarchies and not patriarchy *per se*, as if patriarchy were static and universal in form rather than subject to spatial and historical contingencies. Although it be would problematic to identify an African patriarchy (based on some essentialised notion of Africa), it is certainly the case that a range of local patriarchies exist throughout Africa in which the question of the relationship of women to land is quite central (as is the presence of some kind of male-centred 'traditional' authorities). And, in specifically former white settler societies like South Africa, the issue of race and how it articulates with gender becomes important, with black women often carrying a double burden because of their gender and race.

It is also the case that black women in rural Africa (as in the case study for this thesis) are not so much exploited within the capitalist economy as discarded by, or superfluous to, it. For example, given the character of the agrarian economy in the former bantustans of South Africa, with the near impossible prospects of being incorporated successfully into the labour market (and thus into economic production), women remain outside the capitalist economy though not unaffected by the implications of the form it takes. Because of this, the domestic

sphere of social reproduction becomes particularly central to patriarchal arrangements. This is even more so given that the site of social reproduction and the site of economic production (through the existence of homestead-based agriculture) spatially overlap. Thus, any understanding of the working out of patriarchy under such circumstances requires particular sensitivity to social reproduction at household level, such that the household is the key unit of patriarchy in terms of women's subordination as wife, mother, caregiver and labourer (Millet 1969, Eisenstein 1979). At the same time, the notion of 'women' needs to be disaggregated, with marital status (married, single, divorced and widowed) being of a crucial factor in making sense of lives of women at household level.

Though patriarchy is an overall-embracing social system of power which is based on relations of domination and subordination, like all systems of power it is not total. Indeed, all feminist theories argue (in their own way) that patriarchy can be challenged and is challenged regularly, not only by scholars or by women's movements but by the everyday activities of women (even if they do not explicitly articulate such activities as anti-patriarchy). In this respect, the existence of patriarchy does not mean that 'women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence and resources' (Lerner 1989:239). Thus, there is room to manoeuvre for women within patriarchy if not always against it or beyond it, and they open up cracks within patriarchy in trying to make a better life for themselves and regularly for their children. As well, women at times embrace their femininity (and their social reproductive role) almost instrumentally, or perhaps more correctly tactically, using the roles attached to the feminine identity to safeguard themselves and their children. The ways in which women 'negotiate' their way through the world of patriarchy depends quite fundamentally on the marital status of women.

This should not however underestimate the significance of the effectiveness of patriarchal discourses in contributing to the production and reinforcement of patriarchal systems and practices, as these discourses are regularly embedded in the very identities and subjectivities of men as men and of women as women. Kabeer (1999:441) thus observes that 'power relations [including gender relations] are expressed not only through the exercise of agency and choice, but also through the kinds of choices people make' and these choices are 'inscribed in the taken-for-granted rules, norms and customs within which everyday life is conducted'. Femininity and masculinity, including constructing women as motherhood, are

normally naturalised in that patriarchal discourses turn what has been socially-constructed into something biologically-innate. On this basis, the very presence of this discursive effect is not necessarily recognised by women (and women), including by women who seem to challenge their subordinate position.

2.4 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

In the context of the feminist macro-theories about women, gender and patriarchy, I now discuss the middle-level theory (namely, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework – SLF) which is more directly related to the field of inquiry of my thesis. This framework tends to be gender insensitive and hence, in my discussion of it, I try to provide a more feminist-rooted rendering which relates back to feminist theory and offers a more solid basis for understanding and analysing the livelihoods of female-headed households in Cala.

2.4.1 Historical ideas and approaches

The SLF did not suddenly emerge out of nowhere as an analytical tool and framework to understand rural livelihoods. Cross-disciplinary rural-based studies profoundly influenced the rural livelihoods perspective, though this influence often entailed critical engagement with these earlier studies. In this respect, I refer to two perspectives.

First of all, the work by Scott (1976) and others tend to start off by positing a moral economy hypothesis in romanticising past rural livelihoods, and they strongly put forward the significance of collective subsistence and communitarian economic security in the lives of peasants, with the village seen as the social fibre or cultural unit animating peasant life (Colburn 1982:441). In this regard, peasants are conceptualised as pursuing ‘anti-market welfare’, preferring ‘common property to private’ and depending upon ‘closed corporate villages’ (Scott 1976:5-6). In upholding the ‘safety first principle’ (Scott 1976: 189), peasants seek first and foremost subsistence and security and they are hesitant to place themselves in situations entailing risk, thereby focusing on evading drops in production (for household consumption) and not enhancing profits via the market. Cash crops sold through the market always come with the probability of a drop in market prices and therefore in income, consequently posing long-standing risks to peasants. However this collective and somewhat autonomous way of life became increasingly under strain with the further entrenchment of colonial capitalism, which ‘forced peasants into economically and socially isolated positions without the insurance and protection of their traditional institutions’ (Scott 1976:189). The

deepening commercialisation of agrarian relations in many ways undermined peasant subsistence, customs and traditional social rights and substituted them with contracts and the market mechanism. At the same time, some kind and degree of moral economy based on communitarian principles is still said to exist amongst peasant villagers, though now weakened and altered because of the commodification of life under contemporary capitalism.

Secondly is the work by Samuel Popkin, and notably his *The Rational Peasant* (1979). Popkin goes contrary to the moral economist argument in conceiving the peasant (even historically) as less communitarian and more individualistic and more of 'an economic man' than 'a social man'. Peasants, despite their often marginalised conditions of existence, seek actively to generate market surplus and to make meaningful investments in their productive activities. This theory adopts the peasant household as the main unit of analysis, and not the village as moral economists regularly did (Popkin 1979:17). The peasant, understood at household level, is an individual self-interested rational actor not chained, at least today, by any attachment to a shared traditional culture (Colburn 1982:439). Clearly, this approach to the world of the peasantry is influenced by mainstream neo-classical economic theory which suggests that the peasant efficiently allocates land, water, labour, seeds and other important inputs in rural production (Adams 1986:275). Ultimately, peasants make rational choices that maximise food security for their households (Popkin 1979:31). Brycerson (2000) summarises this position by saying that peasant smallholders are 'optimisers in line with neo-classical perfect competition and that their optimizing behaviour was observable through price responsiveness' (Brycerson 2000:25).

This imposition of an undifferentiated economic model on the peasant world, or the world of smallholders or small-scale farmers, certainly counters any problematic assumption that peasants remain trapped within a pre-modern world marked by irrationality and unreasoning practices. But the rational peasant approach has its own difficulties. Adams (1986:273) for instance is of the view that peasants are not (fully) rational because 'they lack sufficient information and live in a world of uncertainty... [T]he notion of a rational peasant leaves little or no role for families' social and economic characteristics or for personality, motivation and intelligence of individual farmers'. It is also claimed that a range of environmental and other contextual factors prohibit peasants from acting rationally (such as weather patterns, changes in conditions of production, government policies and market-related factors) (Lipton 1968,

Brycerson 2000). Of course, this is a criticism of the economic model *per se* which reduces the social world to the economic world and fails to recognise that economic rationality does not capture the complexity and diversity of peasant life or social life more broadly.

Combined both approaches emphasise key points, namely, the significance of understanding the world of the peasant at both household and village (or community) levels. But, also combined, they failed to provide a holistic understanding of the lives of rural people by categorising them purely in terms of their relationship to the land: peasant, small-scale farmer, etc. (Murray 2002). Broadly speaking, the SLF does not categorise rural people as peasants or farmers but as engaging in multifarious livelihood strategies to maintain household well-being. In this regard, the SLF also involves moves away from conventional development thinking involving production thinking, employment thinking and poverty line thinking (Chambers and Conway 1991, Scoones 2009).

Production thinking entails indicators such as hunger, malnutrition, famine and under-nutrition as problems pertaining to, or rooted in, insufficient food production. However, evidence shows that these problems should be considered as related to 'entitlements' (such as access to and control of resources like labour, land, capital, technology and markets) and these refer back to the capacity to 'command' food supplies (Sen 1981). In other words, inadequate food production must be understood within the broader agrarian political economy which severely compromises food security. For employment thinking, the issue of rural poverty is examined through the lens of unemployment and the need for employment generation in agrarian spaces (Schumacher 1973). Chambers and Conway (1991:2) point out however that this kind of thinking is divorced from rural realities in that rural inhabitants construct livelihoods through various activities (and in which formal employment is limited or absent). The poverty line thinkers view deprivation (including poverty) in terms of one criterion, namely, the poverty line which is usually measured in terms of incomes (i.e. salary or wage). This however is an urban-based notion of poverty which fails to recognise the importance of numerous livelihood strategies in rural areas which do not entail income generation.

Together, these three lines of thinking may be relevant and applicable to some contexts and to some extent, but they have a clear industrialised country imprint and are reductionist in their

analyses (e.g. employment) perhaps to facilitate ease of measurement of poverty and livelihoods (Chambers and Conway 1991:3). They fail to capture the specificities of specifically agrarian areas as well as the diverse livelihood activities, and varied household livelihood portfolios, which exist in these areas. In addition, because of their urban bias, they are silent about the significance of land and natural resources in facilitating livelihoods.

2.4.2 Genesis of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The sustainable rural livelihoods perspective, while critical of earlier approaches, nevertheless does draw upon some of their insights. It recognises for instance that rural people do act in largely rational ways in the construction of livelihoods but not in a straightforward means-end schema because of the troubled and fluctuating contingencies of their lives including constant shocks and stresses. Likewise, it appreciates the fact that rural households do not necessarily act in an independent manner but draw upon kinship and social networks at intra-household and community levels. Further, as will be shown, the framework seeks to combine sensitivity to both structure and agency in understanding the conditions of existence of rural households and their livelihood activities.

The conceptual roots of the SLF are varied including coming from applied social sciences, agro-eco system/farming systems analysis and especially participatory approaches to rural development (de Haan 2012). In this sense, it has strong roots in programmatic interventions and not only in analytical perspectives. The notion of sustainable rural livelihoods was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development of 1987 as 'an integrating concept dealing with the issues of population, resource, environment, and development, while corresponding with the need and priorities of the poor' (Chambers 1987:10). The conference organised by the United Nations on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (the so-called Earth Summit) gave credibility to the prospects of a programmatically-focused livelihoods framework in poverty reduction (Krantz 2001). The sustainable livelihoods framework became the core of international organisations' poverty alleviation policy. According to Geiser et al. (2011:258), international organisations explicitly aimed at 'a refocus on assistance to the poor'. In the end, Ashley and Carney (1999) conclude that the SLF has conceptual, practical and organisational implications. They thus claim that that

> Conceptually it drew on changing views of poverty, recognising the diversity of aspirations, the importance of assets and communities, and the constraints and

> opportunities provided by institutional structures and processes; in practical terms it placed people – rather than resources, facilities or organisations – as the focus of concern and action; and emphasised that development must be participatory and improvements must be sustainable; organisationally it had evolved within research institutes, NGOs and donor agencies and was not exclusive to one or the other (Ashley and Carney 1999:4).

The approach focused on human well-being and how to achieve household and community sustainability in the context of broad-based development (de Haan and Zoomers 2005), rather than prioritising economic growth *per se* (as increasingly propagated by neo-liberal discourses).

The SLF rose to prominence and became internationally-renowned and trans-disciplinary as it could be, and was, made relevant to theory, research, policy and practice (Kuntsson 2006:90). In this light, the SLF 'became an analytical structure for coming to grips with the complexity of livelihoods, understanding influences on poverty and identifying where interventions can best be made' (Farrington et al. 2004:91). The sustainable livelihoods approach represented a shift away from a nation-state orientation of prior development efforts, which focused on modernisation and political control, to advocating for the analysis of the realities of poor and marginalised people from their own perspective (Hendriks 2010). The framework won the attention of policy makers and donor institutions as it was seen as presenting a holistic and integrative approach with the capability to analyse and understand the complexity of rural development (Solesbury 2003, Bennett 2010). It therefore soon became the preferred way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities of development which would meet the needs of the rural poor.

It should be noted that several other like-minded approaches have been formulated which seek to understand rural livelihoods, including: the Framework for Thinking about Diverse Rural Livelihoods (Ellis 2000); Bebbington's (1999) Capitals and Capabilities Framework; and the UNDP's (1999) Sustainable Livelihoods Diamond. The SLF, as articulated for example by Scoones (1998, 2000) and Carney (1998), provides though the middle-level theory underpinning this thesis.

2.4.3 Basic Tenets of SLF

In this section, I identify and analyse the different components of the sustainable livelihoods framework and how they relate to each other in a coherent manner. However, given the specific focus and objective of the thesis, I am particularly concerned with its relevance to rural women and specifically female-headed households; and thus I consider the SLF in relation to gender. It is important first to provide a working definition of livelihoods and sustainable livelihoods.

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

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

While there are numerous definitions of 'sustainable livelihoods', the commonalities in these definitions are captured in the following definition articulated by Chambers and Conway (1992:7, emphasis in original):

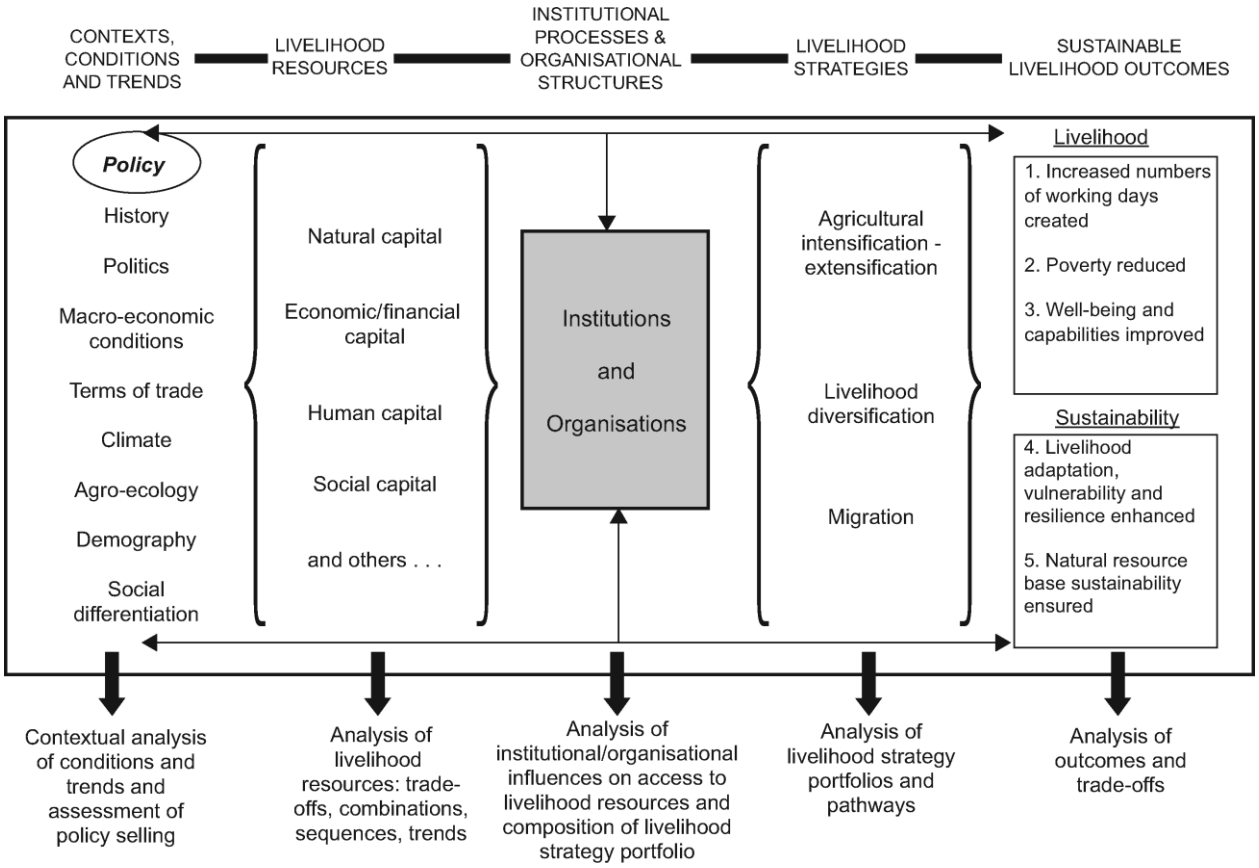
> The capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the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

Using the SLF is not conditional on concluding that rural households under study are engaged in livelihoods which are sustainable (whether within one generation or over generations). More often than not, what is discovered and analysed is the ongoing un-sustainability of rural livelihoods in the context of the current agrarian political economy.

Any sustainable livelihood framework is invariably divided into the following: first of all, certain conditions which compose the social context of vulnerability (for example, trends, shocks, crises and seasonality); secondly, livelihood assets (resources or capitals) which are drawn upon by households in constructing livelihoods; thirdly, broader structures and processes (i.e. social relations, institutions and organisations) which facilitate or constrain livelihoods; fourthly, livelihood strategies or activities pursued by households; and, lastly, livelihood outcomes which, as indicated, may not be characterised by sustainability (Scoones 2009).

Figure 2.1 depicts diagrammatically these different elements in the framework and the interactions or dynamic flows between them (as indicated by arrows). None of the arrows are meant to depict direct and unmediated relationships of causality; in the end, these are relationships of influence or soft determination (DFID 1999). The framework seeks to give some level of coherence to the lives of rural people but, in practice, their lives are deeply complicated if not 'messy' as they reassess their livelihood patterns on a daily basis through the complex and fluctuating maze which constitutes rural structures and relationships. Rural livelihoods are thus fluid and dependent upon a range of contingencies, such that they appear to be in a near constant state of strategising and redirection. In this regard, the SLF recognises the importance of reflexivity and agency on the part of rural households. But, simultaneously, it does deny the ways in which conditions and structures constrain (and sometimes even) enable the construction of livelihoods.

Figure 2.1: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



Source: Scoones (1998:4).

2.5 Assets

Assets are vital to the achievement of household-based livelihoods and are the building blocks upon which rural inhabitants are able to undertake production, engage in labour markets and participate in reciprocal exchanges at household, intra-household and community level (Cattermoul, Townsley and Campbell 2008). Assets therefore can be depicted as stocks of capital which can be used either directly or indirectly for household survival (Ellis 2000). In this way, the starting point of the SLF is the capital assets owned, possessed, controlled and claimed. I examine in turn the different assets highlighted by the framework, namely, natural capital, physical capital, human capital, financial capital and social capital. The SLF tends to treat assets as things, but it is crucial to note that they are embedded in sets of social relationships, including highly gendered relations.

2.5.1 Natural Capital

Natural capital (or resources or assets) entails the natural resource stocks which are used in constructing livelihoods and these include land, water and other environmental resources (Scoones 2009). These resources are particularly significant to rural people even under current conditions of marketisation and commodification. Natural capital can be categorised or classified as either renewable or non-renewable. The former entails resources that are replenished at least potentially over time (for instance fishery stocks, trees used for firewood, water levels and underground aquifers) while the latter refers to resources that are often permanently depleted (and cannot be replaced) according to the degree of extraction (such as metal, ores and oil) (Ellis 2002). The important natural resource is the land itself, which forms the basis for agriculture, including crop production and animal husbandry. But key natural assets also include bush meat (wildlife for human consumption), timber (as construction material and fuel, and for charcoal production), medicinal plants (for personal use and sale), roots, wild tubers, and honey (as food) (Golden 2009).

What may be considered as renewable though is often subject to depletion if not carefully managed. Thus, according to Casse et al. (2004), deforestation is threatening rural livelihoods because of the significant dependence of rural households on forests and forest products. And high levels of deforestation are directly related to rural livelihood strategies that entail fuel wood collection, timber exploitation (either for local consumption or for sale to urban centre), cropland expansion, and increases in grazing land (pasture). Even the land itself is open to degradation with problems of soil erosion and the lowering of the water table inhibiting the prospects for agriculture, which is normally based on rain-fed irrigation.

Natural resources are part and parcel of everyday rural livelihood activities but they also act as a critical safety net at times of stress and shock. Thus households may turn to natural resource extraction in the case of harvest failures, natural disasters or the death of a breadwinner who was engaged in formal employment. Coping strategies in times of crisis may include substituting previously-purchased goods (on the market) with natural resource equivalents (such as mushroom and berries) or engaging in the temporary sale of natural resources and handcrafts made from natural resources to supplement household income (Shackleton and Shackleton 2004); though it is often the case that involvement in such informal trading is integral to rural livelihoods.

A key advantage of natural capital is that it is regularly easily accessible (at no cost), though there are normally local forms of natural resource governance to control its usage (Rakodi and Llyod-Jones 2002). As such, rural people's reliance upon the market (both commodity and labour markets) is not as substantial as it is in urban spaces. This is not to deny the relevance however of commodity markets for rural households, both input markets (for agriculture and own consumption) and output markets (for selling goods) and certainly there is no claim to the effect that these households are able to survive independently of involvement in the labour market. But the more intimate connection to land and natural resources does allow for a level of food security which is not available in urban areas, all other factors being equal.

Natural capital, and specifically land, has a pronounced gendered dimension to it. Gender, in the context of systems and practices of patriarchy, plays a significant role in access to, and control over, land and farming (Shackleton 2004). This brings to the fore the importance of disaggregating the household unit and considering intra-household relations as structured along lines of patriarchy (at least in the case of married couples). Land in rural areas (such as the former Bantustans of South Africa) is regularly state-owned land. It is thus not privatised under freehold title but simply occupied by rural households. Patriarchy dictates that men have primary rights (of access, possession and control) to this land and women's rights to land are secondary and mediated through the male (such as the husband). In this way, and to a large extent, land is seen as part of the male identity, realm and space.

Women are undoubtedly central to the agricultural labour force in rural households yet they are sidelined in making decisions connected to agriculturally-based livelihoods because of their relationship to land (Schatz, Madhavan and Williams 2011). Ultimately, patriarchy structures the ways in which productive labour in agriculture is organised in agrarian spaces and it has implications for domestic labour or social reproductive labour as well. In this respect, women have a particular relationship to natural resources such as water and firewood (Tibesigwa, Visser, Twine and Collinson 2011), as they are responsible for collecting and gathering these resources for domestic purposes, which often entail considerable expenditure of time, energy and labour on their part. As such, women become marginalised, subordinated and disempowered at household level within agrarian spaces (Moyo 2004) with natural capital (entailing a set of gendered social relationships) being fundamental to this.

Additionally, in areas where small-scale farming exists, the 'feminisation of villages' is a regular occurrence. Men often migrate from their rural homes to seek formal employment elsewhere, such as the mines in the case of South Africa. Numerically, then, women often predominate in rural areas but this does not in-itself lead to any fundamental restructuring of relationships to the land. Husbands, despite their absence and only infrequent visits back home, still rightfully claim primary rights to land in the light of prevailing patriarchal practices and any decision-making powers exercised by wives is merely power delegated to them by the absent husband (Busingye 2002). In the case of wives who have lost their husbands in death, or who are divorcees, their possibilities of access to land is open to considerable variation, ranging from total exclusion, to ongoing secondary rights (through a senior male) and even to land access in their own right. According to Agarwal (1997), some degree of control over land tends to enhance women's ability to sustain their lives despite the existence of patriarchy, as it enhances their bargaining and decision-making power.

The subordinate position of women is reinforced by the ongoing existence of colonially-constructed customary land tenure systems (in which land is state-owned) and the associated so-called traditional form of local governance (involving the chieftainship system) (Ntsebeza 2004). Patriarchal discourses and practices are normally deeply implicated in these systems, and in many places they have been reinforced under post-colonial conditions (or post-apartheid in the case of South Africa) (Catherine and Hornby 2002). Chiefs, headmen and village heads (or similar hierarchies are traditional governance) are composed of men and they are often granted immense powers over land by the central state (Ntsebeza 2004). Further, they operate implicitly on the basis of patriarchal norms, with all decisions pertinent to land (including land allocation and land inheritance) invariably having a male bias. These governance structures contribute to the reoccurring disconnections between land and women, with this disconnection existing because of the ways in which women are ultimately conceptualised as belonging to the husband. Any connections women have to land (including labouring in the fields) are mediated by, and dependent upon, the husband. In the case of divorcees and widows, the decisions of traditional authorities can be of even greater significance in terms of livelihood possibilities.

2.5.2 Physical Capital

Physical capital entails the basic infrastructure and services essential to support rural livelihoods. The vital infrastructure includes affordable transport, proper road networks,

secure and decent shelter, sufficient and accessible water supply, and clean and affordable energy (Scoones 2009). Services relate in particular to health and educational facilities. Natural capital and physical capital complement each other. For instance, a proper transport network enhances the movement of any farm produce being sent to markets and also facilitates movement of rural people for engaging in other non-agricultural activities including petty trading of natural products (Ellis 2000:33). Likewise, the utilisation of electricity in rural areas helps to reduce pressure on the use of firewood which depletes natural capital.

Proper shelter is essential for decent and dignified livelihoods but, as Rakodi and Jones (2000) note, it is sometimes used for multifunctional purposes in not only providing domestic quarters but also income as rent or a site for petty commodity production activities. As well, and broadly speaking, infrastructure and services such as roads, electricity and water are crucial in enhancing livelihood diversification. But rural areas are often comparatively deprived of physical capital due to deficiencies in rural development initiatives and programmes; or, if present, services may be inaccessible because of issues around affordability arising from the increasing commodification of life (Solesbury 2003). Certainly, neo-liberal restructuring entailing the introduction of user fees has at times complicated the question of access to for instance rural hospitals and clinics (Farrington et al. 2002).

So, questions of availability and access become crucial for rural villagers. And – as with natural capital – physical capital is embedded in social relationships which are animated by patriarchy. Electricity may be present but unaffordable; and water may be available but only sporadically. Because, as indicated earlier, women carry the burden of domestic chores they are therefore invariably responsible for ensuring that alternatives to electricity plus water at a distance from the homestead are made available for their household. Farrington et al. (2002) argue that women will spend considerable time in travelling long distances to fetch water (which at times is not safe for drinking) and firewood (for warmth and cooking) such that considerable energy is consumed in pursuing non-productive activities; and this does not lessen women's assigned roles in agricultural work or in caring for children. Furthermore, it is often women who are expected to travel to clinics over long distances with the elderly or children when the latter need medical care and treatment.

An additional form of physical capital, which is also discussed under financial capital, is moveable household and agricultural assets. Again, these are normally owned by the husband and given that they store value and may be sold for different reasons and under different conditions (such as in times of crisis to generate income) (Chambers 1997), men's control over them is of great significance in disempowering women. For instance, when it comes to conflict within the marriage, the husband's control over these assets can be used to enhance his bargaining power; likewise, divorce can lead to the loss of such moveable property for the wife. Even in the death of the husband, the husband's relatives may claim this property as their own and leave the widow with little or no asset base on which to start her life afresh.

2.5.3 Human Capital

Human capital is a widely used term depicting skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health which, when considered as a whole, enable rural people to pursue different livelihood strategies (DFID 2000, Rakodi 2000). One of the essential assets that rural people possess is their capacity to labour, which is particularly significant in rural areas bearing in mind that a range of livelihood activities in these settings are labour intensive. But the capacity to labour may be undermined by sicknesses, with the HIV and AIDS pandemic being of great relevance today notably in southern Africa. There is also a nexus between human capital and financial capital. For instance, access to formal employment and earnings (as elements of financial capital) is often made possible by a strong human capital base in terms of skills and knowledge.

A change in human capital, through factors such as death, marriage and migration will have prolonged effects on livelihood strategies. Death may lead to a reduction in the household's capacity to labour (including in agriculture) and migration may have a similar effect while also though leading to an increase in financial capital through migrant labour remittances (Moser 1998). Migration also, as noted earlier, is effectively male migration and therefore adds to the burden of work (but not necessarily decision-making powers) for women.

Education and health both enrich human capital but the quality of both services (education and health) in rural spaces is hugely problematic. Both though tend to be prioritised by rural households, and hence it is not unusual for these households to at times divert money needed to purchase daily household necessities to for example purchase urgent medication instead (Crook 1996:150). In a similar way, education of children is deeply valued and women as

mothers in particular go out of their way to ensure that school fees and related costs are paid timely. Children though may be withdrawn from school because of household cash flow problems or because of urgent agricultural labour needs (during for example harvesting). Overall, because of deficiencies in the quality of schooling in rural areas and the many problems of ensuring that children remain in school until their late teens, high levels of illiteracy exist and this impacts negatively on the possibility of employment in other than unskilled positions. In the case of health, even below-standard health clinics may not be easily accessible because of the distances required for travelling, or due to inadequate cash for even transport costs.

Patriarchal norms are also observed with regard to human capital including in relation to education, such that girl child education is different than boy child education. This limits the enrolment of girls in both primary and secondary education when household finances are extremely tight, and this may have a knock-on effect on women's skills and knowledge for living independently subsequent to becoming a divorcee or widow. Women, when married, are also not viewed as farmers as this label is reserved for the husband. In relation to agriculture, women rather are literally deployed by their husbands as agricultural labourers (and as unpaid labourers) and that is their main human capital status.

2.5.4 Financial Capital

Financial capital is described as the financial resources that rural people have access to, in order to achieve livelihood objectives and it entails the availability of cash or equivalents which enable households to engage in different livelihood strategies. The two main sources of financial capital are as follows: available stocks comprising cash, bank deposits or liquid assets such as livestock and furniture for which there are no outstanding debts; and regular inflows of money comprising income from employment or informal trading activities, pensions or other transfers from the state, and remittances (Kollmair and Juli 2002). Clearly, the former source is wholly dependent on the latter source; or, sometimes, liquid assets are disposed of (i.e. sold) to generate household income for urgent needs.

Rural people vary in the extent to which they derive their financial capital from employment, remittances, state transfers, and informal trading activities. Stable forms of financial capital are of particular importance, and these would include formal employment (and not more casual forms of employment) and state transfers. But employment in rural areas is difficult to

come by, and state transfers (such as social welfare programmes) are regularly not available and, when available, they are normally contingent on meeting specific eligibility and needs-testing criteria. The absence of regular income, or shortfalls in financial capital, can (and indeed does) have dire consequences for rural households as agrarian economies today are deeply integrated into the money economy. Remittances and informal trading activities are subject to ebbs and flows in terms of regularity. In this context, land and land-based resources act as important safety nets but, even then, agricultural production is seasonal given the fact that it is dependent upon rain-fed irrigation, with climate variability and change currently making agriculture even more risky. Activities which generate financial capital also tend to be structured along gendered lines with, for instance, remittances coming from men (who historically are the typical worker under capitalism) and trading activities being differentiated in terms of notions of masculinity and femininity (with women engaged in selling products often used within the homestead). Ideally, rural households pursue a livelihoods portfolio inclusive of a number of financial capital activities to minimise household insecurity when one particular activity ends abruptly or dwindles over time.

In terms of savings and credit facilities, these are normally minimal in rural areas. Rural households often do not have financial reserves to fall back on in times of crisis, and seeking loans from mainstream financial institutions is near impossible. Any savings generated are not held on a long-term basis but are used for urgent household consumption expenses or for building up the asset base of the household through the purchase of homestead items (such as furniture) or agricultural equipment. Rural households, in large part because they do not own fixed property (even the plot on which their homestead is located), are not able to secure loans because of the lack of collateral for security on the loan. Such loans could be of use in expanding the scale of agricultural production or for entering into petty commodity production on a more secure footing. In lieu of the failure to obtain loans from formal institutions, rural households sometimes obtain credit from informal money lenders (as a form of micro-lending) and often at high and burdensome interest rates. This is often a last gasp measure to ensure that basic household goods, notably food, are purchased.

It is also not unusual for a limited number of rural households to come together to form savings clubs (sometimes called rotational groups). Women in particular are known for participating in such clubs, by which they contribute a monthly cash amount to a common

money pool and, on a rotational basis, draw lump sums of money from this pool to cover substantial household expenditures (Gwagwa 1998). A specific version of this entails burial societies, which are more household-based than women-based, and which allow for society members to cover funeral expenses when a household member dies. Both of these arrangements draw upon existing social relationships at inter-household or community level, and relate to the notion of social capital discussed below.

2.5.5 Social Capital

Social capital is understood in a multiplicity of ways in the prevailing literature (Foley and Edwards 1997, Robinson et al. 2002, Meagher 2005). Putnam (1995) describes social capital as a social entity formed and existing for the benefit of everyone in a community, as it has the 'capacity to facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam 1995:2). Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986), as other significant writers on social capital, have similar foundational conceptions as Putnam, with Bourdieu (1985:248) speaking of this capital as involving a 'durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition'. However, writers like Bourdieu also bring out the perspective that social capital is not necessarily inclusive and of benefit to all, as it can exclude and marginalise certain community members. Insofar as social capital refers to prevailing social arrangements and relationships beyond the household level (Foley and Edwards 1999), it cannot be conceptualised independently of power relations and access to and control over material and ideational resources, such that 'power relations are reflected in and reproduced by social networks' (Molyneux 2002:181). As a result, there are discernible linkages between social capital and the broader political economy. Because of this, and despite the dominant tendency in the social capital literature, it is crucial not to romantic the social arrangements captured under the concept of social capital.

Social capital, as understood at least initially as networks of mutual support involving trust (Meagher 2006), can improve access to resources such as loans, food, and information about employment and other opportunities for rural households (Ellis 2000:35; Portes 1998). But, as Lin (2001) highlights, this requires that each member of a network or arrangement provides ongoing inputs (as an investment) in expectation of benefits arising from it. The kinds of groups discussed under financial capital, namely, rotational groups and burial societies, exemplify these characteristics. It is important to note as well that social capital arrangements may come to the fore more prominently when rural people are in large part

abandoned by the state or where markets fail to integrate them fully. Thus, in a context where states and markets fail, social networks offer alternative sources of provision at local levels and based on local initiatives (Meagher 2006, World Bank 1999).

For Putnam (2000:22) social capital, in its form, can be bonding (intra-group) or bridging (inter-group). What is considered as bonding or bridging depends though on the level of analysis being deployed. Generally speaking, bridging social capital involves the creation of ties among people who are otherwise normally not affiliated to each other, whereas bonding capital refers to more intimate social relationships between people who are part of the same group. Certainly, rotational groups and burial societies are examples of bridging capital, though often existing within the same locale. For my purposes, I consider the household unit as entailing bonding capital and hence it relates specifically to intra-household relationships including the relationship between husband and wife.

So far, I have concentrated on the purported benefits of social capital as supportive arrangements for the benefit of all. Studies which focus on benefits tend to show the importance of social capital in minimising risk and protecting individuals from stresses and shocks (Barr 1998) in what Hyden (2006:73) calls an 'economy of affection'. But social capital also has its downside, though not as considerable as Bayart (1999:43) posits. Problems (including tensions and conflicts) arise from issues intrinsic to these social arrangements, such as a breakdown of trust, and also from outside them because their 'vitality ... is largely a product of the political, legal, and institutional environment' in which they reside (Woolcock and Narayan 2000:234). And arrangements entailing either bonding or bridging capital are regularly marked by such problems, including the bonding capital characterising the rural household based on mutual expectations and responsibilities of wife and husband.

Despite the complexity of social capital, there is often a silence on questions around gender. Feminist scholars argue that social capital is not an innocent term (Bebbington 2002) and is in fact marked by 'gender blindness' (Silvey and Elmhirst 2003:867). In this respect, while the mainstream literature on social capital tends to associate social networks with poor households *per se* in rural areas, the feminist critique claims that it is primarily linked to poor rural women (as for instance in the rotational groups) (Molyneux 2002:179).

But more important for this thesis is bonding capital at household level. When social capital is cited as household-based capital, there is often a failure in the rural livelihoods literature to fully consider the ways in which social relationships internal to the household are embedded in power differentials which shape control over household resources and decision-making, with this differential existing primarily along gendered lines marked by patriarchy (Bebbington 2007:157). Silvey and Elmhirst (2003:30) thus conclude that 'gender ideologies … lead to unwelcome claims being made on women's labour and remittances, and create certain types of constraints on women's mobility and behaviour'. Therefore, the social capital prevailing in rural households is often very exclusionary, with women as wives bearing the brunt of this. In accentuating this point, Mayoux (2001:440) rightfully claims that 'there has been a by-and-large systematic failure in social-capital writing, to get at and problematize the underlying assumptions about gender subordination embedded in the rules and norms governing associations and relationships at all levels' including at household level. In this way, wealth, power and privilege are unequally distributed within rural households (Braun 2002).

2.6 Vulnerability Context

The discussion of the SLF is not complete without a reflection of the processes that mediate access to the above-discussed capitals. Vulnerability conditions and events (such as shocks, trends, crises and seasonal variations) as well as structures (organisations) and processes (institutions) (Farrington et al. 1999:3), which are discussed in the next section, enhance or limit livelihood options and possibilities.

There is no agreed upon definition of vulnerability but its basic content is reasonably clear. Moser (1996:2) simply defines vulnerability as 'the insecurity of the well-being of individuals, households, or communities in face of a changing environment' with the environment being ecological, economic, social and political. Vulnerability is likewise defined by Dershem and Gzirishvili (1998:1827) as 'any threat to survival or livelihood'. Analysing the vulnerability of households involves not only identifying the threat (as depicted in Figure 2.2), but also household coping and resilience in resisting or recovering from the negative effects of a changing environment. The means of coping and resilience often involves drawing upon existing capitals. In this context, 'the more assets people have, the less vulnerable they are' (Moser 1998:3).

Chambers (1995: 189) approaches vulnerability slightly differently, arguing that vulnerability does not mean want or lack but rather exposure and defencelessness. He identifies two sides to vulnerability: first of all, there is the external side which is the subjection to shocks and disturbances; and, secondly, there is the internal side of defencelessness meaning 'a lack of means to cope without [a] damaging loss'. In other words, as vulnerability mounts, livelihoods become less sustainable. While the prospect of coping and resilience for rural households is difficult, Chambers tends to underestimate household capacity in this regard. Coping however is simply a short-term response while resilience and recovery is more long-term and requires enhanced capacity.

Figure 2.2: Vulnerability Context

Trends	**Shocks**	**Seasonality of**
Resource degradation	Human or animal health	Price fluctuation
Population trends, Growth and density	Natural shocks- disasters Drought, pests and disease	Employment opportunities
Political including governance	Sudden economic change, Market crashes, inflation	Production
Change in technology		Health

Source: Carney (1998:18).

Shocks are events which occur on an infrequent, sudden and unpredictable basis. They would include natural disasters such as floods which may destroy physical assets or undermine livelihood activities by pushing people off their land in order to cope with their changing situation. Trends, such as a decline in the price of goods sold through petty commodity trading, are usually more predictable and persistent compared to shocks. They often have direct implications for the effectiveness and profitability of livelihood strategies and mostly affect individuals and households which have limited livelihood options. Seasonal shifts are also a constant cause of livelihood difficulties for poor rural people, including those arising from agricultural seasons (with the extended period prior to harvesting regularly being particularly problematic) (Chambers and Conway 1991:10-11). These factors lead to different kinds and degrees of vulnerability (Di Gregorio et al. 2004:19-20).

However, households and individuals within households are not passive victims of the situations they face but are active agents who negotiate and manoeuvre their way through their world in seeking to preserve life and livelihoods, of which food security is especially important. In this sense, rural households somehow seek to rise above their prevailing conditions of existence. Thus, in handling and mitigating vulnerability, households adopt and pursue one or more ways of adaptation, including economising, hoarding, protecting, depleting, diversifying, making claims and moving (see Figure 2.3). What adaptation mechanism or mechanisms emerge depend upon the kinds of vulnerability being faced by a particular household and the livelihood activities existing at the time.

Figure 2.3: Mitigating the Effects of Vulnerability

Economise - reduce consumption, shift to low quality foods
Hoard - accumulate and store food and other assets
Protect - preserve and protect the asset base for recovery and re-establishment of a livelihood
Deplete - pledge or sell assets
Diversify - look for new sources of food, and diversify work activities and sources of income
Claims - make claims on relatives, neighbours, the community, NGOs, the government by calling on good will and begging
Move - migrating to less vulnerable areas

Source: Chamber and Conway (1991:15).

In the case study of the Cala villages discussed in later chapters, the particular vulnerabilities faced by *de facto* and *de jure* female-headed households and the diverse ways in which they respond to them are highlighted.

2.7 Institutional Processes and Organisational Structures

In understanding the construction of rural livelihoods, it is crucial to understand mediating factors focusing on institutional processes and organisational structures which constrain or enable the livelihoods of rural people by impacting on the possession of, and access to, the different capitals discussed previously (Scoones 1998, Ellis 2000, Farrington et al. 1999). I use the term organisation as 'groups of individuals bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives' (Ellis 2000:38, DFID 1999), including formal bodies (such as government ministries and departments, development agencies like NGOs and private

corporations) and more informal bodies (of which local savings groups, as discussed under social capital, may be an example) (Chambers 1997). Government agencies are particularly important because they pursue programmes based on state policies, including programmes pertaining to employment generation and rural development. The state's agricultural departments which (amongst other things) provide agricultural extension services are of particular relevance to rural households. Weaknesses and failures on the part of the state have profound negative repercussions for rural households. And, in rural areas, it is more often than not the case that robust state structures do not exist with the consequent problems of poverty and vulnerability. In this context, sometimes NGOs engage in rural development projects to fill the gaps in service delivery (including sanitation and water). Additionally, local state governance in rural areas in Africa often takes the form of so-called traditional chieftainships and these play critical roles in terms of access to land, particularly for women.

Institutions are the 'rules of the game' or the 'regularised practices (or patterns of behaviour) structured by rules and norms of society which have persistent and widespread use' (Giddens 1979 in Scoones 1998:12), with these institutional processes forming the basis of social interaction within organisations or in (smaller) groups. And intrinsic to these institutional arrangements, and indeed animating them, are power relations. Of specific relevance to this thesis are patriarchal norms and values which are pervasive throughout contemporary society and which become embedded in different ways in different organisational settings. This is certainly the case with the chieftainship system but it is also pertinent to 'the household' consisting of a group of individuals which seeks jointly to construct household-based livelihoods. Thus, a society-wide system of patriarchy leads to a range of patriarchal practices within the rural household setting which involves disempowering and marginalising women as wives (a point I raised earlier, in a different way, with regard to household-rooted bonding capital and power differentials along gendered lines).

2.8 Livelihood Strategies and Outcomes

Livelihood strategies refer to 'a range and combination of activities and choices that people make/undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals (including productive activities, investment strategies and reproductive choices)' (DFID 1999:25). In using available assets, and in the context of specific vulnerabilities, households often combine different livelihood strategies or activities (making up a livelihood portfolio) to meet their short-term and sometimes longer-term needs (amounting to what are called livelihood outcomes). A

combination of strategies is sometimes referred to as a process of 'straddling' in which households or even particular individuals in the same household engage in different livelihood activities simultaneously (Beall and Kanji 1999). Livelihood outcomes are in constant flux (and in-process) as households are involved in a never-ending process of constructing and reconstructing their livelihoods. More broadly, livelihoods are not static as they have a strong temporal dimension to them and are subject to significant change even over short periods of time (Muroviwa et al. 2012).

Scoones (2000) identifies three broad trajectories of rural livelihood strategies and outcomes, namely, agricultural intensification (or 'extensification'), livelihood diversification and outward migration. Agricultural intensification would likely involve channelling capital and technology into production (to increase productivity or yield per hectare/acre) whereas extensification would involve placing more land under cultivation. The prospects though of rural households moving along this trajectory – particularly in the light of global neo-liberal restructuring and its disastrous impacts on small-scale farmers – seem somewhat limited. As it stands, landlessness is increasing worldwide and small-scale farmers are struggling to maintain current levels of productivity. More commonly, however, people pursue a combination of strategies in sequence. According to Herbinck and Lent (2007:14), this 'livelihood typology [as set out by Scoones] offers useful insights into the broader rhythms of social change and provides relevant categories for analyzing rural livelihoods'.

Livelihood diversification denotes a deliberate attempt by households to discover new ways of generating income and thereby reduce risks and uncertainties, or as a response to shocks and crises (Chambers 1997). This seems to be a more likely scenario for rural households currently. Various factors may prompt rural people to diversify (Ellis 2000) and many of these literally compel households into diversification, though at times it involves more voluntary reasons including asset accumulation (Davies 1996, Hart 1994). Compulsion, in signifying involuntary causes for diversification, would include shortfalls in crop production because of intermittent rainfall and entry into petty commodity production and trading as a result. In this respect, involuntary diversification tends to highlight the existence of pronounced vulnerability and distress and may simply be tantamount to a coping or adaptation mechanism. Indeed, diversification might even amount to households opting for casual and low productivity livelihood activities (Gosh and Bharadwaj 1992). Certain trends

however may lead to a kind of diversification which in fact enhances livelihood outcomes (and over the long term), such as an expanding economy generating employment opportunities. Irrespective of the reasons for diversification or for the existence of a diversified portfolio, the specific activities may entail both agricultural and non-agricultural activities (for instance petty trading), as well as both on-farm and off-farm activities (including employment elsewhere) (Carswell 1997), all of which supplements or substitutes gains from agriculture and acts as a form of security seeking (Scoones 2009).

Diversification may have positive and negative effects. It certainly reduces over-reliance on one livelihood strategy thereby perhaps curtailing vulnerability to different shocks and stresses. Contrarily, it involves putting considerable time and energy into different activities simultaneously such that no one activity becomes noticeably productive and profitable. These though are considerations about which rural households give particular attention when weighing the option of diversification, even though under conditions of extreme stress the time for reflexivity may be quite short (Chambers and Conway 1991). Another positive effect of diversification is that one particular livelihood activity pursued may bolster another. For instance, agricultural intensification or casual work may provide a strong basis for engaging in informal trading activities through the provision of more crops or financial resources (Scoones 1998). Although the household economic model has been useful in providing an entry point of understanding diversification determinants it does not capture inter-temporal dimensions of livelihoods or describe the circumstances of survival under stress (Muroviwa et al 2012:4).

Migration, as a third trajectory, may involve temporary or even more permanent movement outside of the rural home for purposes normally of employment. This was quite common historically, at least in the case of South Africa under the migrant labour system, but it is still prevalent today. With household members employed elsewhere and making contributions in cash or kind (including through remittances), this may enhance the financial security of the rural household and lead for instance to agricultural intensification. But normally the migrant is a male adult (and often the father) and this has certain negative consequences: it reduces the amount of household labour available for agricultural production and it disrupts the normal functioning of the rural household unit. This is the context giving rise to the prevalence of *de facto* female-headed households in rural areas.

Livelihood strategies ultimately yield livelihood outcomes which are subject to reproduction, reinforcement, alteration or transformation as the process of constructing livelihoods is ongoing and takes place in a fluid mix of stable and fluctuating circumstances. The possible outcomes are many, including deepening levels of poverty/vulnerability/incapacity or poverty/vulnerability/incapacity reduction and many points in-between. And, within any rural locale, there is bound to be significant differentiation between households, with some households on an upward path while others are on a downward spiral. The thesis considers this in relation to three villages in Cala, Eastern Cape, in the case of *de jure* and *de facto* female heads.

2.9 Revisiting and Revitalising the Livelihoods Framework

The SLF has for many years now proven to be of significant analytical value in making sense of the complexities of the livelihoods of poor rural households. In this regard, it has certain strengths. First of all, as articulated by Arku and Arku (2011:68), the framework is a people-centred perspective which examines livelihoods at household level in a holistic, integrated and comprehensive manner. Secondly, it goes beyond the household as a unit of analysis by considering social relationships at the inter-household level and community levels. Thirdly, it seeks a broader understanding of the underlying factors leading if only indirectly to poverty and vulnerability at rural household level, and the reproduction of this, by focusing on the broader agrarian political economy and beyond. In this sense, then, the SLF operates at different levels of analyses. And, combined, these points indicate that the framework in its own particular way shows sensitivity to questions of both agency and structure.

Admittedly, this is likely a sympathetic rendering of the strengths of the framework such that critical reviews of the SLF in the prevailing academic literature are often more severe (Ashley and Carney 1999). In this respect, Carswell et al. (1997:10) claim that the framework is marked by a ‘conceptual muddle’ with even the very definition of ‘sustainability’ in sustainable livelihoods often ‘unclear’ and ‘inconsistent’. And the SLF is also said to be riddled with methodological difficulties with, for instance, the notion of poverty (seemingly so central to the framework) rarely operationalised in any meticulous way or operationalised in a reductionist, economistic way. Because of this, even the notion of ‘the poor’ remains ambiguous (Krantz 2001). While these are important conceptual and methodological points, my case study of Cala female-headed households does not rest on a resolution of these points,

as I forego the significance of sustainability in my examination and make no attempt to measure poverty or the poor as such.

My main focus is on the construction of rural livelihoods and the ways in which the SLF contributes to understanding and analysing these livelihoods with particular reference to my case study. My concern here is with the emphases given by the framework to structure and agency and to the different levels of analyses (the scale of analysis) embedded in it. All three criticisms mentioned below highlight in different ways the significance of integrating power and politics more fully into the SLF (Unsworth 2001). In providing these criticisms, I hope to contribute to what Scoones (2009:13) calls for, namely, a 'way of extending, expanding and enriching the livelihoods perspective'.

Firstly, the framework does not properly and fully examine socio-economic inequalities and power differentials within local communities. Though communities are recognised as stratified along various lines, this stratification is regularly understood in a gradational and not a relational sense. A relational understanding would imply a recognition that local thriving households benefit at the expense of struggling households, and thus that their position of privilege needs to understand, in least in part, in relation to the existence of poorer struggling households. Because of this, questions about local agrarian spaces must include: 'who owns what, who does what, who gets what and what do they do with it?' (Bernstein et al. 1992:24). And answers to these questions possibly require a focus on relationships between households positioned in different locations within local systems of differentiation and stratification.

A second criticism is the SLF's failure to offer a complete structuralist analysis. The emphasis by the SLF on agency at local level, including ongoing reflexivity on the part of households, is crucial but it needs to be located in a more sophisticated structural perspective which moves from the local agrarian political economy to the national political economy and the global political economy (Bernstein et al. 1992). Too often, the framework begins and ends at the level of local agrarian spaces and fails to consider how the lives of rural households, even in deep rural spaces, are a manifestation of processes, no matter how indirectly, of national and global processes (Bebbington and Batterbury 2001). The livelihoods approach undoubtedly emerged from a complex parentage putting emphasis on

'the local' and in many ways this is a key advantage of the framework. It goes on to claim that it links analytically the micro with the macro but this seems to be more of an ambition than a reality. The national and the global are often simply treated as 'context' and not as central to livelihoods analysis. However, as Baumann (2000) stresses, context needs to be a focus of analysis in and of itself. Not pursuing this may leave the SLF embedded in a naive localism (Scoones 2009).

Thirdly, and of particular importance to the thesis, the framework does not give adequate attention to a level of analysis below the household, that is, to intra-household social relationships. In this respect, households as such do not construct livelihoods; individuals within them do, and in such a way as to contribute to what can be labelled as a 'household livelihood'. Further, intra-household relations are marked not only by cooperation and coordination but also by power differentials, both generational and gender based. The latter speaks to patriarchal arrangements internal to households. Such arrangements need to be brought to the fore in using the SLF, rather than simply tacked on at the end. Thus, unless the framework is built from the start on a gender-sensitive or feminist basis, its analytical value is severely weakened.

Gender insensitivity in the livelihoods framework is epitomised by the devaluation and undervaluation of women's reproductive and productive work (Arku and Arku 2011:167) in rural areas, thereby leading to a masculinised or perhaps male-centred understanding of rural livelihoods. Women's labour within the rural household is multi-faceted and burdensome, involving social reproduction, subsistence production, petty commodity production (and trading) and even within capitalist production as formal workers (Wield and Chataway 2001).

Social reproduction (involving domestic, caring and nurturing responsibilities) denotes the homestead work done primarily by women, which is often based on patriarchal obligations. Whether these responsibilities entail familial love or straightforward labour, they nevertheless involve unpaid work by women (Mosoetsa 2005:335). Women's involvement in subsistence agricultural production is another form of unpaid and unremunerated labour based on patriarchal arrangements, and it occurs without women having secure rights to the land they work daily. Women regularly become involved in petty commodity production and trading and sometimes do so as a refuge as it gives them quite often a source of income

independently of men over which they have some degree of control in terms of expenditure (Wield and Chataway 2001). The kinds of petty activities in which they engage regularly have a pronounced 'feminine' quality, such as trading in homestead products (mats and brooms for instance) (Chirau 2012, Tamukamoyo 2009). Finally, though rural women find it difficult to successfully seek work as permanent employees in mainstream capitalist (or state) enterprises, processes of informalisation and casualisation under contemporary conditions of neo-liberalism may provide opportunities for women of irregular forms of employment such as temporary and part-time work (Peck 1996). It is not unusual to find women concentrated in these irregular employment forms. Gender thus clearly runs throughout the livelihoods of rural households.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter began by discussing the various contemporary feminist theories. In doing so, I highlighted different focus areas in understanding women subjugation. For instance, liberal feminists focus on equal access for women and men both politically and economically but they fail to address meaningfully issues of gender inequality, while radical feminists highlight that femininity and masculinity are socially constructed and socially reproduced. I also explicitly raised questions around patriarchy from the feminist perspectives, as this offers an entry point into understanding why women continue to be marginalised particularly in rural areas where patriarchy still persists and is solidified. The chapter then examined the sustainable livelihoods framework which is directly linked to the thesis topic and objective. I noted the genesis of the framework for understanding and analysing livelihoods and the different dimensions of the framework, along with its strengths and weaknesses (notably in relation to the prevalence of patriarchy). Combined, these sets of analytical perspectives offer a strong basis for examining the livelihoods of female-headed households in Cala. Besides this theoretical context for the case study, it is also crucial to contextualise the study in terms of the broad political economy of land in South Africa, as this facilitates a deeper appreciation of the conditions of existence and challenges for female heads in a former bantustan. I now turn to this, in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LAND IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

Segregation and later apartheid South Africa is well-known for its racial discriminatory tendencies in all spheres of life (including social, economic and political). Under both segregation and apartheid, the South African economy grew at the expense of the socio-economic conditions and political rights of black people broadly, and rural inhabitants in the former reserves later bantustans more specifically. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, the South Africa government led by the African National Congress has sought to redress racial inequalities orchestrated and legalised by successive racial states under segregation and apartheid, and this has involved pursuing a range of policies and programmes focusing on redistribution, including land redistribution. However, there are significant continuities between apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, and these exist in part because of pronounced neo-liberal restructuring in South Africa since 1994. In this chapter, I first discuss the political economy of South Africa historically until the present and then go on to examine the question of land in the same historical (and thematic) way. This political economy of land is crucial in facilitating an understanding of the conditions and challenges continuing to occur in the former bantustans, as the case study for this thesis is located in a former bantustan.

3.2 Continuities from Segregation to Apartheid

In order to understand the political economy of contemporary South Africa, it is imperative to understand the historical preconditions that marked the segregation period in South Africa in the period from 1910 to 1948, which itself is rooted in pre-1910 colonialism and which led to the apartheid period from 1948 (Giliomee and Mbenga 1997, Feinstein 2005).

Colonialism was marked by the massive expropriation of land held by indigenous people and an emerging racial order which gained further impetus with the discovery of diamonds and gold in the late 1800s. Subsequent to the Anglo-Boer war in the 1890s, the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, with the war and the union entailing conflict and compromise within white power as the colonialists sought to consolidate their power over the indigenous population. In the context of consolidating white power, this entailed land dispossession and economic impoverishment for the indigenous black population as well as their exclusion from the status of citizens and their designation as a source of cheap labour for the emerging

capitalist economy. The mining industry in many ways set the racialised template for the segregation period and later for apartheid, including the treatment of blacks as temporary sojourners in urban areas through the influx control and pass system, the migrant labour system, super-exploitative wages for black workers, and the confinement of these workers to single-sex (male) hostels in compounds (Thompson 2000).

With the formation of the union, the Natives Land Act of 1913 was promulgated and effectively divided the union geographically into white areas (including the cities) and Native reserves, with the latter occupying a small percentage of the total land mass of the union and often in areas with low agricultural potential. The land in Native reserves was owned by the state with the reserve households having merely rights of occupation and use, and under the governance of a chieftainship system which was deeply subservient to the segregationist state (Terreblanche 2002). Though reserve households were able at times to produce an agricultural surplus for the market, this became increasingly difficult after the 1913 Act. As well, the state imposed taxes (such as the poll tax) on reserve households which had to be paid in cash, and this reinforced the migrant labour system with men from the reserves being compelled to seek work on the mines and in the cities (and leaving their wife and family behind in the reserve). Agricultural production in the reserves, insofar as it continued to exist, was conceptualised by the segregationist state, as subsidising the wages of urban black workers. Ultimately, women paid the price for this, as they became more centrally involved in ensuring some form and level of agricultural production in the reserve areas.

In the meantime, the state heavily subsidised and financially-supported white commercial agriculture, in part initially in order to undercut market competition from reserve households and black farmers outside the reserves. The influx control system ensured that white farmers had a ready supply of cheap labour and, though it restricted black movement into the cities, the system did not inhibit a similar supply for the expanding manufacturing industry. In others, white-owned mining, agriculture and manufacturing all benefited from the segregationist policies even though rifts at times emerged between them over notably the supply of black labour. In the end, black workers were treated as mere labour units, with their (and their families') primary place of domicile being the Native reserves (Brynes 1996). This situation did not go unchallenged by both urban and rural blacks, with urban black workers (notably in the mines) engaging in significant strike action despite not being members of

officially-recognised trade unions, including in the years leading to the end of segregation, and 'peasants' in the reserves also engaging in overt and covert forms of protest (Davidson, Issacman and Pelissier 1985).

Racial segregation and domination from 1910 to 1948 was the precursor of a more ruthless, harsher system of racial oppression established and executed by the National Party under apartheid, though in many ways the party simply refined a system already in existence. The victory of the National Party is often interpreted simply as reflecting Afrikaner interests (Sonn 1993) but it also served class forces within the white population (notably white agricultural capital). Apartheid South Africa is regularly understood as involving petty apartheid and grand apartheid (Christopher 1994), with the former relating to segregation and discrimination in the social sphere. Grand apartheid involved separation and domination within the political and economic spheres, including the denial of political rights of citizenship for blacks in the (white) nation-state and the consolidation of (ethnic) homelands or Bantustans (the earlier 'reserves') where blacks were expected to pursue their political aspirations (Davenport 1991). As the prime minister said in 1948, 'institutions in their own reserves [homelands] ...will enable them to have a large measure of self-government and ....at the same time to return their own national character' (quoted in Ballinger 1969:235). This was crucial for the infamous divide and rule strategy in maintaining white hegemony (Kashula and Anthonissen 1995). A revitalised chieftainship system, in terms of the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, was to ensure that the authority of chiefs and headmen was further extended in terms of both executive and administrative powers. In this light, the ongoing dispossession of land for blacks (which became even more pronounced under the forced removals programme of the apartheid state) remained central to the political geography of the country. And, for this reason, a still-heavily subsidised white commercial agricultural sector became more firmly entrenched from the late 1940s, while viable agriculture in the homelands became increasingly difficult.

This became known as a dual agricultural economy: a profitable white commercial one and an unviable largely subsistence-based black one in the homelands in which the apartheid state failed to bring about any meaningful rural development. This dualism was part of a broader national economy in which large-scale manufacturing and mining remained in white hands, and with latter continuing to have significant foreign ownership and investment and

depending almost entirely on the migrant labour system for its labour force (which came from either the homelands or countries in southern Africa). Manufacturing companies had expressed concerns to the apartheid state about the tightening up of the influx control and pass systems from the early 1950s (including the introduction of passes for women) because of a growing preference on their part for a stable urban black male work force (living with their families), but their labour needs in the end were never seriously threatened. In fact, in terms of the national economy, there was significant economic growth particularly during the boom decade of the 1960s. This was during a time when urban blacks, outside the mines, continued to live in townships (formerly known as locations) which were economically and socially deprived areas in terms of housing and access to basic facilities and services. As in the period of segregation, under apartheid (in the 1950s and then in the 1970s) there was massive and often militant opposition coming from the trade union movement and nationalist movements including boycotts and civil disobedience. This took place despite any attempts made by the apartheid state to create a black middle class as a bulwark against such opposition (Carrim 1996).

The 1970s and the 1980s in South Africa were characterised by a deepening economic and political crisis. On the economic front, the seeming advantages of the apartheid economy resulted in deepening contradictions and tensions within the national economy, such that 'financial indicators showed that both a fiscal and monetary crisis was imminent' (Gumede 2007:425; Chili 2000). From 1974 to 1987, the annual average Gross Domestic Product rate was only 1.8 percent while, before this, the average rate over an extended period was 4.9 percent (Levy 1999:4). The declining international gold price hit the economy particularly hard given South Africa's historical dependence upon minerals for exports and foreign currency generation, and thus had knock-on effects for the apartheid state's fiscus (which already entailed deficit budgeting). As well, using black workers as primarily an unskilled labour force resulted in growing skills shortages in the manufacturing industry, particularly at a time when manufacturers sought to capitalise their operations through technological innovation. And despite significant economic growth until the end of the 1950s, urban unemployment amongst the black township population became endemic and indeed structural (Nattrass 1995). International sanctions against the apartheid regime, although regularly subverted, also impacted negatively on the economy in terms of capital withdrawal. The

implications of all this for urban blacks, in terms of deepening levels of poverty, became very clear in the 1980s (McGrath and Whitefords 1994).

Perhaps, politically, the crisis in South Africa from the early 1970s was more vivid. After the heightened intensity of the urban struggles in the 1950s which were consistent with the 1955 Freedom Charter (Moll 1988, Karis and Gerhart 1977, Williams 1987), and subsequent to the significant downturn in struggles in the 1960s in the context of massive state repression (for example the Sharpeville massacre in March 1960), urban-based mobilisation and organisation intensified and deepened in the 1970s and 1980s. This is exemplified for example by the Durban strikes in the early 1970s, the Soweto Revolt (1976-1977), mine worker trade unionism (notably the National Union of Mineworkers) and the formation of the United Democratic Front in the early 1980s with hundreds of civic organisation affiliates, which together involved struggles in both the workplace and community.

In combination, the political and economic crisis led to significant reforms being formulated and pursued by the apartheid government. These included changes in labour legislation, such as the right of black trade unions to register with the government and the doing away with strict implementation of the employment colour bar. As well, restrictions on blacks' movement into the urban centres of 'white' South Africa were relaxed due to changes in influx control and pass law regulations. At the same time, the apartheid government continued to respond to urban struggles with significant repression including national states of emergency. Further, grand apartheid in the form of Bantustans was not tinkered with at all; in fact, a few Bantustans were given 'independence' (including Transkei and Ciskei) and the chieftainship system remained in force though a number of chieftainships showed their support for the anti-apartheid struggle.

This section did not seek to provide a comprehensive chronological overview of the segregation and apartheid periods. Rather it raised a number of themes pertinent to setting the historical context for the following discussion of the post-apartheid era. By the late 1980s, the South African state and nation was immersed in a profound structural crisis and, in this light, the National Party-led apartheid government sought a negotiated settlement which was eventually finalised with the first democratic elections in 1994.

3.3 Post-Apartheid Period: Redistributive and Neo-Liberal Programmes

Upon the advent of democracy in 1994, the post-apartheid government led by the African National Congress (ANC) under the presidency of Nelson Mandela sought to redress apartheid's inequalities, notably racial inequalities, and undo racial oppression through political and economic restructuring. The following words by Mandela on his inauguration are revealing with specific reference to economic restructuring: 'The time to build is upon us. We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering, gender and other discrimination' (Mandela 1994:4). This reflected an initial commitment to the total eradication of apartheid and to building a democratic, non-racial, poverty-free and, importantly, non-sexist (and therefore presumably patriarchy-free) South Africa.

The actual story of South Africa's socio-economic restructuring since then is riddled with tension. The ANC government was faced with a dilemma in 1994: on the one hand, to address the massive inequalities of the past through redistribution and, on the other, to maximise economic growth as the basis for development. The dilemma related to the possibility of doing both simultaneously, and the tension existed because it seemed that pursuing both in practice was contradictory. This tension, in the 1990s, is highlighted by Lesufi (2002:286) who distinguishes between 'growth through redistribution' (based on a Keynesian-style development programme) as reflected in the original post-apartheid government economic policy called the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), and 'redistribution through growth' as a more market-driven neo-liberal approach embodied in the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) programme adopted in 1996. Though the ANC government has increasingly leaned towards the latter since the year 2000, state policies and programmes are characterised by an odd mix of neo-liberal and redistributive components such that Helliker and Vale (2011) are correct in saying that it is highly problematic to talk of a full-blown and unadulterated neo-liberal state in South Africa.

The ANC released early versions of the RDP as its main manifesto for the first democratic elections, with an emphasis on broad-based, inclusive, people-driven development, and the victory of the ANC in 1994 meant that the RDP formed the basis of the state's macro-economic strategy (Wolpe 1995). Economically, the RDP sought a mixed economy based on growth, development, reconstruction and redistribution informed by a broadly Keynesian

paradigm. There was a significant focus on the need for resource distribution nationally, hence the RDP aimed to bring about for instance: a living wage (given the exploitative conditions of black labour under apartheid); large-scale provision of basic services including housing, water, electricity, health and education for black people to overcome the legacy of apartheid; a national-wide system of social assistance which in the past had in large part excluded the black population; and affirmative action along racial lines with regard to employment. Politically, the state was to be significantly democratised not only in terms of the now universal franchise but by ensuring inclusive public participation in the affairs of the state between elections by ordinary citizens. This however did not entail dismantling the chieftainship system, which are often labelled as undemocratic structures, or the racial geography of apartheid on which it rested.

The RDP only lasted two years as the state's flagship programme. Though many of its tenets remain even to this day as official state programmes (for example, state housing and social assistance) it was clear from the start that the ANC government did not have sufficient capital to fund the RDP, certainly not in relation to its grand targets. Further, there were early signs of a neo-liberalisation of the RDP when it came to the RDP-based *White Paper*, legislation and programmes including the need for tight fiscal discipline and controlling state expenditure on supposedly non-productive investment such as housing (Fine 1995). There were also indications of disgruntlement on the part of investors about the RDP macro-economic strategy (Taljaard 2006). In June 1996, the Minister of Finance released the 'non-negotiable', more mainstream neo-liberal project known as GEAR which sought to integrate the South African economy more fully into the global economy on an apparently competitive basis. The demise of RDP was not particularly surprising given that the World Bank and International Monetary Fund had, during the early 1990s, were putting extreme pressure on the ANC as a government-in-waiting to abide by neo-liberal dictates.

GEAR embodied a traditional neo-liberal macro-economic package, including a less-interventionist and more capital-friendly state (Adelzadeh 1996). Goldin and Heymans (1999:112) portrayed GEAR as 'a medium-term strategy to achieve specific targets of economic development, investment and growth, fiscal constraint, enhanced exports and trade employment creation'. The focus was to be on growth *per se* with the expectation – based on trickle-down theory – that redistribution and development would be the invariable

consequences (including through a massive rise in employment). Though 'unproductive' social investments were still considered of some importance (for instance for housing and health), these were to be contingent on economic growth rates. At the same, though, further breaks were to put on overall state expenditure in limiting the fiscal deficit to 3% of the Gross Domestic Product, with this taking place by restructuring the state by way of privatisation and liberalisation if necessary. GEAR was broadly welcomed by both foreign and national capital interests but denounced by the main trade union federation (Congress of South African Trade Unions - COSATU) as a structural adjustment programme for such measures as labour market flexibility, though COSATU was in formal alliance with the ANC.

In the end, GEAR failed to meet even its main target of economic growth and, even more troubling, it likely deepened levels of black poverty and unemployment and racial inequality (Heintz and Jardine 1998). It was meant to entail distribution through growth but it turned out to be (limited) growth without distribution (or development) (Osborn 1997). While successes were registered in as far as curbing the fiscal deficit, the average annual economic growth rate between 1996 and 2000 was 2.5% (rather than the expected 4.2%); and while the government expected to create 270,000 jobs per annum during this period, there was a net loss of 30,000 jobs from 1996 to 2000 (leading to what is called jobless economic growth) (Nattrass 2000). In this respect, it is difficult to accept the conclusion by Seekings and Nattrass (2005) that a 'distributional regime' existed in the early 2000's in post-apartheid South Africa, given the massive black poverty continuing to exist (Kallis and Nthite 2007).

Subsequent to GEAR, there emerged the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) in 2005 and, more recently, the National Development Plan (NDP), with AsgiSA effectively replacing GEAR. According to President Thabo Mbeki, AsgiSA was 'not intended to cover all elements of comprehensive development plan… [I]t is a limited set of interventions to serve as a catalyst for accelerated and shared growth' (Naidoo and Mare 2015:409). No matter how it was framed, AsgiSA's main thrust was to bring about an annual growth rate of the economy of 4.5% in 2005-2009 and 6% in 2010-2014, while simultaneously accelerating the redistribution of wealth, and reducing socio-economic inequalities, unemployment and poverty by 2014 in line with the Millennium Development Goals. AsgiSA's economic growth and employment targets were deemed unrealistic and

attracted considerable criticism. Indeed, AsgiSA was fully consistent with neo-liberal restructuring. As Burger (2007:22) highlights, AsgiSA was

> A collective acronym for a set of policies/interventions that already existed… [C]ollecting them under one banner creates the perception, though not necessarily an accurate perception, of policy integration and focus... [T]he growth and employment objectives are loosely stated since ASGISA does not demonstrate how the various interventions relate and contribute to the objectives.

In other words, there was a disconnection between objectives and interventions. AsgiSA was short-lived as it was replaced by a new growth path, the NDP, launched in 2012. The NDP seeks to position the South African state as a democratic developmental state, or at least an aspiring democratic developmental state, but neo-liberalism continues to dominate macro-economic strategy to 2015. Among the main objectives of the NDP were to create five million jobs by 2020 (and specifically 'decent' jobs) and reduce unemployment by ten percent, besides the standard talk about poverty reduction and inclusive development. Again, like in the previous macro-strategies (such as GEAR), there is a tension within the NDP between neo-liberalism and the recognition by the ANC government of the profound need for historical redress and redistribution.

In this context, in the next section I examine the prevailing objective situation about inequality and poverty more specifically in relation to RDP, GEAR, AsgiSA and NDP as a whole. But their clear and uncontroversial failings are perhaps more clearly shown in 'the subjective' situation, namely, in and through the ongoing and mainly urban-based struggles, including by trade unions, unemployment people's movements, shack-dwellers' movements, community movements as well as less formally organised (so-called) service delivery protests. However, some of the recent struggles, notably the conflicts on the platinum mines (tragically the killings at Marikana in 2012) raise questions around the conditions of existence of rural people living in the former homelands, as most miners have families living in these homelands, including in the Eastern Cape. Here it is important to highlight that, despite any rhetoric to the contrary, these four state strategies fail to address gender in any meaningful way – certainly, they are gender blind and not gender neutral, with patriarchy not being questioned at all.

3.4 Post-Apartheid Poverty, Inequality, Unemployment and Living Conditions

Fighting poverty, inequality and unemployment has been central to the ANC government since 1994. But the legacy of apartheid, and of the earlier segregation period (and indeed of the pre-1910 colonial era) remains etched on the economic landscape of post-apartheid South Africa (Mathole 2005, Francis 2006, Cawker and Whiteford 1993).

The majority of the black population continue to live in conditions of poverty, with poverty therefore remaining strongly racialised and also spatialised. In particular, there are high levels of black poverty in the rural areas, in both the former Bantustans and amongst farm workers and tenants on (still mainly white) commercial farms (Shackleton et al. 2007). For instance, in the late 1990s, 72% of those considered as 'poor' lived in rural areas (May et al. 2000). However, poverty in black urban townships remains endemic. Woolard and Leibbrandt (1999:23) observe that the incidence, depth and severity of poverty are unambiguously highest in rural areas, followed by small towns and secondary cities and considerably lower in metropolitan areas. Both urban and rural poverty arise not from exclusion or estrangement of the economically-marginalised but from their 'adverse incorporation' into the broader political economy of South Africa (du Toit and Neves 2007:147). And, importantly, poverty is intergenerational within particular households.

Black poverty in the former Bantustans and urban townships is associated with unemployment, minimum wages, informal economic activities, substandard accommodation, hunger, and water and sanitation problems. A report by the Human Sciences Research Council (2004) documents the poverty rate according to South Africa's provinces. Limpopo province tops the list with 77%, while the Eastern Cape (where my case study is located) follows at 72%. Generally, the provinces in which there are large former Bantustans (such as the Eastern Cape) are marked by higher levels of poverty. Female-headed households (accounting for at least 40% of the total number of South African households) experience more poverty and approximately 75% of these households are classified as poor. This means that there is very pronounced feminisation of poverty in contemporary South Africa, including in the former Bantustans.

There is though increasing differentiation within the black population (or intra-racial inequality), with a rising black middle class strongly in evidence, and this has led to the black

population as a whole now having a greater share of the national income vis-à-vis the white population. Thus, 'intra-African inequality and poverty trends increasingly dominate aggregate inequality and poverty in South Africa' (Leibbrandt et al. 2010:4). The depth of inequality however in South Africa is normally considered as the highest in the world. The reason for this is not simply the overall economic growth rate but the content of the economic growth path since 1994, which increasingly entails capital intensity and a high-skills regime. As Seekings (2007:17-18) argues, 'the continued adherence to the growth path of the apartheid period inevitably results in continuing poverty in a context of massive unemployment, especially among the less skilled…[The] global context encourages inegalitarian patterns of economic growth but public policies [effectively neoliberalism] also play an important part in the South African case' (Seekings 2007:17-18).

There are clear linkages between poverty and inequality on the one hand, and unemployment on the other (Nattrass and Seekings 2000). There is significant literature on unemployment in South Africa, in particular examining measurements of unemployment and the causes of insufficient employment generation, but these questions are not central to this thesis (see Fedderke et al. 2001, Bhorat and Oosthuizen 2005, Burger and Woolard 2005, Pauw, Oosthuizen and van der Westhuizen 2006, Arndt and Lewis 2000). No matter the causes of unemployment and how unemployment is defined and measured, there is no doubt that unemployment in South Africa is extremely high and that blacks, women and rural people suffer the brunt of the problem. For instance, ten years ago, the rate of unemployment for black Africans was 26.2% in terms of the narrow definition of unemployment (excluding discouraged work seekers) and 41.2% when discouraged work seekers were included. The comparable figures for the white population were 4.2% and 6.3% respectively. Broadly speaking, female employment was much lower than that of men in 1995 and – in the specific case of black Africans – only 17% of women were in wage employment compared to 43% of men (Kingdon and Knight 2005). According to Stats SA (2011), the overall unemployment rate in South Africa is 38.4% and the bulk of the unemployed people are in the former Bantustans (such as in the Eastern Cape), which are marked with a particularly high unemployment rate for black women and youths.

In this respect, the differential levels of unemployment reproduce and maintain the racial and gender inequalities in broader South African society. Unemployment rates differ across

provinces, which again emphasises the intensity of the problems in rural areas. A survey by StatsSA (2004) shows in fact that the highest rate of unemployment was in the more rural province of the Eastern Cape (at 32.5%) with KwaZulu-Natal province not far behind. Further, under neoliberalism, the informalisation and casualisation of the workforce has increased, such that employment contracts do not necessarily involve 'decent' work (Bezuidenhout et al. 2004). This has led to heightened differentiation within the labour force, with 'a core of insiders or permanent workers with rights, better wages and benefits, access to training, etc. and a periphery of outsiders or vulnerable workers – casual, temporary, subcontracted, etc – with fewer rights, reduced wages and conditions, and little job security' (Kenny and Webster 1999:238). Women often occupy the 'outside' occupations, for instance in the retail industry.

The absence of any household income generated through stable forms of full-time employment contributes immensely to poverty. For instance, Leibbrandt, Finn and Woolard (2010) show that income from formal employment was responsible for the 83% of income inequality in 1993 and 85% in 2008. And this of course has a very substantial racial component to it, with black unemployment leading to, on average, low household income levels, a matter which is of great significance given the monetised character of the capitalist economy. But Butler (2004: 69) at the same time emphasises that there are 'new income gaps in ... [South African] society, between a multi-racial middle class and the rest of society, and between an African urban and industrial working class and the African unemployed and very poor'. Because of an urban bias, Butler regrettably does not refer explicitly to the former Bantustans. But with staggering levels of unemployment in these rural areas, household livelihoods become extremely problematic (Cawker and Whiteford 1993, Schoeman and Blignaut 1998), especially as such levels will remain systemic even in the light of the ANC's National Development Plan's focus on broad-based rural development. In this regard, deficiencies in household income mean that conditions of poverty are not transitory but are deeply embedded in the past, present and future of such households (Seekings and Nattrass 2005). For this reason, Seekings et al. (2006: 271) correctly describe the typical Bantustan resident as a 'permanently marginalized outsider'. And rural to urban migration for work purposes rarely results in meaningful and long-term employment success (Bhorat and Kanbur 2006). Yet significant numbers of poor black households are marked by fluid and porous household membership with hybrid livelihoods across urban and rural spaces.

Considering the neo-liberal stance of the ANC government and the effects this has on social expenditure, it is necessary to consider social infrastructure and facilities (or living conditions more broadly) in relation to poverty, unemployment and inequality. It is undoubtedly true that the South African state has sought to pursue redistributive programmes focusing on living conditions (a key tenet of RDP), and that it has done so in the context of massive backlogs emanating from the pre-1994 past, but its record in this regard is not overly impressive. This is exemplified by the hundreds of so-called service delivery protests taking place in urban centres throughout the country every year.

There have however been definite improvements. Access to housing and basic household services have improved since the mid-1990s. For instance, the number of households with access to formal dwellings increased from 65.1% in 1996 to 68.5% in 2011 and then to 77.6% in 2011. Resulting, the number of households living in informal dwellings (for example shacks) and traditional housing (for instance, made from wattle and mud) decreased. But the figure is still considerable, at nearly 25% of South Africa's population (with informal settlements and backyard shacks appearing in and around urban townships). In relation to access to piped tap water, the percentage rose from 80.2% to 90.6% during the 1996 to 2011 period; and it increased from 58.2% to 84.6% in terms of access to electricity. With respect to access to a flushed toilet, the 1996 figure was 82.9% and the 2011 figure was 90.6%, but this meant that nearly 10% of South African households used a bucket toilet or had no toilet whatsoever (Van der Berg 2006). These statistics however hide as much as they reveal. It is well known for instance that the quality of the formal housing stock in urban townships in many cases is quite deplorable, including severe conditions of overcrowding. As well, access to electricity does not necessarily entail ongoing usage of electricity, as affordability of electricity for poor black households is a challenge. Additionally, access to piped tap water may entail the usage of communal taps outside of the dwelling and shared by a number of households. It should also be highlighted that the poor black households which are most disadvantaged when it comes to social infrastructure live in the former Bantustans. In this light Crais (2002:224) argues that, in the former Bantustans, a 'state of emergency' exists, one which speaks to the very foundation of human security and dignity.

Given the levels of unemployment and poverty discussed, a key question becomes the way in which poor black households (in both urban and rural areas) sustain themselves under deeply

disturbing conditions of existence. Fundamental to this has been the social assistance programme (specifically the social grant system) which has been implemented on a massive scale since 1994, a redistributive programme which seems to go contrary to mainstream neo-liberal thinking though, in practice, perhaps simply softening the blow of the harsh realities of neo-liberalism in South Africa.

These grants, which presently number around 17 million, include the child support grant, the old age pension, the foster care grant and the disability grant. The child support grant has by far the largest number of recipients, but its monthly amount is only R350. The grant is for all children up to the age of 21 whose parent(s), guardian or caregiver meets the eligibility criteria pertaining to means-testing. The relevance of the child support grant in contemporary South Africa is especially revealed when the prevalence of the HIV and AIDS pandemic is highlighted. Dorrington et al. (2006:17) report for example that in the year 2005 about 5.4 million South Africans were HIV positive, with an HIV prevalence rate of 11%. The pandemic has led to massive numbers of orphans – with caregivers of the orphans (sometimes grandparents, sometimes siblings of parents) receiving the grant. The old age pension, for men 65 year and over and for women 60 years and over who meet the eligibility requirements, also has significant numbers and the monthly amount is more substantial, currently at R1350.

There is absolutely no doubt that this cash transfer system (in the form of social grants) has played and continues to play a massive role in providing a regular monthly income for poor black households and particularly where wages from employment do not exist. In fact, without the social grant system, as Seekings (2007:21) highlights, the levels of poverty in the country would be far greater. However, this does not in any way imply that the grant system is an effective poverty reducer let alone poverty alleviator, and it does not provide a long-term sustainable solution to household income (van der Berg et al. 2006) and thereby ensure that households break out of the poverty cycle.

3.5 Land Questions in pre-1994 South Africa

The process of land dispossession in South Africa has its history in the 17th Century when the white settlers arrived at the Cape in 1652, with the first formal act of forced relocation occurring with the removed of Khoi communities from the west of the Salt and Liesbeek rivers. Military conquest and colonial settlement continued on an unrelenting basis over the

new two centuries, with legislation and decrees often legitimising land expropriation. For instance, in 1894, the Glen Grey Act (which became a template for land laws for the Union from 1910) was introduced in the Cape Colony to – amongst other things – limit the number of indigenous people able to subsist on the land and thus it 'indirectly force[d] the surplus into the capitalist sector' (Lacey 1981:15). By this time, and spurred on in the main by the mining sector, the demand for labour in the emerging capitalist economy was intensifying. The colonialists did not desire a stable African peasantry which would limit the pool of cheap labour for the mines or compete with white colonial farmers (though in many areas this class of farmers was on the rise) (Beinart and Bundy 1988). They sought rather to transform rural indigenous people into a labouring class though one which was not fully proletarianised, with indigenous (black) labourers still retaining links to rural-based families increasingly struggling over time to work the land productively. This was to form the basis of the infamous Native reserve system with the families of migrant labourers engaging in Reserve subsistence agriculture and thereby, according to the logic of colonialists, ensuring that the low wages of the ultra-exploited migrant husbands/fathers were dutifully subsidised.

The formation of the Union from the four existing colonies (including the Cape Colony) undoubtedly involved centralising, coordinating and regulating control over land in the interests of the white colonialists (de Villiers 2003, Hendricks 2001, Christopher 1994). It thus led to a white segregationist state with pronounced racialised land policies, regulations and practices, though the often-hidden and underplayed gender dimensions need to be brought to the fore (Ntsebeza 1999). The racial-land nexus was explicitly articulated from the start though the 1913 Natives Land Act, which divided the Union into white South Africa and Native Reserves and thereby justified centuries of violent land expropriation and dispossession like elsewhere in former settler colonies in Africa (Basset 1993, Naldi 1993, Murray and William 1994).

In the case of South Africa, the Native reserves formed 7% of the country's land with an increase to 13% in 1936. The change was informed by the Beaumont Commission's recommendations which argued that the 7% initially allocated was insufficient to accommodate the majority of the black population in the reserves. At the same time, the status of black tenants on white and other land outside the reserves became increasingly subject to state coercion, including through the removals of blacks without consultation and

compensation from so-called black spots (Platzky and Walker 1985). Reserve land was state land as blacks were denied right to freehold title, with reserve households holding 'permission to occupy' permits (Ntsebeza 1999). This implies a relationship to the land based on uncertain and insecure land rights (Lahiff 2007).

As the population in the reserves grew, resources became depleted. In this regard, there was never any attempt by the segregationist state to meaningfully develop reserve agriculture for purposes of rural livelihoods. The kind of state agricultural interventions undertaken were purely internal to the reserves and were imposed on local populations, such as so-called betterment planning and rehabilitation programmes from the late 1930s which included culling of stock, cutting down of arable land size and concentration of settlements (McAllister 1989). As Murray and Williams (1994:316) argue, these were 'designed to improve production and conserve the soil in the African "reserves" without altering the distribution of land'. The racialised political geography of the country was never questioned by the state and it simply brought about reserve reorganisation which was deeply resisted by reserve inhabitants.

All of this continued into the apartheid period from 1948 and with greater intensity and coercion. Forced removals took place on a massive scale and have been ably documented by the Surplus Peoples Project (Platzky and Walker 1985; see also Levin et al. 1997, Kepe et al. n.d.). Platzky and Walker (1985) note for instance that, at times, people were moved by direct coercion involving police, guns, bulldozers and demolishment of houses. Likewise, betterment schemes and other kinds of modernist agricultural interventions in the reserves (now named homelands or Bantustans) were the order of the day for the apartheid state, but the one-size-fits-all technicist approach was largely impractical and of minimum value for Bantustan households. And male members of homeland households continued to seek work on the mines and in urban centres of 'white' South Africa, as the migrant labour system was foundational to the very existence of specifically the low-wage mining industry.

Critical to the reserve and then Bantustan system was the chieftainship system which was reconstructed by the apartheid-colonial state. In this regard, Mamdani (1996), in his analysis of Africa broadly but also with specific reference to pre-1994 South Africa, speaks about the existence of a bifurcated racialised state. On the one hand, there was central despotism which

entailed racial domination at a nation-level, with a whites-only franchise and whites alone being considered as citizens. On the other hand, reserves/Bantustans were under indirect rule (or decentralised despotism). Though central state Native or Bantu administrations held overall control of governance in these areas, authority was delegated to the chieftainship system (or so-called traditional authorities) and homeland residents were thus mere subjects without any democratic control over their own lives. This was most explicitly articulated through the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act which formalised homeland territorial and sub-territorial (or local) authorities based on traditionalism.

By making traditional authorities more central to apartheid administration in the Bantustans, the building blocks of apartheid were more firmly consolidated in these rural areas. The tribal authorities headed by traditional leaders were undemocratic and additionally they were extremely patriarchal in character (Ntsebeza 1999) in terms of composition (for instance headmen were men) and practices. Land, under a permit to occupy arrangement based on what the segregation-apartheid states imagined as customary (and pre-colonial) tenure, comprised a homestead, land for crops and common land for grazing, with homesteads often under villagisation due to betterment schemes. And, importantly, the permit of occupy was held by or registered in the name of invariably men, many of whom were migrant labourers. In this context, the existence of *de facto* female-headed households was extremely prevalent if not the norm. Women, with primary rights to land, carried the burdens of agricultural labour, social reproduction and the everyday management of the household, and under the most difficult of circumstances (Marcus 1991). In the event of death of the husband, and in becoming a *de jure* female head, the wife (now a widow) might continue to access land through a male relative or at times in her own right (Ntsebeza 2006).

Overall the result was a bifurcated agricultural system (or agrarian dualism) with food-insecure homeland households struggling to sustain themselves (even for own consumption) through agriculture on small plots without private title (and under traditional authorities) while white agrarian capital with freehold title and heavily supported by the apartheid state (for instance credit through the Land Bank) engaged in commercial agricultural production using increasing economies of scale (Hendricks 2001). Dualism though is perhaps a problematic term as it tends to imply that the two agricultural systems are disconnected when in fact white agriculture is only productive and profitable because the homeland agricultural

system has been marginalised and undermined on a constant basis, involving agriculture often on unproductive land with poor rainfall and infertile soils (Ditlahke 1997, Bernstein 1997, Wegerif 2004). In 1994, 60,000 white commercial farmers were in possession of approximately 86% of agricultural land. The average amount of land held by black people in the homelands amounted to 1.3 hectares compared to 1,570 hectares by their white counterparts (Deininger 1999:25). This was the situation inherited by the ANC government in 1994.

3.6 Land in Post-Apartheid South Africa

One of the key problems faced by the new democratic government was the colonial-style legacy of racial dispossession and the broader political geography of apartheid including the Bantustans and their governance system. Though a non-racial universal franchise now exists and, officially, the Bantustan system has been dismantled, agrarian dualism is still prevalent along with the chieftainship system. In this respect, and prophetically, Mamdani argued that 'the real import of (South Africa's) transition to non-racial may turn out to be the fact that it will leave intact the structures of indirect rule' (Mamdani 1996:32). Though there has been a deracialisation of politics, with all areas of the country now falling under provincial and municipal structures and elections taking place locally under the council system, the bifurcated state has only been reformed because of the presence of traditional authorities in the former homelands.

Outside of the former Bantustans, white agrarian capital tends to remain dominant though, because of neo-liberal restructuring, the state no longer provides massive support to commercial farms as in the past. The ANC government has over the past two decades sought to tackle this dominance, and deracialise land ownership, by a series of land redistribution programmes as well as through its restitution programme. This is consistent with the new post-apartheid constitution which asserts that 'the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis' (Section 25(5) of the Bill Rights, Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996).

Restitution enables black people who were dispossessed by racially-discriminatory legislation dating back to 1913 (for example, those subjected to forced removals in the past) to claim compensation, either financially or through actual restoration of lost land rights (Roodt 2001,

Levin et al. 1997, Sihlongonyane 1997). The cut-off date for lodging restitution claims has recently been extended and, so far, most of the claims have been about dispossession from urban land and, in many cases (including in rural cases), the compensation has been purely monetary with the funds coming from the state (de Villiers 2008). Many problems have occurred, including multiple claims in the absence of documented evidence, fraudulent claims, exorbitant land prices, and protracted negotiations to settle claims in part because of 'bureaucratic confusion and chaos' (Mngxitama 1997:24). The amount of land subject to successful claims as of 2014 was 726,952 people nationwide; 62,077 (9%) of these beneficiaries were women while the rest were men (Commission for Gender Equality 2014). Restitution's overall contribution to addressing the racialised land legacy is at best 'mixed' (Walker 2011). It is important to note that, though households in the former reserves and Bantustans were forcibly moved due to betterment schemes (if only into centralised villages), this issue has yet to be properly addressed by the ANC government in terms of the restitution programme.

Redistribution has evolved through a number of programmes (known by their acronyms SLAG, LRAD and PLAS) (Wegerif 2004, Lahiff 2008) and these have consistently not met their quantitative targets (in terms of land redistributed and, as a more recent emphasis, levels of agricultural production) (CSIR 2005, CASE 2006). The amount of land transferred to date through redistribution is more than 4.2 million hectares from white ownership to black farmers (African Research Institute 2013) which amount to about 8% of South Africa's land area. At the same time, there have been major deficiencies in the forms and levels of post-settlement agricultural support provided by the state to the 'new' farmers. Originally, redistribution was meant to target marginalised groupings (as per the RDP) which included the rural poor in the former Bantustans, with this supposedly contributing to decongesting these areas. In this way, land redistribution was at first primarily about historical redress. But, increasingly, the main focus of redistribution has been agricultural productivity as a more neo-liberal form of reasoning (Mbongwa and Thomas 2005), with redistribution recipients requiring proof of productivity as a condition for remaining on the redistributed farm. In fact, the redistribution model in South Africa continues to rest on a willing seller-willing buyer market-driven (state-assisted) logic (May et al. 1995), without any land expropriation taking place. This model is consistent with the constitution's respect for private property rights (Hall 2004) 'enshrines the [land] inequalities inherited from the past' (Hendricks 2013:28), and it is

rooted in the 'adherence of the ANC to neo-liberal policies' (Lahiff 2007: 1578). Though poor women have at times been prioritised in the redistribution programmes, the Commission for Gender Equality (2014) noted that only 18.284% of the 50,877 beneficiary households under redistribution have been women (including female-headed households).

Besides restitution and redistribution, the South African state has pursued tenure reform as a third component of its overall land policy (Meer 1997). Tenure reform relates to the land and tenure rights of farm workers and dwellers on commercial farms in former 'white' South Africa and there has been some progress on this (in making tenure rights more secure.) through legislation known by its acronym ESTA, though farmers continue to engage in evictions either legally or illegally. But tenure reform was also meant to deal with land rights and access in the former Bantustans and, with regard to this, there has been no progress at all. As such, the land in the former Bantustans remains as state-owned with rights of occupation (or possession) only for households.

Overall, the land reform programmes of the ANC government (including redistribution, restitution and land tenure reform) have

> Proved to be slow and have made little headway towards the goals of rural restructuring and poverty alleviation. Politicians and policymakers in South Africa have [for instance] yet to draw relevant lessons about the limits of market-based land redistribution and appear to be repeating the tendencies towards... moderate deracialisation of the land-owning class and the growth of a small black commercial farming class in place of wider agrarian reform (Moyo and Hall n.d:1).

Of particular importance for this thesis is that no significant changes have taken place in the former Bantustans, and I now elaborate upon this.

3.6.1 Traditional Authorities, Land and Gender

The issue of traditional leadership has been debated quite extensively in South Africa within policy circles and by academics, with a crucial question being the relationships between land, traditional authorities, democracy and gender (McIntosh et al. 1995, Ntsebeza 2013). Chieftaincy in the South African context is a result historically of traditional African customary institutions being incorporated into and reconstructed by colonial, segregation and apartheid processes (Bernstein 1985, Walker 1990) and, if anything, it has been consolidated

even further since 1994 (Walker 2011). Such arrangements are of course a worldwide problem (Agarwal 2002, Deere and Leon 2001).

Altering land tenure in the former homeland areas by, for instance, allowing for land markets and land ownership would ultimately challenge the power and status of the traditional authorities, with which the ANC government prefers not to tamper because of the importance of chiefs and headman in securing rural electoral support for the ANC (Cousins 1996). This of course means that, as a general trend, the rights of women remain as mediated secondary rights and patriarchal practices are widespread. The patriarchal social order involving gendered privileges (for males) as well as marital status (in which unmarried women, whether divorced, widowed or single, are often disadvantaged) is thereby reproduced (Rangan and Gilmartin 2002:641).

In the former Bantustans, conflict looms between traditional leaders (as an ongoing form of indirect rule) and democratically-elected local government structures in allocating and administering land, such that there are two centres of power. More specifically, there is tension between so-called customary law as administered by traditional authorities and civil laws rooted in a national constitution which upholds gender equality. Indeed, since 1994, the government has advanced land policies that push for gender equity and empowerment, but simultaneously it continues to give power to traditional leaders over land issues within the context of local patriarchies (Walker 1998). In this light, women are in practice subject to the authority of men and traditional leaders despite any gender-informed legal changes based on the constitution.

There are in fact pertinent pieces of legislation which have led to a resurgence of traditionalism in post-apartheid South Africa, namely, the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Amendment Act of 23 of 2009 and the Communal Land Rights Act of 2004 which was declared unconstitutional in 2010 (Loate 2014). Combined, this pending legislation in the early 2000s was said to likely ‘entrench the powers of undemocratic, patriarchal traditional leaders over communal land’ and ‘fail[s] to secure the tenure rights for women living on this land’ (Walker 2005:298). This consolidation of traditionalism leads to a situation of marked dependency of households upon chiefs and headmen because of the latter’s authority over land access, possession and control. And this has particular

implications for women, for instance in the case of challenges around inheritance of land by the widow on the death of her husband. As Levin et al. (1997:157) observe, 'control over land-allocation constitutes the fundamental material basis of the power of the chiefs, and is also the most crucial mechanism for the interplay of corruption and control'. At times, it has been alleged that headmen enter into illegal land market transfers for personal gain and that they engage in discriminatory land practices favouring particular households to the disadvantage of others. And women are in a particularly weak position to question such any local land dealings.

The absence of significant land rights for women in the former Bantustans affects detrimentally their social and economic well being (Walker 2005). For women, insecure access to land also undermines their agency and power within households as well as at a more community or village level. Failure to address this through appropriate tenure reform in the former Bantustans, and by even deepening the problems for women through the reinforcement of traditional leadership, is part of a broader issue with reference to the weaknesses embedded in the ANC's land policies and programmes. As Walker (2003:26) notes with specific regard to a study of land reform in KwaZulu-Natal Province, 'very little attention was paid to gender equity and women's empowerment. Officials worked with already constituted groups and existing power relations between men and women'.

3.7 Rural Livelihoods in the former Bantustans

In this context, I examine rural livelihoods in the former Bantustans with a particular emphasis on women in former Bantustans (Morema 2000). It is particularly disturbing that, twenty years after the end of apartheid, rural communities are still marginalised with respect to employment, access to resources (particularly land), infrastructural development and social services. Any real chance of broad-based rural development in these areas has been undermined consistently by neo-liberal restructuring. It is regrettable that this restructuring took off during the time of the transition away from apartheid because, not only did it mean that white agrarian capital lost its significant state support, small-scale black farmers in the former homelands also lost any chance of necessary state support to recover from decades of segregation and apartheid suppression. Rural livelihoods hence continue to be characterised by significant levels of poverty with 'the overwhelming number of rural women' being 'poor or very poor' (Walker 1998:4). In considering rural livelihoods, I look at land-based strategies and other strategies. Though (former) Bantustan households continue to engage in

some form of agriculture as well as consumption of (and trade in) natural resources, cash transfers (such as social grants and remittances) are extremely important for household well-being and food security (Adams et al. 2000, Shackleton et al. 2001).

3.7.1 Land-based Strategies

Studies continue to highlight the relevance of land and agriculture for rural livelihoods. This may entail income through engaging in market sales of agricultural products or natural resource products, or the direct use value of land-based livelihood activities (through own consumption) including small livestock, garden and field produce, wild foods and other natural products. It also at times involves non-monetised reciprocal barter and exchange of goods and services (Shackleton et al. 2001). Moreover, these direct use values arising from land-based livelihoods act as a safety net for rural households in times of stress (Ashley and LaFranchi 1997, Shackleton et al 2000). This safety net cushions shocks that are as a result of for example loss of employment or death of a household breadwinner.

Rural areas of South Africa procure a wide variety of natural resources for home consumption or sale (Shackleton and Shackleton 2000). Twine (2013:3) mentions that natural resources are used by rural households to provide for their domestic needs, to save on money (for example, the use of fuel wood instead of electricity), and to generate income through the sale of raw and processed natural products. Natural resources are thus used for petty commodity production and sale, for instance in the making of brooms, mats and clay pots. Natural resources sometimes connect rural and urban spaces, with rural people trading natural resources (such as medical plants, mopane worms, fire wood and edible herbs) informally with urban households for cash at reasonably low prices. Sometimes, though, middle-men take advantage of this rural to urban trade and mediate between the seller and buyer, often to the distinct disadvantage of the rural seller.

There is growing evidence in the former Bantustans, and particularly in the case of remote and deep rural households, that dependence upon natural resources is increasing. Shackleton et al. (2005) claim that natural resources contribute an average of 22% of total household income and consumption in the rural areas of Bushbuckridge (part of the former homelands of Gazankulu and Lebowa, and now in Mpumalanga Province). And the significance of natural resources is typically greater in particular for poorer rural households (Thondhlana et al. 2012). Twine (2013) mentions that, again in Bushbuckridge, the direct use value of natural

resources averaged across all households was 1.55 times that of both large and small livestock. Some resources are collected opportunistically while engaging in other activities and this reduces the labour and time needed to collect natural resources. Women are often involved in natural resource collection and sales, but generally they do not consider this as a full-time activity given their many other responsibilities (including social reproduction).

Cousins (1996) examines the role of livestock in communal areas in South Africa, and notes that many studies tend to investigate why rural households maintain high numbers of notably cattle in the face of significant levels of Bantustan environmental dilapidation. There have been fewer studies with regard to the value of small livestock (such as goats, sheep, pigs and chickens) to rural households (Shackleton et al. 1999). A study by Vetter (2013) mentions the multiple benefits (both cash and non-cash) that rural households derive from livestock, particularly in contributing to livelihood diversification and resultantly resilience. Often, though, poor rural households tend to rely to a greater extent on their smaller numbers of livestock compared to wealthier households with larger herds, in part because they do not have regular forms of employment (Sallu et al. 2010). Overall, the majority of all livestock owners derive little, if any, regular cash from livestock sales (Vetter 2013) and the direct-use values of products such as milk and meat exceed that of cash sales (Shackleton et al. 2005). Mutenje et al. (2010) rightfully claim that the role of livestock as a form of savings and insurance and hence as a safety net should not be overlooked, though livestock is not simply treated as an asset to be disposed of in times of crisis (Mapiye et al. 2009). A range of other livelihood benefits are derived from livestock such as access to organic manure, oxen for plowing (including for others) and bride wealth payment (*lobola*).

Compared to the presence of livestock in the former Bantustans, there is clear evidence of declining commitment to crop production though its ongoing relevance should not be dismissed. Crop agriculture still does play a crucial role in rural livelihoods in specific areas of the country. And agriculture is often an important livelihood activity undertaken by female-headed rural households (Manona 2005:22) in order to reduce food insecurity. In rural areas, this kind of farming is weakening in part because it is left in the hands of old people, children, women and hired labour. Old people are normally too weak to perform well in field agriculture, while children and hired labour's performance depends upon close supervision (Puttergill, Bomela, Grobbelaar and Moguerane 2011). As well, young men have often left

the rural areas looking for work in urban centres, such as those from former Bantustans in the Eastern Cape moving to Cape Town.

Two farming systems are prevalent in communal areas (homestead gardening and arable field farming) and both generally rely on rain-fed irrigation, with women comprising an important part of the (unpaid) agricultural labour force. Firstly, rural households engage in homestead gardening where they cultivate in the immediate vicinity of the house. A small patch may be utilised for gardening purposes, but at times it can reach two hectares. Under this form of farming, leafy vegetables are grown including tomatoes, green beans, spinach, cabbages and maize. Rural households sometimes produce a surplus which is marketed within and outside the community (Perret et al. 2005:29) but homestead gardening is primarily for consumption. In this context, it becomes a livelihood activity pursued to enhance food security and guard against poverty by reducing expenditure on foodstuffs that can be grown. At times, a particular crop is used to substitute for another foodstuff normally purchased (for example, growing of spinach and cabbage as an alternative to meat bought in supermarkets). Secondly, rural households practice agriculture in the form of arable land (fields). These may be close to the homestead or they can be several kilometres away from the homestead, with the latter often having arisen because of villagisation under past agricultural betterment schemes (Shackleton et al. 2001). The major crop grown is maize and for consumption purposes primarily, with it being stored at times for future household usage. In appreciation of community ties and kinship, a small fraction of the crop may be donated to family, friends and neighbours, and this is very crucial especially in time of crisis.

Puttergill et al. (2011) argue that better-off households tend to farm commercially compared to poor households. The productivity though from both homestead and arable fields is generally very low relative to commercial farming. According to Vetter (2013), several reasons for low productivity include relatively small areas being cultivated, so-called cultural resistance to modern technologies, low and inadequate inputs, inefficient practices and inadequate capital or access to capital.

3.7.2 Other Livelihood Sources

Other livelihood sources include informal economic activities, employment, remittances, social welfare and social reciprocity. Thus, in addition to farming both crops and livestock, rural sites in South Africa are also locales in which there are complex repertoires of informal

economic activity taking place (Neves and du Toit 2013). These activities are informal because they are of low productivity and marginal in falling outside the regulatory ambit of the state and its tax system. Informal enterprises sometimes contribute a significant amount of income to rural households. But Perret et al. (2005) argue that the earnings derived from informality are not the primary source of income for rural households. Plus these activities are constrained by the lack of consistent customers and an absence of capital to plough back into the activity. Most of these fail to sustain themselves over time because of these constraints, or they occur intermittently. Women are more involved in informal economic activities than men but income generated is limited, thus (Todaro and Smith 2009:333) indicating the survivalist nature of these activities. In order to 'make ends meet', that is to sustain their households, women employ various strategies to make a diverse range of products, both food and non-food, that are mainly used by local village people (Perret, Anseeuw and Mathebula 2005:18).

In South Africa, the informal sector is relatively small, accounting for just more than one-fifth of the workforce (Cichello et al. 2005). This is attributed to a number of reasons, but the key factors include the legacy of colonialism and apartheid which undermined African entrepreneurship, as well as ongoing problems with access to credit, information and skills (Lund and Skinner 2003). Furthermore, informal activities in former Bantustan areas are subject to specific forms of governance (Neves and Du Toit 2013), with traditional authorities continuously imposing their power and control over natural resources from which the majority of villagers draw their raw materials for petty commodity production and sales (Roitman 2005). Successful informal operators frequently seek to exploit small niches, as the resource-poor former homelands have local markets which are comparatively thin and geographically isolated.

Despite that, informality provides alternative income for the unemployed (including women) while also enabling them to cope with poverty. In this regard, local permanent full-time employment in the former Bantustans is very rare, with many men continuing to work outside the Bantustans, notably on the mines, and sending remittances back in cash or kind to their rural household on a regular or irregular basis. Most local formal employment opportunities are based on casual or short-term contracts with no employment security at all.

The South African welfare system pre-1994 was highly racialised and ignored poverty amongst black people. Upon the dawn of democracy in 1994, the social welfare system was extended to the black majority, largely those in the rural areas. As such, income from social grants has become quite possibly the most important basis for livelihoods in the former Bantustans. The monthly cash transfers, particularly the old age pension and the child support grant, provide an immediate relief to rural households who may not have alternative sources of income. In rural areas, the grants are normally used for purchasing food and clothes, and for education enrolment for children (du Toit and Neves 2009). There is also some evidence that cash transfers (particularly the old age pension, held mostly by women) support investments in productive assets (i.e. securing seeds and buying livestock), facilitate informal economic activities, and allow for the hiring of agricultural equipment (Neves and du Toit 2012, 2013). As well, income from social transfers possibly serves as a stimulus to local growth by increasing local purchasing power in the former homelands and thereby generating multiplier effects (Neves and Du Toit 2013).

Rural households engage in social networking and social reciprocity on a regular though not necessarily formal basis. As such, networks (including kinship, friends and neighbours) are particularly important as forms of mutual exchange and assistance in rural areas, or as possibly informal means of social protection (Bracking and Sachikonye 2006). Neves and du Toit (2013:107) note that 'these practices underpin both inter- and intra-household transfers, and animate urban-rural linkages and household livelihood activities'. These circuits of mutual assistance are prevalent throughout the communal areas because of the significant exposure of households to poverty perennially. A wide range of activities occur under social reciprocity, including material and monetary exchanges of gifts and disbursements, as well as favours and unremunerated care work (Neves and du Toit 2013:108). Webs of social reciprocity, as indicated, are not only limited to kinship ties. In a study by Neves and du Toit (2013), a villager allowed teachers of a local school to store their perishable items in a fridge that belonged to a woman. This was not simply an act of altruism, but it was an act that placed her firmly in the local web of exchange and support. Du Toit and Neves (2009) argue that such networks of social reciprocity are maintained within larger relationships of kinship, clanship, village and even ethnic affiliations (and possibly church affiliation could be added to this). Rural households headed by women in particular engage in these reciprocity

arrangements because of the precariousness of their livelihood activities in the face of high vulnerability.

These social networks however are not without their disadvantages. The systems of social exchange and mutuality are irregular and bumpy in their benefits and distribution. Exchanges are mediated by gender, age, wealth, status and power (Spiegel et al. 1996), and this creates benefits for some and makes others more marginal and vulnerable. Of importance to note is that those without resources or ability to offer labour power struggle to participate in the exchanges or do so on disadvantageous terms (du Toit and Neves 2009). Villagers at times are also under significant constraints at times to help others and, in offering help in such circumstances (because of obligations on their part), they may compromise the sustenance of their own households.

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter began by discussing the continuities from segregation to apartheid in South Africa in terms of the political economy of land. In doing so, it unpacked the systematic racial tendencies of the white minority which became manifested in legislation and institutions created during the segregation and apartheid periods, all of which served to create deep poverty and acute inequality particularly in relation to the reserves/bantustans. The chapter then discussed the post-apartheid period from 1994 and various policies and programmes implemented by the ANC-led government which have been marked by neo-liberal restructuring but also by redistribution initiatives. It is notable that the land question remains unresolved in post-apartheid South Africa and that the former bantustans continue to resonate strongly across the countryside including through the existence of the chieftainship system. This absence of any fundamental restructuring of land and the ongoing deficiencies of rural development in contemporary South Africa has very deep implications for the lives and livelihoods of households in the former bantustans (or now communal areas) in terms of conditions of poverty. In the following two chapters (chapters four and five), the case study of the female heads in Cala (in the former Transkei) is presented and discussed in depth, and the livelihoods of these heads need to be understood in the context of the prevailing political economy of land in the country as discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FEMALE HEADS CONSTRUCTING THEIR LIVELIHOODS IN CALA COMMUNAL AREAS

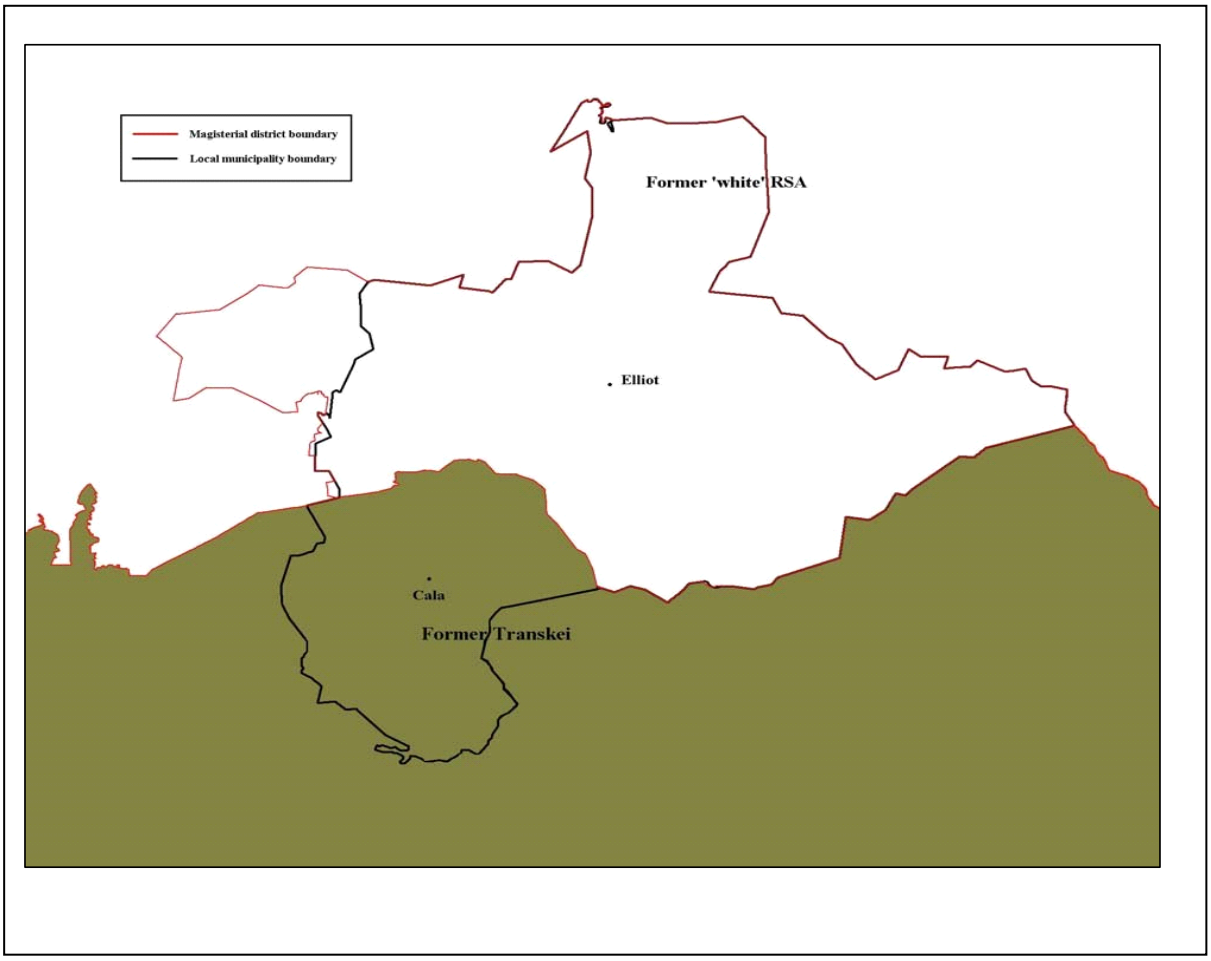
4.1 Introduction

This and the following chapter outline the research findings about the livelihood strategies of female-headed households in the former Bantustans of post-apartheid South Africa. The findings of this study were elicited through a questionnaire, in-depth interviews, life histories and focus group discussions. Five broad themes compose this first empirical chapter. The first theme presents a brief overview of the local historical, social and economic context for the study site. The second theme profiles the female heads studied in Cala, including variables such as age, education, and household composition and size. The next theme provides a lengthy discussion of the livelihoods pursued by the female heads in the Cala communal areas of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi. The livelihoods pursued by *de facto* and *de jure* female heads are classified into two broad categories, that is, agricultural-based and non-agricultural based activities. The fourth theme examines the various livelihood assets/capitals available to and used by female-headed households in Cala in constructing their livelihoods including human, social, physical, natural and financial capital. In ending the chapter, I provide examples of three different household trajectories (described as thriving, surviving and struggling) as a way of indicating differentiation amongst female-headed household livelihoods.

4.2 Cala Overview

This section provides an understanding of the study site of Cala. Cala is a town in Sakhisizwe Local Municipality (covering 2,355km^2), which is part of the Chris Hani District Municipality in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (see Figure 4.1). Cala is a rural town located close to Tsomo River, 28 kilometres southwest of Elliot. The name Cala has the Xhosa meaning of ‘adjacent to’, referring to its location west of the Drakensberg mountain range which extends from north to south. Sakhisizwe Local Municipality is classified in terms of the Municipal Structures Act as a Category B municipality which means that it shares executive and legislative authority in its area. Sakhisizwe is an isiXhosa name meaning ‘we are building the nation’.

Figure 4.1: Map of Eastern Cape showing Cala under Sakhisizwe Municipality



Source: Aliber, Masika and Quan (2006:7)

Because of the systems of segregation and apartheid pre-1994, former Bantustans tend to have a predominantly black African population and a majority ethnic group. In Cala communal areas, which formed part of the Transkei Bantustan, Black Africans are the majority (98.8%) and the balance consists of Coloureds (0.3%), Indians (0.3%) and Whites (0.2%). The Xhosa-speaking people are the majority in Cala communal areas as they are in the Eastern Cape Province more widely. The Xhosa were part of the South African Nguni migration which slowly moved south from the region around the Great Lakes, displacing the original Khoisan hunter-gatherers of southern Africa. Xhosa people were well-established by the time of the Dutch arrival in the mid-17th century, and occupied much of eastern South Africa from the Fish River to land inhabited by Zulu-speakers south of the modern city of Durban. Because of their historical presence in these areas, the apartheid state declared the Bantustans of Ciskei and Transkei as the legitimate home of Xhosa-speakers.

According to a Sakhisizwe Municipality bulletin (2012), Sakhisizwe local municipality has an approximate population of 63,582. As for the age population structure, it is estimated that 35% of the population is under 15 years, 57.5% are between 15 to 64 years old and 7.5% of the population is 65 years and older. Sakhisizwe currently has a negative population growth rate of -0.44%. As of 2011, Statistics South Africa (2011) reported that there are 16,151 households in Sakhisizwe municipality with an average household size of 3.70. Female-headed households, which are the focus of this thesis, form the majority of households, at 51.9%.

In South Africa there is widespread unemployment and Sakhisizwe municipality is no exception to this, with an estimated 38.8% unemployment rate. Moreover, youth unemployment is prevalent and is estimated at 48.6%. Formal employment is in fact not a key livelihood activity for Cala residents, but agriculture is also not prevalent. Grazing land (for livestock) is abundant and was historically demarcated according to villages; nonetheless, as populations increased grazing lands have shrunk. Any crop production depends on rain-fed irrigation but the widespread presence of *aloe forex* in the area is a sign of low and sporadic rainfall.

Further, Cala communal areas (including Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi) endure all the shortcomings of rural development typical of former Bantustans in relation to service delivery. Transit walks, observations and informal conversations with respondents in Cala uncovered that the studied communal areas of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi are for example connected with tap water. Nonetheless, the water flow is erratic and intermittent in all these villages and some taps are defunct, such that the communities often rely on unsafe river water for drinking, food processing and other activities. The rural electrification programme has reached Sakhisizwe local municipality and Cala communal areas are connected to electricity. However affordability is a major problem given the limited income of female-headed households and the broader community. Ablution is also a major problem and there is no progress in providing pit latrines.

The non-accessibility and non-availability of infrastructure (such as water) and social amenities (including health and education facilities) is particularly crucial because it affects mostly women. Cala communal areas are serviced by one large hospital, Cala Provincial

Hospital, which is located in the small town of Cala. Communal areas surrounding the town (Mnxe, Lupapasi and Sifonondile) are sporadically serviced by mobile clinics, and no community health care centre or public health centre exists. A great number of people have died due to insufficient clinic services. For instance in Lupapasi, villagers travel to Mcewula clinic which is a three-hour walking distance. In Mnxe, villagers travel to Cala hospital which is located 8 kilometres away while some travel to Tsengiwe clinic which is located more than 10 kilometres north of Mnxe village. The villages are serviced by gravel roads full of potholes, notably the road from Cala town heading to Lupapasi.

Like other areas in former Bantustans, Cala has composite structures of land administration, authority and leadership. Both modern (municipal) and traditional (chieftainship) structures co-exist and on an uneasy basis, although the former surpass the latter particularly in relation to formal recognition by the government. There are ongoing contestations between elected councilors and traditional leaders over who has power over land, natural resources, governance, local disputes and development in Cala resulting in what could be termed a 'double crisis of legitimacy'. It is a double crisis because both the municipality and traditional chiefs aim to have administrative control over the area but neither is able to bring about meaningful local development to Cala.

Each village in Cala is administered by a village head (locally known as *induna*), who fall under a chief (known as *inkosi*). The headmen report to their respective chief and their area of jurisdiction is smaller than that of the chief. The powers of chiefs and village heads are formally regularised under the Traditional Leadership and Governance Framework Act No 41 of 2003. Village heads in Cala and in other parts of the former Transkei in the main inherit their positions from their fathers; in other words, the position is hereditary rather than based on democratic elections. Nonetheless there are cases of headmen being chosen by the villagers. Headmen and chiefs during apartheid were used as the voice of the apartheid government, though some stood in opposition to apartheid. Villagers in Cala tend to be cynical of the role that the traditional authorities play, particularly female heads. Female heads are concerned about the increased powers exercised by traditional leaders over local community matters including governance, land ownership and administration, development and the delivery of services.

4.3 Female-Headed Households in Cala

Female-headed households in South Africa and elsewhere globally are not a new household family structure. In South Africa in particular, at least historically, the emergence of the female-headed household is a product of the male migrant labour system. Female-headed households (including both *de facto* and *de jure*) have existed for decades in the country and they have often struggled, and more so than male-headed households, to pursue and construct decent household livelihoods. Below I provide a brief profile of the female-headed household respondents in this study (see Table 4.1), and try to show any important differences or circumstances which exist between them.

In terms of marital status, female heads in this study fall into two domains of household type or structure. The majority (83.1%) of female heads surveyed are *de jure* female heads meaning that no male (husband or other senior male) is present at any time within the household while 16.9% of the female heads reported that they are *de facto* female heads, meaning a male (husband) is considered part of the household but lives somewhere else for extended periods and for various reasons. Various circumstances led to women being *de jure* female heads, with the majority (78.5%) of the *de jure* female heads being widowed while those divorced amounted to 12.3% (this goes some way in explaining, as noted below, the old age of the typical female head). The main reason for the existence of *de facto* female heads arises from the husband being a migrant worker. *De facto* female heads indicated that, because of family responsibilities and an eagerness to maintain the father as the ultimate authority within the household, most husbands visited the village once or twice in a month. However, issues which required immediate attention were addressed by the female as *de facto* head and decisions were made accordingly, including buying groceries and taking sick livestock to the veterinary. It became apparent from the survey that the vast majority (92.3%) of the *de jure* female heads are the main breadwinners of their households, particularly because of the absence of male breadwinners. Overall, *de facto* female heads are not the main breadwinners (or are not considered as such). Their income is supplementary to men's household income contribution, but my study shows that *de facto* female heads are playing a significant role in income generation though as secondary income earners.

The number of household members (and hence the number of dependents) for the surveyed female heads vary considerably with household sizes ranging from one to twelve people. In

this regard, 69.4% of the households have between four to eight persons, and households of one to three persons amounted to 25%; the balance had more than eight people. In addition, female heads reported that other members of their households lived elsewhere and for various reasons, including seasonal migration (67.8%), staying in another place to reduce the number of dependents (6.8%), and sending children to urban areas on the grounds of access to quality education compared to local schools (10.2%). As well, others (15.3% indicated this) are reported to be married and living outside the village.

Table 4.1: Summarising demographic profiles of female heads in Cala

Variable Name	Variable Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	31-40	2	3%
	41-50	14	21.5%
	51-60	16	24.6%
	61-70	13	20.0%
	70+	20	30.8%
Marital Status	De jure	54	83%
	De facto	11	17%
Breadwinners	Female breadwinner	60	92.3%
	Husband-breadwinner	5	7.7%
Educational Level	Illiterate	35	53.8%
	Primary School	22	33.8%
	Matric	8	12.3%
Household Size	4-8 persons	45	69.4%
	1-3 persons	16	25%
	10+	4	6%
Household Type	Hut	22	33.8%
	Town like	22	33.8%
	Shack	21	32%

Source: Field Survey, November 2014.

Female heads in this study are of different ages, with their ages being of importance especially when considering their current and future livelihoods. A large number (30.8%) are

quite elderly, from 71 years and above, while a significant number of female heads (24.6%) are between the ages of 51 and 60. Smaller percentages were recorded for other age categories: between 41-50 years of age (amounting to 21.5%), the 61-70 grouping recording 20% while those with ages ranging between 31-40 years amounting to only 3%.

There is a general assertion that rural area inhabitants are mainly illiterate and that this is particularly the case with women. The Cala study confirms this with a significant majority (53.8%) of the surveyed female heads being illiterate and without any formal education at all. A further 33.8% reached some kind of primary school education while female heads who reached matric education (or secondary school) amounted to only 12.3%. Besides the lack of employment opportunities in Cala, the majority of female heads do not possess the required skills and education needed by employers.

Additionally, a key reason why female heads are illiterate is because of early marriages in order for the parents to acquire the bride-wealth (locally known as *lobola*) for the daughter; but the absence of an appreciation of girl child education in rural communities is also important. One *de jure* female head said the following:

> *I never went to school because my parents did not have money to send me to school… My parents regarded educating a female child as a waste of money since the child will get married and will be part of another family. One would rather educate male children* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

A *de facto* female head reiterated this point though somewhat differently:

> *I grew up as the only girl child in our family of three boys. My mother was involved in a car accident in Mthatha; I was the only option to take care of her…[S]ince my brothers could not bath her…my father forced me to leave school and take care of my mother* (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Another younger *de jure* female head in Lupapasi, in relation to education, revealed her experiences though completing secondary education, highlighting in her case certain financial difficulties emanating from conditions of poverty in the area:

> *I got some good passes in my Matric and I wanted to go to university or any tertiary institution but we didn't have money. My father struggled to pay fees for my older brother, who failed his degree at University of Port Elizabeth. I am sure he didn't want a repeat of the same thing. Besides, he lost his job soon after my Matric… he*

was retrenched and I got pregnant after that and I decided to get married. My husband is late now and it's too late for me to go back to school and I have children to look after. I am the children's only parent (Life history, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Of the surveyed households, their house structure/type varied. The majority (33.8%) reported that their house was simply a hut with a thatch roof; 32% spoke of their houses as a shack; while another 33.8% were housed under brick 'town-like' houses with asbestos or zinc as roofing. In assessing the quality of the housing, nearly-half (47.7%) claimed that the condition of their housing was 'fair'; another 44.6% reported that their house was in 'poor' condition and needed renovation; and only 7.7% reported their house to be in a 'good' condition. Furthermore, female heads were asked to specify the problems associated with their household type, and a significant number (50%) reported that their houses were not safe havens as they were prone to burglary; as well, 45.2% reported that weather (roof leakages especially during rainy season) was a major challenge.

4.4 Surviving in Cala: Livelihood Dynamics and Trends

This section provides a nuanced discussion of livelihood activity trends in the case study community as elicited by the survey, life histories, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. In the end, though female heads in Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi are undoubtedly victims of poverty, they are not without agency. Livelihoods pursued by female heads (*de facto and de jure*) in Cala fall broadly under two main categories, that is, agricultural and non-agricultural and these will be discussed in turn.

4.4.1 Agriculture-Based Livelihood Activities

The majority of South Africa's rural population resides in the former Bantustans (homelands). Cash from urban areas and government grants often form the mainstay of the rural economy in most of the former Bantustans, now called communal areas (including in Cala). Nonetheless, this should not distract from recognition of the diverse livelihoods that rural households pursue (including agriculture) and the contribution of these livelihood activities to overall livelihood wellbeing.

4.4.1.1 Crop Production

There is evidence of some agricultural crop production in the villages surveyed in the communal areas of Cala, and this takes the form of homestead cultivation and arable field cultivation.

In the case of homestead-based cultivation, female heads (and households generally) engage in gardening or cultivation of land in the vicinity of their house. A variety of crops were grown in Cala and these differed from household to household and from village to village. Overall, evidence elicited from the survey indicated that eight main crops were grown around the homestead, namely, beans, groundnuts, pumpkins, spinach, tomatoes, cabbages, onions and maize (see photo 4.1). The majority of leafy vegetables were grown year round while groundnuts, pumpkins and maize were grown during the rainy season starting from October, November and December.

Homestead gardens are patches of land just a few metres away from the homestead and are from 1 hectare to 5 hectares in size. In the villages of Sifonondile, Mxne and Lupapasi, 93.8% of female heads practiced homestead gardening (or at least had access to land for this purpose) and 6.2% did not have access to land for homestead cultivation. Female heads practicing homestead gardening were not though making full utilisation of the land available due to a number of constraints including but not limited to lack of inputs (notably seeds), destruction of crops by livestock and non-availability of water. The vast majority of female heads (88.3%), when they practiced homestead production, did so over an area of about 50 metres by 50 metres (less than a hectare). Other female heads (10%) reported gardens of between 2 and 3 hectares, while a small number (1.7%) spoke about between 4 to 5 hectares under cultivation.

Female heads were clearly only partially utilising the available land around their homestead and, indeed, there is evidence showing that some of the land has not been ploughed and cropped for a number of years at the time of my fieldwork. From the in-depth interviews with female heads, it became apparent that the size of the gardening venture at the homestead depended in part on the size of the plot available for gardening. The older female heads of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi generally have the bigger homestead plots available to use for gardening because they have lived in the villages longer and, at the time that their

household stands were demarcated, the population in the villages was smaller than it is currently. As the population increased over time, the pegging of homestead stands involved the demarcation of increasingly smaller plots. The case of Nqobile, one *de jure* female head from Lupapasi, serves as an example of how homesteads were located and demarcated in the past:

> *1961 as usual the land was allocated by the headman Mtuzile and there were very few Xhosa people living in the area of Lupapasi. Land allocation for both housing and cultivation was in abundance. I still remember when my late husband was allocated this homestead, the headman counted his footsteps until my husband shouted to him to stop. Between homesteads there was a lot of space because they were very few families in the area; it changed later on around the 1980s if I remember well. Our recently married sons started their families and it meant they have to take some land from their parents; that's why these 1980 and 1990 villagers have small pieces of land around their houses. Even our cattle, goats and sheep did not have to travel far to graze but now livestock travel far to graze* (Life history, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Thus, subdivision of plots because of new families (through marriage) being formed in Cala has led to smaller areas available for homestead gardening and this of course affected the older generation which has lost some of its land in the process.

Photo 4.1: Homestead Crops Grown

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014

Evidence from the study highlights that the main reason for cultivating gardens around the house is for consumption purposes, particularly because female heads lack sufficient income to purchase foodstuffs and hence they grow crops to reduce food expenditures (particularly on those crops which they can grow). This concurs with the findings of Statistics South Africa (1999) which found that 93% of small farmer households engage in this form of agricultural production primarily to produce food for own consumption. In Cala, 53% of the female heads specifically indicated that they cultivated gardens for consumption, while 6.7% alluded to the production of some surplus, with surplus crops being sold on local markets to obtain extra income for immediate household purposes. Further, 18.3% of the surveyed female heads said that the main reason for homestead gardening was to improve food access, and 13.3% indicated that gardening was undertaken to improve food supply and nutrition. Both of these reasons though relate back to homestead gardening for household consumption. The spirit of *ubuntu* (meaning togetherness) is still prevalent at times in Cala as some female heads (8.3%) donated garden crops to family members outside their household, as well as to friends and neighbours, in acknowledgment of kinship and community ties. This finding corroborates what McAllister (2001) found, namely, that community ties and assistance become important at least during times of crisis.

One female head (aged seventy) spoke of the overall importance of gardening and how it saved her some money to use on other expenditures:

> *Money is a problem nowadays because I am no longer working and none of my children support me. On my monthly grocery I do not include vegetables that I grow and it saves money that I can use to buy electricity and other things. At times when I run out of meat, I substitute meat with spinach to eat with pap…I grow onions and pumpkins so I do not buy these. At times I sell spinach at a cheap price of R7 a bundle* (Focus group discussion, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Of importance to note is that female heads in times of extreme crisis substitute meat with available grown crops such as spinach, and this is testimony to how central land-based livelihoods can be, at least potentially, to female headed households. Selling the crop produce does not yield much income per month. In a good month, more than R100 was gained by certain female heads depending on the demand for a specific crop such as leafy vegetables (spinach and cabbage). These were often in demand at the middle of the month when the majority of households had exhausted their food supplies (meat in particular).

Crop production under homestead cultivation is not an easy activity, as it is time consuming. Several hours per day were spent on gardening although the time involved differed from one household to another. The majority (64.1%) of female heads spent 2 to 3 hours in this activity, while 20.5% spent 1 to 2 hours, 12.8% spent 4 to 5 hours and a small number of female heads (2.6%) reported to be spending more than 5 hours per day in gardening. Female heads spending a significant number of hours tended to hold larger sized plots. However, the yields of crops grown by female heads, as measured in quantitative terms, were limited due to the lack of inputs, water challenges and the absence of support services (as there were no agricultural extension services in the villages).

Besides homestead gardening, female heads in Cala also pursed agricultural activities in arable fields (or *amasimi*). Compared to homestead cultivation, though, relatively few female heads cultivate arable fields. In the Cala villages of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi, there is certainly no pronounced evidence of demand for arable land to cultivate. Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins (2001), in citing several studies, indicate that demand for arable fields is often greater than the supply of available land. In contrast, my study found that cultivation of land in the villages in Cala is limited, with vast tracks of land unutilised. In this respect, McAllister (2001) provides evidence that, in Transkei, communal farmers have been abandoning cultivation of their fields and investing all their agricultural efforts in the homestead plot (which can be up to 2 hectares), with the focus of production activity being household consumption or commercial sale. Something similar seems to be happening in Cala, as arable fields are in abundance but often underutilised or unutilised.

Evidence collected from Cala revealed that, in terms of utilising the arable fields, the majority (69%) did not utilise them while 31% of the female heads did. Arable fields in the Cala villages varied in terms of distance from the area of residence (or homestead), as some were located close to the homesteads and other arable fields were located a few kilometres away. The major crops grown are maize (*imbona*), beans and pumpkins. Maize is for home consumption and is eaten as green cobs though some female heads reported to occasionally enter local markets (in Cala) to sell maize cobs at a fixed price of R6 to R7 a cob. Other female heads indicated that they sold cooked cobs at a price of R10 each. It is quite revealing that female heads sold maize cobs to earn extra income in the context of their precarious

livelihood situation and, like selling crops from homestead gardening, this was meant for acquiring cash to meet basic household needs.

Cala has a long history of arable land cultivation which dates back to the colonial era and before. Hence it is an old practice carried over and evolving through generations, though disrupted at times because of apartheid agricultural engineering such as betterment schemes. Currently, the practice is proving to be difficult and its prevalence seems to be on the decline for various reasons. Female heads for instance indicated that destruction of crops by livestock, changing rainfall patterns, lack of inputs (money, seeds and fertilisers) and labour shortages are major challenges forcing them to abandon or scale down arable cultivation. Data gathered through the survey indicate that a significant majority of female heads (78.1%) lack seeds, 12.5% reported to be lacking draught power and 9% lacked actual physical labour to work on a day-to-day basis in the fields. In terms of size of the arable fields (as evidenced by transect walks), they are relatively large. And a significant majority (69.2%) reported that they owned (or possessed) 6 to 10 hectares of land while a smaller number (30.8%) of female heads owned up to 5 hectares of land. Thus, if the challenges are addressed, there is considerable potential for arable land cultivation in Cala.

From the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, though, there was overarching agreement that, despite the land distribution programme of the government, little or nothing was being done by government specifically to support and bolster subsistence farming in Cala communal areas (for example, with regard to input acquisition notably seeds and fertilisers). Compounded by lack of household income among female heads (and other households in Cala), a significant majority (92.3%) of heads reported that they retained home-grown maize seed for maize production while 7.7% borrowed maize seed. This reliance on own seeds however has reduced the size of land cultivated, subsequently reducing the yields. As such, relatively-small areas are cultivated because of inadequate resources and lack of inputs (Fenwick and Lyne 1999), despite people's access to pieces of arable land beyond the homestead. This is also consistent with Francis' (2000) finding that underutilised arable land is primarily due to that fact that people in rural areas, particularly in the former Bantustans, lack the agricultural means, including equipment, fertilizer, and credit, to work the land.

The land in communal areas like Cala is state-land, but households tend to treat it as private property with security of tenure. The arable fields in Cala are inherited and are passed on from generation to generation, and are subject to subdivision because of new families emerging. Kinship and lineage therefore are very significant factors in access to and possession of arable fields. Some of the arable land is divided among sons, but most of these young men are not using the land, either because they are staying in urban areas or, even in cases where they are residing in the village, they lack inputs and sufficient labour to work the fields. With specific reference to the female heads in Cala and their acquisition of land, a slight majority (53.8%) inherited their land and these consisted of *de jure* female heads who retained the land for usage after the death of a husband. For other *de jure* female heads (46.2%), the land held by them was formally allocated by the headman in the different villages. For the *de facto* female heads, they alluded that the land belonged to their husbands. No female head indicated either invading or purchasing the land.

Unlike homestead cultivation, arable land cultivation is practiced over the rainy season in the soils that potentially store moisture until the dry season. Field cultivation is carried out from October or November with harvesting taking place from March to April depending upon the hybrid maturity of the maize seed used (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Timetable for crop production (homestead and arable fields)

Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Leafy vegetable are grown all year round											
							Land preparation				
									Planting in arable fields		
Weeding		Harvesting									Weeding

Source: In-depth Interviews, November 2014.

4.4.1.1.1 Value of Crop Production in Cala Communal Areas

Shackleton et al. (2001:592) describe previous studies as underestimating agricultural production and its contribution to communal area livelihoods in South Africa and, in the case of Zimbabwe, it is argued that agricultural activity accounted for approximately 50% of total income to rural households in communal areas of Zimbabwe two decades ago (Bradly and Dewees 1993). Whereas many studies measure the importance of commercial agricultural

production (Nattrass and Nattrass 1990, May 1996) with reference to South Africa, I seek to understand the significance of crop production in former Bantustans and specifically in Cala.

Broadly speaking, subsistence crop production in former Bantustans is of some significance despite the limited level or scale of production and even though it rarely contributes to household income through market sales. As highlighted earlier, homestead crop production (and field production) is mainly for consumption with very little or no surplus for sell. In cases where surplus is sold, and this is done on a seasonal basis, household income is not increased substantially. But this does not invalidate the monetary contribution of crop production which rural households obtain from their land, though this contribution is difficult to measure accurately. The benefits derived from crop-based livelihoods are critical to the survival of many female-headed households in Cala, particularly the very poor, and thus crop production at times reduces household vulnerability to risks such as death.

Using the survey for Cala, it is estimated that the contribution of homestead crop production and arable land production is on average between 15-21% of total female-headed household income. In monetary value, after selling the grown crops, female heads on average spoke about an amount of more than R1,200 in sales every two months making it over R7,000 per annum. These findings are consistent with Makhura et al. (1998), although my findings are slightly lower than their projection that income generated from selling agricultural produce represented 27,7% of total measured income to the household. It is also critical to note that crops, which in the main are for own consumption at household level, provide a non-cash contribution by supplementing foodstuffs purchased on the goods market. Hence, own-consumption crops reduce household food expenditure.

Nonetheless it is not every female-headed household which earned income through crop sales, and there are several factors which affect the quantity of sales including the size of homestead land available, and the availability of inputs and labour. Some earn much less than R7,000 per year while others earn considerably more. The case of Sibongile, a *de jure* female head aged fifty-five, is revealing in as far as earned income is concerned.

> *Since the death of my husband in 2005 I learnt how to use my hands and earn a living for my family. Almost everyone in the village has access to land but some people do not use the land because of different reasons, some you have seen are too old to cultivate*

land. I am not yet qualified for an old pension grant as other female heads so I have entered into a deal with people who run food outlets in Cala town, like Mama Zakele who is a good and constant customer. All my produce is purchased by these customers ranging from onions, beetroot, beans, spinach and at times tomatoes but they are always affected by a disease. The amount of money that I get over a year is more than R7000 in a very good year. This money is very important to me to support my children. It is not easy though; it requires a lot of effort from fetching water, spending many hours weeding and constantly guarding goats and cattle from entering the fence (Life history, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

In a different vein, another *de jure* female head aged sixty-eight indicated the following:

Gardening is important to me and my grandchildren because sometimes I take time to go and collect my old age pension and child support grant so I always make use of spinach in the garden to eat with pap and if I do not have money for transport I always sell in advance before the day for collecting the grants…I do not get a lot from selling the spinach only R7 a bundle but if I have imbona [maize cobs] *I get R30 for a dozen. It is not always the case because crops are at times destroyed by goats and owners of the goats do not compensate* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Clearly, crop production is not an easy task, particularly for older female heads, yet they persevere because it complements other livelihood activities at times (for example, old age pension) or even becomes a more crucial source of household sustenance when other activities are not possible. The crops produced were either marketed in the local village or neighbouring villages, as this reduced transport costs. However female heads indicated that, during month end, crops were sold further away in Cala town when they go and receive their monthly pensions or child support grants. The income generated varies across households, but coming to exact monthly amount through crop sales (per household) was not possible because female heads do not record their sales. The crop income is used for immediate household consumption purposes and income generated (let alone profits made) was never recorded.

In conclusion, although female heads in this study were unable to clearly quantify the monetary value of their crop production sales, or the value of crops consumed directly by the household, the fieldwork evidence in Cala indicates that the contribution of crop (homestead

and field) production should not be underestimated. Although there is evidence of abandoned land (particularly the arable fields), this does not necessarily reflect a declining importance of crop production in the livelihoods of female headed households. Certainly, to a level difficult to determine statistically with any fine-tuned precision, crop production increases the self-provision of foodstuffs and generates sporadic cash income.

4.4.1.2 Livestock Production

According to Cousins (1996), a number of studies have investigated the role and importance of livestock in communal systems in southern Africa. Livestock ownership in Xhosa culture in the Eastern Cape Province, including Cala communal areas, is critical as it acts as a stock of wealth and a safety net in times of crisis. Livestock in the Cala communal areas of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi ranged from cattle, goats, sheep, pigs and poultry (chicken). Like in many communal areas (in South Africa and elsewhere), cattle regularly form the main component of livestock and the more the cattle a household owns the wealthier and financially stable it is deemed to be. Although ownership of cattle is mainly attributed to men, female heads in Cala reported that they inherited livestock (in the form of cattle, goats, pigs and sheep) after the death of their spouses, while others have bought livestock. Data collected for this study indicates that a significant majority (95.8%) (see table 4.3) of the female heads claimed to be actual owners of livestock of some kind while 4.2% of female heads do not own livestock. Those female heads who are owners of livestock are mainly *de jure* female heads (given the absence of the spouse) while those who not own livestock are *de facto* female heads. In *de facto* households, and despite the absence of the husband for extended periods, livestock is owned by the man (spouse). *De facto* female heads indicated that they played stewardship role in keeping livestock while spouses are away. The livestock numbers varied across the three studied villages and differed from household to household depending upon capacity to build up stock levels and the benefits derived from keeping livestock.

The significance of livestock in communal area households is not always directly and clearly recognisable. Overall, female heads under study revealed that despite having relatively small herds of cattle (and other livestock), these play a significant social and financial role (almost an investment portfolio for savings and security) in their lives. This finding tends to demystify any perception that communal livestock rearing is unproductive as compared to commercial livestock especially with regard to cattle. Many Cala female heads thus spoke as

if their livelihoods centred on cattle because of the range of goods and services obtained thereby. In fact, better-off *de facto* female heads and *de jure* female heads revealed that they have invested in cattle rearing despite the drought that recently killed a significant number of Cala cattle.

Table 4.3: Total number of livestock surveyed in Cala

Type of Livestock	Cala Communal Areas under survey			Total of Livestock surveyed
	Sifonondile	Mnxe	Lupapasi	
Cattle	40	15	44	99
Goats	70	25	12	107
Sheep	34	15	108	157
Pigs	12	8	20	40
Chicken	140	60	191	355

Source: Baseline Survey, November 2014

Livestock provides goods and services to female heads in Cala communal areas which are easily ignored and under-valued, including being a source of bride-wealth. At the time of the fieldwork in 2014 almost every household had some form of livestock and female heads stressed the importance of livestock especially when adverse circumstances arose (such as the loss of alternative livelihood sources). Cattle play a crucial role in bringing income to female heads. For instance, evidence gathered through in-depth interviews uncovers that female heads who owned sufficient cattle (or had cattle available at the time) ploughed for cash the homestead gardens and arable fields of other villagers (although this happened only seasonally in the case of arable fields). Comparing with the price charged for a local tractor, female heads revealed that their cattle were ploughing for others at a very competitive rate and that, because most households planted homesteads gardens perennially, this served as a fairly regular source of income. In 2014, a tractor was charged at R400 to R450 per acre (which is 70m x 70m) whereas using animal draught power cost only R250 to R300 (and at times because of the spirit of *ubuntu* and local networks of social obligation, the price was even much lower). As well, this kind of cooperative ploughing increased food security for female-headed households which did not have cattle or money to hire a tractor.

Given the general inadequacy of household income in the Cala communal areas of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi, most households relied on substituting meat with milk (locally known in Xhosa language as *ubisi*) particularly at critical times (mainly relating to mid-month until the month end). In general, Xhosa people as part of their culture attach milk production as very important for their food dishes. Data from the field work uncovered that female head's milk production was mainly for home consumption, such as for eating with pap (known as *umvubo/umphokoqo,* which is a traditional Xhosa meal involving a mixture of crumbed pap and sour milk). Fresh milk was also used for tea while at the same time for emergency sale to the villagers at a cost ranging from R10 to R12 per litre.

The significance of particularly cattle came out clearly in the interviews with the female heads, notably as a safety net when adverse circumstances befell a household. Also, better-off female heads used cattle as a source of income perennially. This is clear from the following quotation:

> *Owning cattle is very important to me; when my husband died he had just retired and part of his retirement package went to purchase cows in Elliot* [Elliot is a town located approximately 28km east of Cala town]. *I am very thankful to him, I do not work permanently I work for the community works programme* [CWP] *under* [what is called] *Mngcunube. I have entered into a deal with butcheries in Cala and Queenstown* [a town located more than 150km away from Cala town]. *I sell one cow at a price of R5000 and more depending on the size of the cow; in a month I can sell 2 to 4 cows but I never slaughter a cow for my family…I buy calves as well so that I sell them in future otherwise my business will go down…Yes this money is very important especially tuition for my daughter at Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha and buying food and clothes for my children* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

The above sentiments from Sibonelo (a *de jure* female head) are revealing in highlighting the importance of livestock in the form of cattle as an income generating activity, compared to selling cattle in the face of adverse circumstance. In this context, one female head from Mxne village said the following

> *I was forced to sell my cows at a very low price when my son was admitted at Cala Hospital. Because I have no one to help me, I had to do what it takes to get money in order for my son to have a leg operation…a very low price…R1500 and another one was R2000* (In-depth interview, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

The selling of livestock therefore takes place under different conditions. In the first case, it becomes a means of generating income (of converting livestock into cash) at a favourable market price. In the second case, livestock is sold under desperation and often at below-market value, particularly in households where there is no stable income. Thus, for the vulnerable female head from Mxne, private buyers effectively ripped her off and this served to deplete her household assets over at least the short-term. Cattle though were central in both cases, and specifically the selling of cattle. In this respect, female heads argued that slaughtering a cow for own (household) consumption was like 'eating capital'. Additionally, it was noted during focus group discussions with female heads in Mnxe that cattle were used as an alternative to money in the case of fines levied by traditional courts. In the case of Thokozani, she paid a cow to another family because her grandson Simphiwe had impregnated a niece in the family (locally known as *muzukulwana*).

Besides cattle, households had some form of small livestock during the study period including the following: sheep (18.2%), pigs (18.2%), poultry (36.4%) and goats (7.6%). During interviews and focus group discussions, it became apparent that some female heads kept small livestock (goats, sheep and pigs) not mainly for consumption but for selling. However they slaughter when the need arises particularly during festive seasons when their sons and daughters visit the village. Hence the significance of rearing small livestock differed from house to house, and the significance was also seen in total numbers of small livestock. Female heads who were selling their small livestock were rearing above ten (across all small livestock) while those who reared for social obligation (such as festivals) would have less than five. In terms of selling, female heads argued that at times they slaughtered the livestock to sell the meat rather than selling the beast live. The market price per kilogram varied depending with the market demand in villages or in Cala town. If slaughtered, female heads sold the meat to villagers at specific prices: during the time of the fieldwork, goat meat was priced at R40 per kg, sheep (mutton) was priced at R45 per kg and pig meat (pork) was priced at R40-R50 per kg. Poultry generated a significant amount: R45 for a chick, while medium to large chickens ranged between R100 to R110 depending on size. Additionally, eggs were sold at R1 each. In addition, there was the case of a *de facto* female head (Thokozani) in Lupapasi Village who owned over thirty sheep and earned much of her household income through small livestock rearing. She claimed that over a three to four month period she receives over R6,000 after selling wool to a company in Port Elizabeth.

Broadly speaking, the money generated by female heads through small stock sales was channelled towards purchasing groceries and covering school fees and medical bills.

As with crop sales, it was difficult to estimate the average monthly household income generated through small stock sales. Accurate records were not normally kept. And sales were uneven across the calendar year (with good and bad months), with the timing of sales depending upon household need as well as specific events during the year, with festive seasons being particularly important in this regard. During festive season, for example Easter and Christmas holidays, goats and sheep were priced at between R500 to R700 while pigs were priced at R600 to R900, depending on the size of the animal. For female heads who did keep reasonably accurate records of their sales, an estimated R3000-6000 a month was gained from small livestock, but this is likely an overestimate as better-off households were more inclined to keep records.

Non-owners of livestock (both cattle and small stock) or those households with limited stock levels also have access to and are given products and services from livestock. This is important for such resource-poor female heads as they receive meat, milk, dung and ploughing services through kinship and neighbour relationships. Dung is used as manure for the homestead gardens, as well as a source of energy especially at times of crisis when poor female heads cannot afford to purchase electricity for preparing food. It is also used on floors and as a binding and for plastering houses. Therefore livestock rearing is not simply a household level asset but has implications at neighbourhood and village level as a source of community aid and assistance.

One other source of land-based activity in Cala relates to the long-standing practice of fishing both as a source of income through fish sales and for household consumption. Fishing is undertaken along the nearby Tsomo and other rivers and mainly during the rainy season. A significant number of female heads practiced fishing themselves while others revealed that their grandchildren were directly engaged in it. In some cases, female heads practiced barter trade with other village members especially during mid-month when food shortages begin to arise. For instance, two fish would be exchanged with another household which has rice or mealie meal. Households also directly sold fish at a price ranging from R10 upwards depending on the size of the fish. Further, market forces of supply and demand affected the

pricing of fish within Cala communal areas. During the rainy season (October to February) when this livelihood activity is mainly pursued, the price of fish is low as compared to the months between March and September when the supply of fish is very limited.

4.5 Beyond Agricultural Sources of Income

Besides agriculturally-based livelihood activities, female-headed households in Cala have other sources of livelihoods, such as social grants and remittances. This section discusses these, starting with the significance of social grants.

4.5.1 Social Grants as Safety Nets

Social assistance in South Africa refers to non-contributory and means-tested benefits[1] provided by the state to vulnerable groups unable to provide for their own minimum needs, such as the disabled, the elderly and young children in poor households (Woolard 2003). A large number of South Africans, including in the former Bantustans, are recipients of social welfare grants. The rapid increase in government expenditure on social security since 1994 has increased households' reliance on welfare grants and possibly reduced their vulnerability. While the national government is responsible for social security grants, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is responsible for administering social assistance by implementing policies and procedures for effective and efficient administering and disbursement of social grants. It has been estimated that social grants form more than 60% of household income in the former Bantustans of post-apartheid South Africa (Woolard 2003). My study uncovers that, within Cala communal areas, social grants in the form of the old age pension, child support grant and disability grant are the most regular and consistent sources of income in almost all the female-headed households surveyed.

4.5.1.1 Old Age Pensions

The old pension grant is a means-tested grant disbursed every month to women who are 60 years and above, while men should be 65 years and above. On the basis of extensive fieldwork, Ardington and Lund (1995:5) concluded that pensions are 'a significant source [of income], with definite redistributive effects; they are a reliable source of income, which leads

[1] A means test is the most important factor when a person applies for social assistance and it assesses his/her financial position. The reason for this is that grants are only awarded if the applicant's financial resources are below a certain level. In determining whether an applicant qualifies for a grant, and if so, to what amount he/she would be entitled, the income and assets of the applicant and spouse are assessed (South African Social Security Agency 2005).

to greater household security; they are the basis of credit facilities in local markets, further contributing to food security; they deliver cash into remote areas where no other institutions do; they are gender sensitive to women'. Female heads in Cala both *de facto* and *de jure* were recipients of the old pension grant. Of the total population in my study, 43 female heads (65%) are beneficiaries of the old pension grant while 35% are not beneficiaries of the old pension grant. Female heads confirmed that they received a monthly income of R1350 non-taxable (at the time of the fieldwork).

The fieldwork evidence strongly suggests that the old pension grant is the most reliable source of income in Cala amongst female heads who receive it. However, the grant is subjected to tremendous pressure because often an entire household depends upon it at least in part. As such, households often fail to reach the next monthly pay out given that the grant is regularly used for a variety of household expenditures. Many female heads argued that there is need for an increment in the pension and that government should be sensitive to household sizes given that many female heads look after numerous grandchildren without the support of the latter's parents. Access to the pension does not bring female heads out of a condition of poverty, but it has managed to increase levels of security, in particular relating to food security, paying household bills and school fees and even at times starting a small business.

Though a number of female heads in Cala rely quite extensively on the old pension grant, they still seek to diversify their source of income through other livelihood activities. This does not necessarily alleviate their vulnerability and poverty in any significant way but it does show some degree of reflexivity and a sense of responsibility in trying to make ends meet through livelihood strategies and their outcomes. For instance, Nkosi, a *de jure* female head from Sifonondile village receives an old pension grant and simultaneously engages in the Phaphamani Poultry Project (see Photo 4.2) and the Masizame Gardening Cooperative to support her household. Phaphamani Poultry Project is an initiative established by Sifonondile villagers with the help of Sakhisizwe municipality. More than five hundred chickens are raised. The profits from the poultry project are shared among the villagers who participate in the project. Masizame Gardening Cooperative is another initiative started by villagers (particularly female heads) in Sifonondile with the aim of improving food security and

household self-sustenance. Yields and profits are also shared among the participants. The two initiatives are particularly important to female heads. Nkosi said the following:

> *I support a household of seven, including myself, two of my own children, a daughter-in-law and three grandchildren through Phaphamani Poultry Project and Masizame Gardening Cooperative and Old Pension Grant. I have been a widow for nearly five years now but I have been supporting my household prior to my husband's death because he was ill. My pension is R1350 per month and my earnings from the two projects ... ranges from R200 to R500 per month. At the same time I have my own garden and I often get help from my children and daughter in law. I grow maize, beans and vegetables for my household consumption. But my main source of income is the pension grant, I use that to buy groceries and pay school fees for my grandchildren. I wish my husband was still alive, he was going to help me through this whole struggle…My wish is that my children should get some work so that they can help me because now I am aging and soon I will not be working very hard. I will* [then] *only depend on the old pension grant... It's difficult to be a mother and a father at the same time… I have been supporting the household for a long time now…so many many female heads here in Sifonondile do this*….[it is] *so so difficult* (Life history, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Nkosi is testimony to how female heads particularly the *de jure* ones seek to make ends meet. Despite tremendous adversity, these households diversify sources of income, including by investing the old age pension money into other income-generating activities. Such a finding is consistent with Ardington and Lund (1995) and Lund (2002) who argue that cash transfers like pensions support investments in productive assets and in a wide range of livelihood activities (like agricultural cooperatives in the case of Nkosi). It seems clear however that old age pensions serve short-term goals of minimising the effects of poverty rather than a longer-term developmental role which enables female-headed households in Cala to manoeuvre their way out of the poverty cycle. In this respect, other poverty-reduction interventions are required such as employment-creation and rural development strategies.

Photo 4.2: Direction to Phaphamani Poultry Project

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014

Zinthle is a *de facto* female head who is sixty-two years old and she had been receiving the pension grant the second year by the time of the field work in 2014. Like the *de jure* heads, she emphasised the importance of the old age pension grant:

> *I used to work for....the Expanded Public works Programme* [Mngcunube] *and my contract ended in 2012 and by that time I had qualified for the old pension grant. My contract was not renewed although I wanted it to be renewed because the money I was getting paid was important although it was not enough* [R500] *but it was better than nothing. So now I rely on the old pension grant. If it wasn't for this money I do not know how I was going to make a living. My wish is for the SASSA to increase the money because R1350 is not enough given I stay with my children who cannot find any work in the town and my grandchildren* [6 in the house]. *But I am thankful to the government otherwise my family could be starving right now…I am able to buy mealie meal, beans, cooking oil, sugar, salt, flour, washing soap, washing powder, buy electricity and many other necessities. My husband is retired now and he does not get the old pension grant because he is not 65 years yet. But he does receive his money* [pension] *from Transnet a company he was working for many years but the money does not come regularly and he has to do a follow-up…its really hard in the rural areas…but we are coping…and we shall cope* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

This fieldwork evidence clearly demonstrates that female-headed households in Cala rely quite extensively on the pension grant and – without it – many households would be much deeper in poverty. This is consistent with the assertion by Leibbrandt et al. (2010) that rural households in receipt of some form of grant (and notably the pension) depend significantly on this income particularly as they normally do not have regular and stable formal employment. Considering that women over sixty receive the pension, and that their capacity to engage in productive work (including land-based activities such as agriculture) becomes increasingly difficult by the year, the importance of the pension for their households is crucial.

In the Cala communal areas, female heads often stay with, and support financially, their children and grandchildren. But another grant, namely, the child support grant, becomes important in this context. The female head's children and grandchildren are often beneficiaries of the child support grant and at times the female head manages expenditure of the child grant. This grant is discussed below.

4.5.1.2 Child Support Grant

Children are part of the social security network in South Africa and are eligible for a child support grant which is regularly managed by the care giver of the child (which may or not be a parent of the child if both parents are deceased). The grant is envisaged to benefit the child's needs directly but this is not tracked by the government nor can it be ensured. At least indirectly, it is generally presumed that by increasing household income the well-being of the child will be automatically improved. The child support grant was introduced in South Africa in 1997 and this grant is also provided based on a means-tested on the grounds that the income of the primary care giver (and his or her spouse if alive) is not able to provide for the child. Initially the child support grant was awarded to children under the age of seven but the upper age limit has continuously been increased such that now the maximum age is 21.

The majority (80.3%) of the surveyed female heads in Cala communal area reported that either their children or grandchildren (or both) are beneficiaries of a child support grant (CSG) while 19.7% are not beneficiaries of the CSG. Respondents unanimously reported that the CSG is R350 per child per month (at the time of the fieldwork). Hence, it is considerably less than the old age pension. Households though with more than one child benefiting from the child support grant will receive an increased grant income depending on the number of eligible children. It is important to note that some of the female heads who were not receiving

a child support grant were still waiting for their applications to be approved while others revealed that the children had reached the cut-off age. Thokozani for instance stated that her daughter was still waiting for the application process to be finalised for her grandchild. A number of factors hindered female heads in Cala from accessing the grant readily, including illiteracy, transportation problems, and lack of knowledge about the existing programme.

Despite the limited value of the CSG, female heads in Cala were highly responsible in terms of ensuring that the grant money was used specifically for the child. For example, C'bahle a *de facto* female head aged forty-five made good use of the child grants in supporting her children and household:

> *I work as a food saver at Khanyisa Special School which is a school for the disabled from the age of 8 to 21 years. Apart from that I also sell vegetables, eggs and meat at times informally and I am supporting a household of five. And I bring home approximately 70% of the household income from my work as a food saver and I receive a child support grant for my two children of R350 each per month. The money from my work and the child support grant is important because I am able to buy my children stationery for school but as for clothes I place them on lay-by because my income is limited so over a space of three months I will collect the clothes…If you rely on your husband's money you will die of hunger or you end up going back to your parents because they like to spend their money on buying beer and playing lotto* (In-depth Interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

The claim that husbands were irresponsible financially was a common claim amongst the *de facto* heads and hence the importance of the female head in ensuring that she administered the grant.

In Cala communal areas, some female heads (both *de facto* and *de jure*) are grandparents and are looking after their grandchildren; in some cases, this is because the parents are living elsewhere as migrant labourers or, alternatively, because they are deceased. Interviews with those female heads with grandchildren whose parents were still alive revealed that the grant was not directly received by the grandmother as guardian or custodian of the child. Rather, the parent or parents living elsewhere were receiving the monthly grant money such that the CSG did not benefit the child residing with the grandmother in Cala. The very purpose of the grant of course is to benefit the child and to contribute directly to the costs of caring for

young children (i.e. food requirements, school fees and clothing) (CASE 2008). In the scenario indicated above, the grandmothers were suffering an extra burden – looking after their children's child or children but not receiving the CSG in doing so. Several female heads (grandmothers) were placed in this dilemma and it impacted negatively on their capacity to care for their grandchildren. For instance, there is the case of Mtokozi and Mathane whose grandchildren were barred from attending school because they had failed to pay their school fees yet, if accessible to them, the CSG could pay the school fees.

Female heads at times alluded to the existence of mothers and fathers in Cala misusing the grant by purchasing alcohol and other goods which did not directly address the needs of the child beneficiary. To emphasise, this goes contrary to the fact that the grant is attached to the child and not to the biological mother (or father) or caregiver *per se*. But, in actual practice, this does not always take place because the direct needs of the biological parent or caregiver are also quite urgent and necessary. Tshidi a *de jure* female head aged seventy years from Mnxe village highlighted this problem:

> *Yes my grandchild receives the child support grant every month since the age of 3 years and I have been staying with her for one-and-half years now but I have never received the grant. The parents do not give me the grant to support the child. My son and his wife like alcohol too much forgetting they have a child here in the village…How am I supposed to take care of their child without money?* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Thus, in-and-of-itself, the CSG may not necessarily benefit the child, with usage and expenditure of the grant being highly contingent on the commitment of the care giver and the broader needs of the household.

Although such controversies surrounding the child support grant exist, the findings of this study point to the fact that the CSG's importance cannot be ignored. If used responsibly, and despite its limited monthly value, it does play a role in supporting livelihoods in Cala and in meeting some of the basic needs of children (such as food, education and clothing). Those female heads which are using the child support grant to benefit directly the child or children are able to enrol children in day-care at the local preschools, buy food and provide health care for the children, as well as incurring other expenses such as electricity which indirectly meet the needs of grant children. These indirect expenses indicated a tendency amongst Cala

female heads to use the grant to support the financial needs of the whole household and contribute to the overall household income. Hence, in buying groceries, the care giver would have the whole household requirements in her mind. Female heads justified such actions by saying that the grant children did not live in isolation from other members of the household. Other studies such as by Hall and Wright (2010) also highlight this.

Hall and Wright (2010) also claim that there is a marked reduction in the poverty rate for children particularly when the CSG is used mainly if not exclusively for the child. The impact of a cash transfer programme designed to ameliorate child poverty is summarised well in the following statement by Alderman et al. (1997) (cited in Barrientos and De Jong 2004:14) who argue that 'cash programmes cannot raise the income or consumption of children directly, but instead, supplement the incomes of families with children with the assumption that the standard of living of children in these households will also improve. The impact of cash transfers on poverty among children therefore depends on the response of the household'. Though I do not have any quantitative measures demonstrating reduced poverty rates for children in Cala arising from the CSGs, it came out strongly during interviews with Cala female heads that they were fully aware that the sole purpose of the grant was to take care of the grant children and that they, as a whole, sought to pursue this.

4.5.1.3 Disability Grant

Besides the old age pension and CSG, the disability grant (DG) is another form of income that some female heads in Cala communal areas receive monthly. The DG, like other grants, is a means-tested social grant aimed at individuals who are poor and unable to support themselves through work due to their disability (adults aged 18-60 for women and 18-65 for men). According to the SASSA, the prospective recipient should submit a medical assessment confirming the disability and such assessment should be not older than 3 months from the date of application. People with disabilities of course face serious barriers when it comes to participation in education, the labour market and development processes in general. And with South Africa's high rates of unemployment and poverty there is a considerable need for social assistance for disabled people.

Disability grants were received by 10.6% of female heads surveyed in Cala communal areas, and these female heads received only this particular grant. SASSA requirements prohibit receiving both the disability grant and old age pension simultaneously regardless of meeting

the criteria for both. An amount of R1350 is received monthly as a disability grant. Data elicited through in-depth interviews suggests that the combination of poverty and high unemployment increases reliance on the DG by people with disabilities and their household. Female heads with a disability expressed their desire to work or engage in other livelihood activities but, because of their disability and the limited livelihood activities available in Cala, they were de-motivated. Through probing, female heads with a disability agreed that poverty increases the challenges of being disabled. It was necessary to question, the female heads on the significance of the grant to their lives and livelihoods and they pointed out that, due to the disability grant, they are able to access healthcare and food to cushion their disability. In Lupapasi communal area, a *de jure* female head confirmed that discrimination against those with disabilities was also the order of the day particularly in the community works programme. Nhalanhla aged forty-three with a Limb Length Discrepancy or Short Leg Syndrome had this to say concerning discrimination:

> *I used to rely on my husband but when we divorced life drastically changed as well because he was the breadwinner of the house. I was receiving the disability grant and I used the money to supplement my ex-husband's salary. When we divorced in 2007, I tried to approach the village headman since he is the one who recommends villagers to be selected for the EPWP* [work programme]. *With no hesitancy he told me that it was not possible for me to work in the project because I limp when I walk and it would take a lot of time to complete my work. From there I was discouraged to look for work… Therefore I was left with no option than to rely on the DG, the CSG for my three children and my mother's old age pension* [who is 92 years old]. *My ex-husband helps here and there…if I remember well at least three times a year but he gets paid a lot of money but does not pay maintenance for his children. The disability grant is very important to me as I am able to put food on the table for my house and send my children to school, without such income life could have been more miserable here…* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014)

Clearly, then, the DG (often in conjunction with the other two grants discussed) is of some significance in meeting basic household needs particularly given the prevalence of discrimination when seeking for instance to secure casual employment within the Cala communal areas.

4.5.2 Urban to Rural Remittances

Apart from agriculture and social security programmes, female heads in Cala communal areas rely on remittances from their children and other family members or relatives. There is no agreed upon definition of remittances, but Ratha (2003) defines remittances as money or goods that are transmitted to households back home by people working away from their community of origin. Female heads sought, and seek, to make an important investment in educating their children in anticipating that at a later stage in life these children would find stable employment and remit money for taking care of their parents. Data gathered indicate that the female heads under study had family members working in towns and cities. A significant majority (85.4%) reported they have male and/or female migrants working elsewhere, while a small minority (14.6%) indicated that there were no male or female migrant labourers attached to their household.

According to the African culture, with South African Xhosa culture being no exception, it is strongly appreciated that children after becoming employed have an obligation to take care of their parents and to carry their burden. The fieldwork evidence though indicates that, in the case of most Cala households with migrants (children, relatives or spouses), no remittances were in fact being received. Only about 40% of these households were recipients of remittances. The failure to remit was explained in different ways by the female heads. Some indicated that their children and relatives were receiving insufficient income and could not afford to remit back home, while others said the family members working elsewhere had forgotten their 'roots' and thus had turned their backs on their rural households. The latter point speaks to the possible decay of kinship ties in helping each other in times of crisis or need.

In pursuing the matter of remittances, the question of amounts remitted was raised with the female heads. The data established that remittances varied considerably across the female heads under study. A significant majority (75%) received less than R1,000 per month, 9% received from R1,000 to R2,000 and, lastly, 16% reported to be receiving between R3,000 and R4,000. The assumption is that those receiving higher levels of remittances had migrant members who were relatively well remunerated while others had family members in less remunerated work. In addition, female heads indicated that the remittances were not a constant and reliable source of income which they could rely upon without question every

month. Hence, this was contrary to the regular monthly grants received. The Cala heads realised that the remitters living elsewhere had personal needs to cater for as well as unexpected crises. Additionally, some migrants had precarious and temporary forms of employment. One female head from Lupapasi Village had this to say:

> *My son doesn't work fulltime in Cape Town hence he doesn't afford to pay me each and every month…but all I can say is that he doesn't spend more than three months without sending me ewallet* [FnB instant cash]. *I am very appreciative of the fact that he remembers his mom back in the village…sometimes its R300 or R500 because he has to pay for his rent, food and transport so I appreciate the amount he gives me. Without his help I should be struggling right now. I am able to buy food and go to the clinic for my high blood pressure.* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014)

Getrude, a *de facto* female head aged sixty six from Mnxe village brought to the fore how important the remittance is for her:

> *I have a daughter in Johannesburg working as a bank teller at ABSA bank; she is so responsible and supportive. My daughter sends me R2500 every month through my ABSA account, she never misses a month without sending me money and this has been helpful to me because I am able to cater for basic needs for my household. On top she pays for her sister's school fees. She knows that I run a small spaza shop here in the village but she never stopped sending money to me* (In-depth interview, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

The daughter of Getrude remits monthly because of stable employment at the bank in Johannesburg. In both cases, though, the female heads are deeply appreciative of the remittances received and stress their importance to household livelihoods in Cala.

Despite female heads having other sources of income, and given the ever increasing high cost of living in towns and cities, many children and relatives continue to show support for families back in Cala, and this indicates the significance of familial bonds and indeed strengthens them. This is the case for both better-off female heads and poorer ones, with remittances playing a key role in determining the socio-economic status of specific Cala households. Broadly, these remittances are used to provide for households' basic needs, defined by Sander and Maimbo (2003) as including food, clothing, shelter, education of children and health care. In the case of Cala, though, remittances were of particular importance for the purchase of basic foodstuffs. In describing the practice of remitting,

Chimhou et al. (2005) argue that remittances are motivated by an obligation to contribute to household security, or out of affection and as a responsibility towards the rural family. This, at least according to the Cala female heads, seemed to be the key motivation in my study area.

Whatever the motivation, the remittances in the form of cash transfers by children and relatives assisted Cala female heads and their households in providing protection against shocks and risks. In this regard, it is important to note that some female heads in Cala who were not eligible for an old pension grant and who were unemployed (even without casual work) heavily relied on remittances, as seen in the case of Ramena who constantly received remittances from her sister in Durban. The findings of my study on the importance of remittances in Cala is in agreement with the study by Woolard and Klasen (2004), who found that changes in remittance income alone accounted for around 15% of household transitions into and out of poverty in KwaZulu-Natal province.

Female heads in Cala communal area also received non-cash remittance though cash remittances are more common. The study unearthed that most remitted goods are foodstuffs (mealie meal, sugar, salt, cooking oil, beans to mention but a few). Thandi, a *de facto* female head aged forty six recalls a time a when child support grant was not transferred to her. She has this to say:

> *My husband works in Jamestown. At one point in time when the child support grant was not transferred I was under pressure because I rely on the grant before the husband deposits money for our usual purchases…Luckily my husband's friend was driving to Cala for a meeting and Mthoko* [referring to her husband] *bought groceries in Jamestown and sent them with Robert* [her husband's friend]… *salt, cooking oil, mealie meal, potatoes, onions, beans, baking flour, washing powder, bathing soap and so on. It really saved me that time because I didn't have to buy the groceries when the grant was transferred late…usually he just deposits R3,000* (Life history, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

Non-cash remittances can therefore play a crucial role in maintaining household economic well-being as exemplified by the case of Thandi.

4.5.3 Petty Commodity Production and Trade

Rural people in the former Bantustans often engage in petty commodity production and trade activities, in part because of the dearth of employment opportunities in these areas. Thus female heads in Cala, in addition to receiving income from agricultural production, social security and remittances, regularly diversify their income sources further. The motive to engage in commodity production and trade activities should be seen as concurrently necessity and opportunity-driven. Only 12.1% of the female heads though confirmed involvement in petty commodity activities, with this being the main source of income for some heads and a supplementary source for others. Because of the absence of formal training and skills, they have relied on tacit entrepreneurial skills learned over time in and through these informal activities. While the available literature acknowledges the entrepreneurial qualities of those operating in petty commodity production (Brown 2004), the evidence from Cala reveals economic necessity as the main reason for setting up and pursuing these activities. Female heads utilise the natural capital that is in abundance within their villages to produce commodities which they then sell. In doing so, they display considerable ingenuity and creativity. The money gained by female heads through petty commodity activities could not be quantified given that these activities are opportunistic in earning money for immediate consumption needs. The income generated, as indicated by the female heads, may in fact be an overestimate as research subjects may 'want to respond in a way that makes them look as good as possible' (Donaldson and Grant-Vallone 2002: 247).

First of all, female heads made traditional brooms using sticks and grass (see photo 4.3) collected from the nearby forests. Sibongile a *de jure* female head from Lupapasi Village aged fifty seven, is an expert in broom-making and supplements her income through this livelihood activity. She noted that she was subcontracted by local schools to make brooms for sweeping school yards. The following words are revealing:

> *I'm my own boss. I have been making brooms for many years now, but recently the local schools contracted me to make brooms for schools at a wholesale price. My normal price for each broom is R25 but for the wholesale price, the school has to buy more than 5 brooms and the price is reduced to R20 per broom. My prices are based on the labour that I put into making the brooms…I travel distances to collect my material* [grass and sticks] *in the nearby Delindlala farm. Presently, I have three schools that I provide with brooms; initially I used to provide brooms once a term but now they place*

orders any time because school children break the brooms…this allows me to make more and more money. The money I get is very important for my family. I am teaching my son who is unemployed how to make the brooms so that he can make a living (In-depth interview Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

Another *de facto* female head Nqobile (from the same village) engaged in broom-making indicates though that local competition in this activity poses a major challenge:

I make grass brooms to make extra money but because there are no employment opportunities around. Most people in the villages are making brooms because the materials are free of charge and there is too much competition…prices fall and the business becomes unprofitable (In-depth Interview Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

Informal livelihood activities such as broom-making in Lupapasi have become quite congested to the extent that, in certain instances, the activity yields little or no profit.

Photo 4.3: Clay Pots and Homemade Brooms

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014

A second petty commodity activity pursued by female heads in Cala communal area, particularly in Sifonondile Village which is closer to the Drakensburg Mountains, involves fetching grass for making baskets. In undertaking this, they are not only responding to market demand but are also creating a market demand for baskets. Due to the flourishing informal food outlets in Cala town, female heads make baskets for carrying food takeaways for delivery to places like First National Bank, Cala hospital and other retail shops. A number of employees prefer the food made from these food outlets because it is fresh food and there is a variety of traditional dishes like *isophi* (a soup made from mixing maize, beans and peas) and

umngqusho (made from corn and sugar beans). These dishes are not available in mainstream shops like Spar in Cala town. These baskets are also used by female heads and other people who engage in door to door selling of various goods including agriculture products, fish and meat. Basket prices varied according to size: in late 2014, small baskets were priced at R25, medium baskets were priced at R50 while the large baskets cost R100.

Thirdly, aside from making brooms and baskets, female heads engaged in making clay pots (locally known as *udongwe*) (see Photo 4.3). It is part of established cultural arrangements in rural communities in South Africa, as well as simply practical, to own clay pots and villagers in Cala communal area are no exception to this. Clay soil is in abundance in Cala hence female heads utilised the natural capital in the form of soil to make a living. In this respect, no restrictions existed or were imposed by local headmen in relation to digging soil for pot-making purpose. Clay pots were mainly used for cooking by Cala households. Given inadequate household income for purchasing electricity, female heads and other villagers sporadically used fire to prepare food and clay pots were useful in this regard. Clay pots vary by size and prices are mainly determined by the size of the pot, with prices ranging from R30 to R80. The clay pots were marketed in the local Cala villages and at times in Cala town, particularly at month-end when female heads go to town and receive their social grants.

The fourth petty commodity activity is the making of mats. Two forms of mats were identified, those made out of grass and others made from plastic. Mats were more expensive than any other products produced because of the amount of time and labour invested. Additionally, these mats came in different sizes and styles. Door mats were sold at a price of R120 tagged with the words ‘welcome’ while table mats which were not styled were costing R20.

Finally, beads were used by female heads to make traditional necklaces (see photo 4.4) and the price varied according to size, from R30 to R60. Traditional healers (locally known as *sangoma*) were the main buyers.

In addition to all this, female heads in Mnxe collectively worked under a project known as Polar City Art and Craft, which was an initiative of Sakhisizwe municipality. Polar City Art and Craft was mainly targeting female heads in imparting life skills (such as knitting and

sewing) and any profits generated were shared. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with female heads in Mnxe indicated that, at first, the project was quite successful and well-marketed. Female heads produced jerseys and traditional Xhosa dresses normally worn during traditional functions such as weddings. Prices for the clothes produced were fixed depending on the material used, styles and the amount of time and labour invested. Income earned through the Polar City Art and Craft was a fixed R500 per female head per month. However, like many such projects, Polar City Art and Craft did not last long particularly because funds to buy materials were mismanaged for personal gain, marketing strategies became weak and Sakhisizwe local municipality was not consistently supportive. But female heads in this study collectively agreed that their skills were improved in knitting and sowing through their involvement in this project.

Photo 4.4: Traditional Necklaces

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014

In this regard, female heads in Cala who trained under Polar City Art and Craft bought their own sewing machines to start their own businesses in the future. In an in-depth interview with Sindisiwe, a sixty two *de jure* female head from Mnxe village, it was indicated that, for her, knitting and sewing sales formed more than 30% of her monthly household income:

> *Polar City Art and Craft helped me very much to improve my skills and now I am a professional in sewing and knitting. The project was not very big so when it was closed no one was given a package to take home but what remained among the women was the*

skill. Today I can make a beautiful dress and school jersey from scratch…a jersey costs R180 while a hat costs R25 to R30. I am making a living and taking care of my grandchildren…thanks to Polar City Art and Craft (In-depth interview, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

Another female head said the following:

I make children's clothes and sell them in Cala. Sometimes people do not buy what I have made. They, too, do not have money. I tend to sell to those I know and trust on credit, with the hope that they will pay me when they have money (In-depth interview, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

While petty commodity production is of some significance in Cala communal areas, its overall effects in reducing poverty and unemployment is limited. Female heads' activities in petty commodity production and sales have been merely survivalist in nature for the majority of female heads involved. This is illustrated in the following words by Thombi a younger *de jure* head from Sifonondile:

I have a stall in Cala, next to the Spar. I sell fat cakes [locally known as *magwinya*], *drinks, second hand clothes and sweets. I am making between R50-R400 per month. I make just enough money to survive* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

But the effects of this type of activity are quite diverse. While some heads use it simply as one of many livelihood strategies because of its failure to generate significant income, others are able to use petty commodity activities as close to their main source of household income.

Also, the kind of petty commodity work has implications for profit margins. For some activities, all inputs (as part of natural capital) are obtained free of charge but the making of clothing for instance becomes problematic because it is necessary to source and purchase wool and other necessities for knitting and sewing, and at times the female head may not have cash available for such purchases. In the end, the findings of this study are consistent with the argument by Tripp (1992:176) that 'even though women have managed to enter into more lucrative enterprises, most women, for whom access to capital is a serious problem, have little hope of expanding beyond small microenterprise'. For those heads involved in petty commodity on a minimalist basis, any forthcoming proceeds are used to supplement food supply and, at the same time, income generated is erratic, intermittent and unpredictable

– particularly if products are sold on credit. Thus, as argued in another study, the rural poor in engaging in petty commodity strategies remain living at a poverty-level standard of living or subsistence living (International Labour Organisation 2004).

4.5.4 Local Casual Work

Female heads in Cala are also at times involved in casual work which took on different forms. A significant proportion (27.3%) of female heads indicated that they participated in casual work locally, as opposed to regular formal employment locally. The most commonly identified casual work is the expanded public works programme (EPWP) (locally known as *Mngcunube*) which remains an ongoing process with an estimated income of more than R500 per month. The remuneration given to female heads under the *Mngcunube* differs considerably to the extent that it is difficult to come to any definite conclusion about the amount of income received through the programme. The Expanded Public Works Programme is one of government's programmes aimed at providing poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed. The findings of this study reveal that the EPWP is managing to help female heads if only by ensuring that they do not enter into deeper levels of poverty. The following quotation though from Ntombifuthi a *de jure* female head aged fifty-five from Lupapasi village highlights that the programme can be even more significant:

> *Since losing my husband 6 years ago, I have battled to make ends meet. After my husband's death, life became a challenge…it's difficult when you're used to being supported and taken care of and suddenly you have to work. When my husband died, I had to find a way to make a living to support my six children. I started selling vegetables and doing laundry for my neighbours and people in the community. I made very little money but I survived for many years…to tell the truth I was everyone's helper. I had no choice…to do piece jobs or go hungry. To make matter worse I didn't do formal education, as I stopped school in grade seven when my father died and without any qualification or skills, I struggled to get a decent job. It is only four years ago when I got a break though when I joined an Expanded Public Works Programme project involving cemetery cleaning, gardening and road maintenance. Since joining this project, my life is good and I have been able to take care of my family. We are no longer worried every day, wondering where our next meal will come from. The stipend that I receive helps me to get food…which will sustain my family* (Life history, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

Female heads maintained that such government projects aimed at increasing work opportunities, even if only temporarily, were important in securing household economic well-being, although the heads also lamented that the money was normally inadequate. Nonetheless, this does not override the importance of EPWP as, at times, a stable and reliable source of livelihood.

Apart from working for EPWP, female heads particularly the younger ones engaged in domestic work. Domestic work included doing laundry for the older female heads and other villagers. Findings indicate that these young female heads have regular households to which they offered domestic services and they have established a trustworthy relationship with particular clients particularly because of good work. The remuneration for laundry services was R150 per load of clothes (though no exact instrument was used to measure a load) including ironing of clothes. Firewood gathering was another source of income identified as casual work. Because of the physical ability required to walk long distances to gather fuel-wood, older female heads subcontracted younger female heads to do the task for them. A bundle of wood (see Photo 4.5) (locally known as *igoqo*) was R300 in 2014.

Photo 4.5: Bundle of Firewood

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014.

Other casual jobs involved working in homestead gardens and arable fields of villagers, and fetching water. Payment however was not invariably in a monetary form as labour power was also traded with foodstuffs needed by the casual labourer. For instance Thuli from Lupapasi village said the following:

> *At times when we do not have enough food, we will go to work for other families who are better off. We make arrangements with them and they will allocate a piece of land*

for us to work and we will be paid with food (In depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Another *de facto* female head reiterated that:

At times we work as a family so that we finish the job quickly. When we have this food for work, my children do not have to attend school. They have to help because on my own, I will not be able to finish on time due to aging (In depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

This was corroborated by focus group discussions with female heads, who noted that it was often better to be paid in kind (such as foodstuffs) as this would ensure immediate access to food for a meal.

The cash and kind gained through the casual jobs (such as laundry, cultivating land, fetching firewood and water) is quite minimal but, for female heads interviewed, it was significant. Through probing, it became apparent that some of the casual work practiced by female heads was out of sheer desperation. In this light, casual work in Cala may not enable female heads to deal with the economic risks and uncertainty they face (Chen, Vanek and Heintz, 2006: 2131), but it is not frowned upon. This is clear from the fact that casual work proceeds are primarily channelled by the female heads to the needs of children. Plus, in the absence of formal employment work locally, the heads need to take any local work opportunities which come their way.

Further, a local school in Mnxe village provided employment for some female heads particularly of a younger age. Evidence gathered indicates that younger female heads could get part-time employment easily there because of their physical capabilities. Katalane, a *de facto* female head whose husband never supports his family, was part-timing as a food server at Khanyisa Special School, a school for the disabled aging from 8 to 21 years. Her monthly remuneration was R840.

4.5.5 Rotational groups

Female heads, along with other villagers in Cala, took it upon themselves to engage in more cooperative methods of generating income, specifically through rotational or savings groups (known as *mgalelo*) to which group members made regular financial contributions. Group members could, in turn, draw lump sums from the group's accumulated finances. These groups are autonomous from any local government authorities; they also have their control

mechanisms and are self-regulating and self-sufficient. Social capital in Cala plays an important part in establishing the rotational or savings groups because such groups are formed on the basis of trust and social networking between the members of the group. An assertion by Meagher (2005:554) that 'networks and various informal sectors of African economies provide livelihoods, housing and other services in cases where the official economies fail to' is in this way confirmed by the existence of such groups. Female heads are able to secure and supplement income based on established social networks in their villages.

Most female heads (80%) indicated that they were part of rotational groups while 20% were not. Mutual trustworthiness and long-term personal friendships were the most important membership qualifications and this was done to avoid defaulters (i.e. those who failed consistently to make financial contributions to the group). Female heads who did not belong to rotational groups said that they could not afford to contribute monthly given their limited sources of income. The number of members forming one rotational group varied across the three villages of Sifonondile, Mnxe and Lupapasi. Generally speaking, though, each group comprised of more than five female heads. The amount contributed per month was agreed upon by the whole group depending on the monthly income of each female head. The amount that was contributed every month across Cala communal areas ranged from R300 to R1,500.

The monthly contributions accumulated were given to the female head receiving the group's cash in a particular month. This cash was used for different purposes, such as asset accumulation (for example, the purchase of livestock or household property) or in enhancing existing assets (such as through household renovations). The amount drawn was often quite significant and more than the female head would have at any one time if not part of a savings group. Thus, thoughtful and wise decisions had to be made to avoid misusing the income. The following words from Thando a *de facto* female head is revealing in this regard:

> *Rotational groups are very important to us all. It is very difficult to contribute your whole income monthly but I am always comforted by the fact that when it's my turn I will take home a lot of money. In our group we contribute an amount of R1500 monthly per individual so last month was my turn and I received R7500 and I have been able to invest in buying chicks and piglets since I am starting to venture into that business. I hope my business will be a success. The only problem that I am afraid of is thieves...you will be shocked to wake up one morning without any pigs...that is my great fear but like*

in every business there is risk...and I will think positive and I have to put fence around and padlocks on the doors of the pigsty (In-depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Hence, rotational groups were being used by some female heads to start-up informal production and trading activities. But this depended upon the monthly amount contributed by the heads. For groups with smaller contributions, the amount drawn was often used for basic household and personal needs such as purchasing clothing and food, and paying school fees. Additionally, though, female heads noted that the rotational groups were sensitive to unexpected crises in the lives of a particular member (such as funeral and chronic illness expenses) such that the groups would make contributions to meeting these challenges.

4.5.6 Remarriage

Intriguingly, the research findings show that remarriage is a key livelihood strategy of female household heads in Cala communal areas. Generally, men are perceived culturally as the family provider and female heads interviewed indicated that, after divorce or death of a husband, they regularly remarried after a period of 3-5 years. Several benefits of remarrying were identified including emotional support but also income enhancement and shielding from poverty. Nevertheless, remarriage in the end is not a solid livelihood strategy in the study area because it tends to worsen the situation of the women due to the increasing number of children that result from the new marriage.

Lerato's case is testimony to this, as she describes the effects of her remarriage in the following words:

One of the reasons for my unhappiness are the number of children that I got from each of my marriages…my first husband left me with three children without any support or maintenance being paid…I dragged him to the Court and he paid the first five months and from that time he never paid anything to support his children. Then I got remarried to my second husband and added two more children. I have now five children to raise all by myself. I was in a better condition before I got married to my second husband (Life history, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Another de facto female head made the same point:

I never thought I would remarry but I ended up remarrying thinking my life will be better…but to my surprise life has treated me the other way. My husband works but he does not take care of his family but finishes money on other women and I am troubled

that one day he will be bring the deadly disease [HIV and AIDS]. *Whenever I ask him for money he beats me in front of the children...every month after receiving pay he doesn't come home…if it was not for my children I will pack my bags and go but I have to make ends meet by whatever way possible to educate my children from both marriages so that one day they will take care of me* (In-depth interview, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

Overall, it is important to note that remarriage as a livelihood strategy is a challenge. The increase in household size from additional children means that any additional income has to be equivalent to the number of dependents to maintain a decent livelihood. This does not seem to be happening in Cala, particularly when the income generated by the new husband/father is not used in full toward household expenses.

4.6 Livelihood Assets

Chapter two of this thesis discussed the sustainable livelihoods approach as a crucial framework underpinning this study of Cala female heads and their households. Rural households pursue livelihood strategies or activities using different assets (or resources) available or acquired, with these assets shaping significantly the livelihood options of households including in Cala communal areas. These assets include financial, physical, human, social, and natural capital (Carney et al. 1999). In this regard, and to reiterate, Ellis (2000:31) argues that assets are 'the basic building blocks upon which households are able to undertake production, engage in labour markets, and participate in reciprocal exchange with other households. Assets (which I use interchangeably with 'resources' and 'capital') are therefore critical to household sustenance. In this context, I provide a nuanced analysis of the livelihood assets of female-headed households in the Cala communal villages of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi and how these contribute to the generation, construction and maintenance of livelihoods. The capitals are not presented below in order of importance and, in fact, the significance of particular capitals varies across the female-headed households in Cala.

4.6.1 Natural Capital

Natural capital includes access to land, water and wildlife, from which households engage in agricultural pursuits and resource collection for both sustenance and income generation (Narayan 2000). The form and degree of access is a central aspect in the full utilisation of natural capital in eventually assuring meaningful rural livelihoods. In Cala communal areas,

female heads alluded to the fact that access (including possession and control) to natural resources was in effect free of charge although constraints at times hindered their utilisation. Data gathered uncovered that Cala heads have access to gardening, arable fields, fishing, collecting firewood, and gathering raw materials for petty commodity production and sales. Cala communal areas are naturally resourced and this opened the avenue for livelihood opportunities although these resources have been depleting over the years. This depletion, and constraints on access, does not however imply that natural capital is of no significance in Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi.

The abundant land in the Cala communal areas is particularly important in the construction of livelihoods. As highlighted earlier in the chapter, female heads acknowledge the key role played by agriculture-based (and therefore land-based) livelihood practices in maintaining some level of household sustenance. Homestead gardening and arable fields acted as a basis for own-consumption of agricultural crops, thereby reducing household expenditure on food, and income generation more sporadically. This was the case with 93.8% of Cala female heads surveyed, involving homestead gardening for growing maize (55.4%), beans (56.9%), cabbages (43.1%), spinach (52.3%), tomatoes (29.2%), onion (20%) and pumpkin (35.4%). During the dry season, homestead gardening did not produce significant yields particularly because of insufficient water. Female heads unanimously agreed that, during the rainy season, yields increased. Despite the lack of rain-fed water during the dry season, female heads utilised the river water (from Tsomo River) while tapped water was heavily regulated locally because of excessive demands on it. Because the homesteads of the female-headed households were located at varying distances from the river, differentiated yields existed from one household to another (and regardless of being a *de facto* or *de jure* household). One *de jure* female head expressed her deep frustration concerning the lack of water and regulation of the tapped water source. In also referring to favouritism by the headman in Lupapasi in terms of accessing the tapped water for homestead gardens, she said:

> *Gardening is an important part my family and the village, but the great problem that we face is the lack of water…Some of us we do not have any source of money and we depend on farming to raise our children and buy them food and clothes. It is my wish that the government bring water in Lupapasi so that we can harvest and sell our crops and have more money…We spent a lot of time going to the river to fetch water to water the gardens. But sometimes it is not fair; if you have a good relationship with the*

headman you can fetch water and use it in your garden. Mostly, the men in the village do not respect the rules of the village and no one even fines them but if it is women you are made to pay money to the headman…[This is] *not fair* (In-depth Interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

The absence of available financial capital, in the form of disposable cash at short notice, would inhibit certain households from 'paying off' the headman for water access purposes.

Serious constraints were identified as limiting the full use of local natural capital, particularly in relation to the arable fields, including seed inputs, limited farm labour, absence of draught power, and inadequate income to hire a tractor for ploughing. One *de facto* female head from Mnxe aged sixty-eight expressed the following:

Land here is enough for everyone. In fact everyone has a piece of land inherited from their husband when they passed away but because of lack of income they have sold the cattle to use in ploughing in search for money to feed the family. The truth of the matter in this village is that people have land but they have no money to hire the tractor because it is expensive…[It is] R350 depending on the owner of the tractor to just plough one acre 70 x 70 metres (Focus group discussion, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

This was a common comment by the female heads in Cala, namely, that there was no shortage of land for crop production. It was 'everywhere' but, due to the many constraints, land often lay unutilised or underutilised. This was very distressing for the heads, as land was seen as central in contributing to food security at household and individual level.

Without active and ongoing engagement with the land, female heads felt a sense of loss and completeness. In this respect, one *de facto* female head accentuated the multi-dimensional importance of natural capital (mainly land) particularly if farming was a viable livelihood practice:

Land is very important as it defines us… there is food in this land my friend, it provides us with our own food to eat, and it is more than just land …it provides jobs for the people in this village. Because of my diabetes I cannot do heavy jobs. I always hire a garden boy to do all the work in the garden although I sometimes take some time to do some work in the garden like weeding, but I can't water the garden because the water is far away. Every season I make sure that I grow maize and other crops in my field. …

> *It is good that I have my cattle and I use that to plough and I sometimes out of compassion hire out the cattle to other villagers at a better price than the tractor…just to get money and help them to grow their own food* (In depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014)

From the above sentiment, it is apparent that unhindered access to land is a major part of the self-identity of Cala female heads, and of villagers more broadly. The heads have a long-entrenched connection to the land and a sense of belonging to it ('land … defines us') despite the many constraints which hinder a more intimate relationship with it through now seriously-disrupted agricultural practices. The fact that Cala women's access to land is normally mediated through a male (regularly the husband) does not undercut the significance of land for women. And, for *de jure* female heads in particular, the relevance of land may now be greater in the absence of the patriarch.

Though land is important for identity and belonging, Cala female heads also view it in a 'productivist' sense (as a source of material life) and, indeed, the notion of natural 'capital' speaks to this directly. With regard to actual material returns or yields, land enables the Cala heads to harvest maize especially from the arable fields. The size of the maize yields varies across Cala households and the yield was at times capable of providing food for almost an entire year. The most common usage of maize was in the making samp (locally known as *umngqusho*). This is a traditional South African recipe mixed with beans (known as *mbotyi*) and most common among Xhosa-speaking people (*amaXhosa*) as a staple food. In this regard, land (through stored maize) provided food especially in critical times when any household income had been depleted before the next pay-out for grants. This was also crucial because of the ever-increasing food prices in Cala town which were beyond the reach of particularly 'surviving' and 'struggling' households. Undoubtedly, then, crop-based agriculture continues to play a pivotal role in contributing to household food security in Cala.

Natural capital in the form of forests also provides a source of living for the female heads in Cala. Households for instance, and because of shortfalls in household income, substituted the electrical power with fuel wood for both warmth and food processing. Out of the sixty five respondents surveyed, forty-four reported to be using fuel wood (at no expense normally) at one point if not on a regular basis. Firewood collection was also done on behalf of some female-headed households, notably elderly heads, and thus became an income-generating

activity for other heads. For petty commodity sales, grass for thatching and brooms came from the forests as well. It was reported though that grass for thatching and for making brooms was often collected from Delindlala farm (a private white-owned farm adjacent to Lupapasi village) for which payment was made. Forest products broadly speaking provided a safety net and were particularly imperative as a coping strategy for the 'struggling' Cala households, such that the forests normally acted as a supplementary livelihood activity for agriculture (Casse et al. 2004). However, deforestation, in part because of extensive firewood collection, is significantly threatening the available forest resources in Cala. At times, due to expansion of cropland and grazing land to allow for access to land for new married families in Cala, forests are also subject to encroachment.

4.6.2 Social Capital

Social capital consists of obligations and expectations, and a set of norms and effective sanctions that constrains and encourages certain kinds of behaviour (Coleman 1988). In his definition, Putnam (1995) highlights features of social organisation such as social networks and social trust which enables community members to act collectively for mutual benefits by fostering coordination, cooperation and cohesion among them. At the same time, it is important to note that social capital can involve processes of exclusion which marginalise certain community members.

The evidence from Cala speaks to the existence and importance of social capital amongst the female heads. Female heads who engaged in casual labour, such as doing laundry, fetching water and collecting firewood, reported that it was the good relations with other villagers (including other female heads and villagers at large) that culminated in obtaining casual work in the first place and ensuring temporary work on a reasonably regular basis. The ongoing short-term work contracts arose because of recommendations from existing clients to others. Female heads thus unanimously agreed that they always make recommendations to their relatives, kinship and friends for causal labourers who perform their work effectively and efficiently. One *de jure* female head who cannot perform any physical work because of her health said the following in this regard:

> *I stay with my grandchildren and they are still too young to do some of the work. As for me I cannot do any job that requires my power because of my health…I have worked so hard to raise my children since the death of their father. Working in white owned farms in Elliot was very difficult but I was left with no option than to provide food and pay*

school fees for my children. I no longer do any kind of work but since last year I was recommended by Sibongile [a friend] *to hire Thabiso* [a male villager who does part time work] *to collect firewood and water for me…Obviously he doesn't do the laundry but Tshepiso* [a young divorced female head who does piece jobs] *is the best in this village; she is earning a living through that…she is on demand…she knows her job…I even leave my grandchildren with her when I go for medical check-ups in East London* (In depth interview, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

Thus, social capital facilitates financial capital for villagers like Thabiso and Tshepiso, such that casual work becomes a crucial income source for these villagers. In this respect, trust is central to this arrangement, which is quite prevalent amongst female heads in Cala. Particularly considering the failure of the South African government to pursue a broad-based rural development strategy leading to pronounced rural employment creation, social capital 'kicks in' so to speak by providing an informal mechanism for filling such an employment gap and contributing to household economic well-being. This point goes contrary to the thoughts of Meagher (2005) who tends to undervalue of prevalence of sound social networks in rural spaces.

Besides these household-to-household relations that are embedded in community-wide networks, there are other social capital processes taking place in Cala rooted in burial societies and stokvels (also known as rotational groups/savings clubs), which bring Cala heads together, respectively, in preparation for an impending crisis (for example, death of a household member) or to facilitate bulk household purchases. For example, Phantsi Kwelitye is a burial society in Lupapasi village which is of composed of fifteen female heads and each pays an amount of R100 per month. Other burial societies also exist, with the monthly amount varying depending upon the mutual agreement between the members of the society. However, not all female heads in Cala can afford to pay the monthly subscriptions for the burial societies; and, hence, they are simultaneously inclusive but also exclusive, with often the 'struggling' heads being faced with exclusion. Female heads under study reported that their burial societies were formed on the basis of trust. These burial societies were established in Cala communal areas for different reasons, including helping out and assisting in the burial of a family member through the purchase of a coffin, food and any other logistical

arrangements. One *de jure* female head, who lost her son just months before the fieldwork for this study, reported on the absolute importance of burial societies. She has this to say:

> *My son was very ill because of the HIV/AIDS, he came back here while sick and I had to take care of him since he was not married and his father died a long ago. He was always in pain until the day he died. I did not have any money to bury him but thanks to the burial society they helped me very much because I was always contributing to the group…he was buried decently* (In depth interview Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

Networks such as this play a critical role in supporting female heads, including in death in ensuring a dignified burial for family members. In this respect, it is not only the financial support provided but also the sympathetic emotional support given in the absence of partners and relatives.

Informal social security groups such as savings clubs (often known as stokvels) are examples of social networks that play a vital role for the rural poor in Cala. Female heads (both *de facto* and *de jure*) reported that they did not receive economic security from their husbands. This is particularly relevant for *de facto* heads whose husband is still alive but is not living up to the responsibility of caring for the wife and children, including by spending household income on women and drinking. Women are significantly more responsible, as noted by the ways in which both *de jure* and *de facto* female heads seek to ensure that child support grants are used primarily for the basic needs of the children in the household.

Thus, on the one hand, stokvels and burial societies empower female heads as well as cushioning them against vulnerability in times of stress. On the other hand, they are not without their own problems. During interviews women expressed their frustrations with the social networks as a result of increased responsibilities that come with burial society and stokvel membership. One *de facto* female head from Mnxe village said the following:

> *We always run for burials societies because they help us when we are in a crisis but it is difficult at times especially those dry months when you rely on the child support grants and when my husband does not deposit money for children's food. How will I be able to pay for the burial society because they will be calling members to ask for the money…I sometimes have to borrow and replace the money later on. So many things need money so it's very difficult for me;, imagine I have to pay for my children's*

clothes on lay-by and the bank deducts its own fees…[We] *will be left with nothing* (Life history, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

In similar vein, a *de jure* female head from Sifonondile reported her concerns:

Stokvels are good but some other times it becomes a problem especially when in a certain month when you have not received money from piece jobs but you are left with no option than to help each other because you will need the money in another month. In our stokvel we are 6 but we used to be 10 in 2013…Others dropped out because they were no longer affording the monthly installments and others had additional responsibilities (In depth Interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Clearly, female heads in Cala communal areas value social networks and seek to assist each other through stokvels and burial societies. But many female heads struggle to meet the subscriptions each and every month while other female heads drop out. The results of this study thus concurs with Ferlander (2007:120) who argues that 'women in low-income and marginalised communities with strong bonding ties, often suffer from high levels of stress and anxiety due to the pressure they feel to provide for others'. Social networks are a source of financial and emotional uplifting but they at times put a strain on Cala female heads as they seek to juggle the income and expenditure side of the household's financial equation.

Social networks, ultimately though, are networks of necessity for the Cala heads and they act as crucial coping mechanisms where there is a dearth of alternative opportunities to ensure household well-being. But, by no means do burial societies and stokvels provide comprehensive and adequate sustenance and assistance to female heads in Cala communal areas of Mnxe, Lupapasi and Sifonondile. They are simply one of many aspects of a female head's household livelihood portfolio, and supplement more crucial sources of livelihoods such as old age pensions. To claim that social networks are a necessity is to speak about their importance in providing a livelihood strategy. It does not imply that Cala female heads interact and network purely because of compulsion. In fact, the spirit of *ubuntu* continues to have significance in Cala communal areas. *Ubuntu* entails localised forms of caring for each other as an expression of humanity based on reciprocity and mutual good will (Broodryk 2002:13). It takes on various forms in Cala. Evidence from the field demonstrates for instance that the female heads knew each other in their respective villages personally and shared intimate matters which they experienced as a form of emotional concern and caring.

Further, when they were asked if they have received any kind of support from their relatives, a significant percentage (93.2%) of female heads surveyed indicated that they have relatives in the village while 6.8% of the heads reported not to have relatives in their respective villages. Of the heads with relatives, just below 50% of the heads receive help from relatives on a reasonably regular basis, including working in their homestead gardens and arable fields. In cases where no help was received, it was established that households of relatives were finding it extremely difficult simply to care for their households, and neither the resources nor energy to assist the female head. Given the poverty endemic in Cala communal areas, it was also noted that just below 40% of the female heads obtained food at times from their relatives, with the balance simply unable to bail out the female heads by providing food for them. It seems that this type of assistance, or mutual assistance, has decreased over time, with 54.6% of the female heads indicating so, while 43.2% reported that mutual aid has remained the same (only 2.3% concluded that mutual aid had increased).

Additionally, the *ubuntu* spirit happens between female heads and their neighbours, to the extent of borrowing money and food from each other in times of crisis. However, the female heads brought to the fore that failure to reciprocate in terms of assistance strains the relationships with neighbours (and even with relatives at times) and contributes to undermining local networks of support. One *de jure* female heads from Mnxe showed the significance of *ubuntu* through the following words:

> *I do not have anyone who can help me; my two sons who were working died in a car accident coming from Cape Town. My husband died a long time ago when the boys were still young. I always get help from my neighbours, sometimes I do not have food, but I have never slept on an empty stomach…who am I without their help?…God blesses them for their kind assistance* (In-depth interview, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

4.6.3 Financial Capital

Financial capital regularly takes the form of income generated from the sale or use of labour power, including through employment, social grants, agricultural sales and petty commodity production (Twigg and Bhatt 1998). Given that the monetised economy pervades even communal areas in contemporary South Africa, some source of income becomes critical for household consumption of goods and services and, hopefully, for the purchase and accumulation of physical assets for the household. The need for, and pursuit of, financial

capital often leads to diversification and intensification of livelihood activities as a crucial component of household sustenance. This is clearly evidenced by the female heads in Cala communal areas.

Income from agriculture in Cala is difficult to generate because it is mainly subsistence based. Nevertheless, natural capital in the form of land (for crops and livestock) provides one source of financial capital, no matter how meagre. However, income from agricultural sales is not necessarily a sign of a 'thriving' household because, as noted in the previous chapter, 'struggling' and 'surviving' households may sell livestock as a distress sale in order to meet an immediate and basic household need. But despite the fact that agricultural income is particularly unreliable (dependent as it is for instance on variable rainfall patterns), and hence can be a very stressful and burdensome activity, farming has been able to keep the heads of some Cala heads above water. One *de facto* female head from Lupapasi thus said the following in relation to an appreciation of whatever amount she receives from farming:

> *Life is difficult in this village, we cannot find jobs, our children cannot find jobs…we are all the same. Is this what Mandela fought for? For us to live we try to do anything that will bring some money in the house because if we do not do that we end up dying of hunger. I sell vegetables or exchange with any item missing in my house…whatever money that I get from selling vegetable makes a difference…I just wish if my children had jobs, life could be better* (In depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

Where poverty is harrowing, and where 'struggling' households seem to be on the brink of collapse, and even sending children away to be looked after by relatives outside Cala, the relevance of even small sums of money from selling vegetables (or other agricultural product) should not be underestimated.

Though income derived from agricultural production was of some value, and its value varied considerably across Cala households, the financial capital of female heads was – as a general tendency – mainly derived from social grants particularly the old age pensions and child support grants. With close to 17 million grants nationally, mainly child support grants, this social security programme is of immense significance for both poor urban and rural households. The Cala survey indicates that nearly two-thirds (65.2%) of the female heads were recipients of the old pension grant worth R1,350 per month. Though of immense importance generally, its significance was contingent on alternative and complementary

household income sources as well as the number of dependents in the household. Thus, for many households, the old age pension is deeply constrained in terms of its impact on household sustenance. One *de facto* female head from Sifonondile thus noted:

> *The grants are important to us but the major problem that we are facing is that SASSA doesn't care about the number of the people who benefit from the grant; in my house we are five and my daughter has two of her daughters and she does not work. I am the breadwinner because I am paid the grant; her children are not receiving the child support grant because they do not have birth certificates and the father is not known…the money is not enough to take care of everyone* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Further, of the surveyed female heads, 80.3% reported to be receiving at least one child support grant while 10.6% of the female heads receiving a disability grant. Like the old age pension, the regularity of the child support grant (a set amount every month) provides some basis for planning at household level in terms of expenditure, though the monthly amount is far below the old age pension amount. Female heads also highlighted that the 'intended' child does not always benefit from the grant money if received by the parents living elsewhere, with the money diverted for other purposes to the detriment of the female head in Cala.

Remittances, in cash or kind, are also important for many Cala female heads but they are not a consistent and stable source of financial capital. Given the levels of poverty and vulnerability in Cala, remittances simply cushion the adverse effects of poverty. A significant majority (66.7%) of the female heads receive remittances, but the monthly amount varies considerably between households, from R200 to R3,000, with those receiving significant amounts not only being able to purchase household consumables or accessing education and health services but also investing in movable property (such as livestock) as a source of wealth generation.

A final source of financial capital is credit through informal channels. Most female heads in Cala (63.6%) have access to loans but these loans were all accessed from informal credit providers in the form of individuals which are not regulated by the relevant government institution (the National Credit Regulator). Certain individuals are locally well-known in providing credit and are labeled as *mashonisa* (or loan sharks). Formal credit providers like

banks refuse to offer credit to the heads because of the lack of collateral security set by banks. Additionally, they generally lacked a guarantor with long-term and adequate income to act as security for them; as well, their informal activities yield low and irregular returns considered unacceptable to money lenders. The female heads acknowledged the importance of credit in the form of cash as it acted as a means of increasing household income for purchases particularly food in situations where a household ran short in the middle of the month, or to pay school fees and medication. One *de facto* female head commented on how significant the money from the *mashonisa* is, and despite the high interest on the loan:

> *We have no employment here in our village…even the youth do not have employment. The government promised us jobs and up until now we have no jobs. We are relying on the grants that we receive, my mother is receiving R1350 for the old pension but it is not enough so sometimes we borrow money from the mashonisa to buy food and we repay the money after we get the grant. Let's say you borrow R500 when you pay back you pay R700. But at times it's difficult to repay the money especially if you have other expenses and you end up selling a goat to pay back the money…It is difficult to head a household when you don't have a husband* (Life history, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

It is not unusual for the 'loan shark' to hold onto the female head's SASSA pay card and identity documents while the debt is outstanding, to ensure that payment is received when the head draws her grant at the end of the month. There was a general consensus amongst the female heads that they are in constant debt because their lives are marked not by irregular crises but by a systemic and deeply-embedded long-term crisis of existence.

4.6.4 Physical Capital

Physical capital concerns the basic infrastructure and services needed to support livelihoods, such as affordable transport, secure shelter, adequate water supply and sanitation and clean and affordable energy. Generally speaking, the non-availability of infrastructure (particularly water and transport) and social amenities (particularly health and education) has adverse effects on rural households and often specifically on women. It is also important to note that former Bantustan areas like Cala still bear the brunt of rural underdevelopment shortcomings including with regard to infrastructure and amenities.

For Cala, the transport system refers to road infrastructure and the availability of transport in the form of for example taxis. The main roads to the three villages under study (i.e. Mnxe,

Lupapasi and Sifonondile) are rough gravel roads and are not at all maintained. These gravel roads lead into the main road which connects Cala town with Queenstown. There is very limited traffic in and around the villages because very few local inhabitants have their own vehicles. Villagers rely on public transport namely commuter taxis (with vehicles such as Quantum and Inyathi as well as bakkies or pickups). The standard mode of movement in fact is walking. Given the limited income of local villagers and compounded by the scarcity of transport operators because of the deplorable conditions of the roads, school children walk a distance of between 2 and 4 kilometres to school. One *de facto* female head from Sifonondile expressed her concerns as follows:

> *The ANC promised to construct tarred road from Cala town to Sifonondile but until now nothing has happened. The road is very bad, and no taxis want to operate on these roads. Our children walk very long distances to school, we walk very long distances to clinics, ambulances do not come here because of the roads…people die on the way to Cala hospital...we need better roads* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Villagers' access to adequate and affordable transport is hugely problematic in Cala and according to the quotation this can be a life-and-death matter. Female heads, because of the roads, struggle to gain access to standard and emergency health care but they are also hindered from selling their agricultural and petty commodity goods at markets beyond the village level. In a sense, then, Cala villagers are cut-off from the outside world.

In terms of health facilities and care, the South African government since the end of apartheid has sought to expand health services into rural areas throughout the country. But the presence of hospitals and clinics remain limited and they are often inaccessible. In cases where rural clinics are present, the quality of health care is normally below standard. In the case of Cala, there are no hospitals or clinics in the immediate vicinity. For female heads this is a huge challenge. Whether as *de jure* or *de facto* heads, they are not only responsible for 'production' at household level (including agricultural production and income generation), they are also primary care givers with overall responsibility for social reproduction within the household. With reference specifically to health care, they are invariably tasked to accompany the sick (often elderly or children) to the nearest clinic, and they walk very long distances in doing so. For instance, in Lupapasi village, villagers travel about ten kilometres in search of medical care at Mcewula (a village located east of Lupapasi). The clinic in

Mcewula serves a very large area and, because of this, health resources (including tablets and other medication) are severely constrained. Furthermore, female heads revealed that long queues are the order of the day at Mcewula clinic.

Additionally, for specific health complications which cannot be addressed at the clinic, villagers are referred to Cala hospital. Given the road access challenges, a *de facto* female head from Sifonondile testified to the following:

> *There are big problems in this village, no water, no clinics and no money. I still remember two years ago, I had to give birth on my way to Cala because, at Mcewula, nurses told me that I was not going to have a normal birth and I was scared of the caesarian birth…but fortunately on my way to Cala I gave birth to Thulani* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

A *de jure* female head from Lupapasi made the following remark:

> *We do not have our own clinic in the village, we have to travel far to get medication. People die before they reach the clinic. My sister in-law lost his daughter before reaching Cala hospital…Asthma is a very dangerous disease* (In-depth Interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

The issue of health clearly affects women in particular (including female heads) because of their caring role and pregnancy and birthing challenges.

Water and sanitation is also a crucial problem for female heads in Cala. For example, the absence of adequate ablution particularly in Lupapasi village poses a serious health hazard as villages have to relieve themselves in the bush. Of the female heads surveyed in Lupapasi, only three toilets were observed. As well, access to clean water is questionable. Female heads in Lupapasi spoke about the existence of only two communal water taps while in Sifonondile there were said to be more than fifteen. However, female heads lamented that the water flow is erratic with villagers going for weeks or months without water. Hence, there is often not sufficient clean water for drinking and cooking. But the shortage of water within the villages means that women, again because of the social role assigned to them as women, need to walk long distances in search for water. Particularly disturbing is the fact that female heads travel exceedingly long distances (often more than 2 hours) to fetch water and from unprotected sources (i.e. the river from which livestock also drink), with this water being used for laundry, drinking, food processing and watering homestead gardens. During the summer

season, during which time it rains, female heads indicated that the distance to water sources was less, as water becomes available from shallow, open wells and other nearby unprotected sources. The unavailability of safe and clean water in the Cala communal areas contributes to waterborne diseases of which children are often the main victims. A significant number of cases of diarrhea were reported by female heads, notably in Lupapasi. In this regard, Banerjee and Morella (2011) argue that such diseases are the leading cause of infant mortality and malnutrition.

Access to efficient and affordable forms of energy is critical in rural areas, as it is shown to enhance production, improve standards of living and facilitate educational outcomes (Khandker, Barnes and Samad 2009). The Cala communal areas of Mxne, Sifonondile and Lupapasi have access to electricity, with a large majority (68.2%) of the female-headed households surveyed being connected to electricity. Nonetheless, the key question is not about access but affordability and, given the inadequacy of household income amongst Cala heads, they cannot afford to use electricity constantly. In addition, despite its un-affordability, power load-shedding by the national electricity agency has not spared Cala and has been a regular occurrence there. In the end, female heads indicated that alternative forms of energy were prevalent in the communal areas. A majority (63%) used firewood for food processing and other usages, and candle usage for lighting was also common. Still other forms of energy such as kerosene, gas and paraffin were beyond the reach of the female heads. Instead then of investing more time and energy in possible income-generating activities, female heads sometimes seek ways of minimising household expenditure such as spending up to 2 hours a day scavenging for firewood for own use.

The absence of clean and safe energy is, as well, contributing to poor health. This includes backache for female heads as a result of carrying heavy loads of firewood as well as respiratory diseases from smoke inhalation. In that regard, a *de facto* female head from Sifonondile village highlighted:

> *I can't afford to buy electricity for the whole month, so I have to look for firewood all the time…I sometimes go with my son and we travel a distance of more than five kilometres to the Drakensberg Mountains. If you cut a tree you have to carry all the pieces of firewood because if you leave any someone else will collect it…that's how high demand is for firewood. The journey requires a lot of energy and at times we*

organise ourselves to go and collect firewood because there were cases of rape reported recently…you have to be careful. I have been treated with backaches at the clinic and our children suffer mostly of coughs… because of the smoke coming from the firewood (In-depth interviews, Sifonondile village, 2014)

4.6.5 Human Capital

The key indicators for human capital in the case of the Cala female heads are education, capacity to work, possession of skills, vocational training and access to extension services. And evidence from the field in Cala on human capital is very disturbing. The findings for instance show that 53.8% of the surveyed female heads are illiterate, 33.8% attained some level of primary education while 12.4% went on to secondary school with some attaining a matric certificate. Those with some primary or secondary education have different capacity levels in terms of reading and writing. The lower levels of education are skewed towards the older generation of female heads in Cala as they grew up at the height of the apartheid era when access to formal education was exceedingly limited. The female heads do not have knowledge and skills sets suitable for employment and thus work possibilities are generally restricted to unskilled positions. At the same time, insofar as they are in good health, their basic labour capacity facilitates their involvement in agricultural and petty commodity activities. One of the drawbacks with specific reference to agricultural work is the absence of agricultural extension services in Cala. All heads indicated that these simply do not exist, yet state extension services are often important in increasing land and livestock productivity.

Despite the high illiteracy rate among the female heads in Cala, the evidence suggests that they have a range of local and tacit knowledge and skills, some passed down generations, which activates certain livelihood strategies. Farming methodologies and practices, as well as skills pertinent to the making of specific household goods (such as brooms and pottery) are testimony to this. Furthermore, female heads have a solid working knowledge of their local natural environment and are able for example to enter the local forests and gather items suitable for household consumption. Nevertheless, the female heads placed great significance on formal education as a way out of poverty. In this regard, as an investment for the future, the heads prioritise their children and grandchildren when it comes to household expenditures, with income earned and generated (such as social grants) regularly being used to ensure that children attend school regularly.

4.6.6 Summarising the interconnectedness of assets/capitals

The discussion above provided a summary of the capitals or resources of female heads and their households in the Cala communal areas of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi. Though each resource has been discussed separately it is clear from the discussion that, in the day-to-day lives of female heads, the capitals are interlinked and interrelated, and feed into each other. This can be illustrated in different ways. Access to financial capital enhances human capital in terms of ensuring attendance of children at school, thereby enhancing their employability in the future. As well, financial capital enhances buying power of inputs necessary for agricultural activities and petty commodity production. As for natural capital, it is a store for financial capital in that crops produced (in form of surplus) may be sold to gain or supplement household income. Likewise, physical capital has effects on financial capital in that for example the poor conditions of roads in the Cala communal areas hinder travelling to output markets and hence reduce the generation of market-based income. Social capital is also crucial, with stokvels and burial societies bringing in lump sums of money over short periods of time to meet a variety of household expenses. In general, all female-headed households in Cala rely upon a complex mix of interconnections between different capitals, with this mix altering throughout the year or over extended periods.

As well, the fieldwork evidence collected confirms that access to these resources is not uniform across female-headed households. For instance, in relation to natural capital, some female heads have land which is used productively while others underutilise their land. And these differences between households also speak to the interrelationships between the different capitals. For example, female heads undertilising their land often have restricted financial capital for ploughing the land by hiring a tractor, have weak social networks for facilitating assistance from relatives or neighbours, or have deficiencies in human capital with respect to labouring in their fields and gardens.

This interconnectedness between capitals provides the capacity to act and is the fundamental basis for constructing livelihood strategies, no matter how inadequate these strategies may be in ensuring sustainable rural livelihoods**.**

4.7 Understanding Livelihood Trajectories

I have highlighted that the livelihood portfolios of Cala female-headed households vary considerably and therefore the challenges they face vary depending on the specific livelihood activities pursued. In fact, it became very clear during the fieldwork that the female heads in Cala communal areas cannot be viewed as homogenous or undifferentiated. They can be disaggregated in order to understand the different kinds of lives and livelihoods existing in Cala. Female heads (*de jure* and *de facto*) pursue diverse and different livelihood strategies which often vary over time in terms of intensification of a particular strategy or diversification into alternative strategies. Their livelihoods are not necessarily static and, in the context of threats, risks and shocks, they move in and out of poverty as they seek to respond to crises (Wabwire 1997). However, it is possible to categorise female-headed households in Cala broadly speaking, and I distinguish between them by using the labels of *struggling*, *surviving* and *thriving* households. These categories are not based on purely quantitative and statistical evidence but on more qualitative evidence outlined in this chapter which is very suggestive of the different types of lives of Cala female heads. A more longitudinal study would be needed to ascertain if particular households move in and out of poverty over time or during the course of a year.

4.7.1 Thriving Households – Case of Sifiso

The thriving households (16.9%) are mainly less vulnerable, and have comparatively more assets and resources. Data collected in Cala communal area reveals that a small number of female heads (either *de jure* or *de facto*) were relatively better off and were better able to cope with (or even avoid) the risks, threats and shocks experienced locally in Cala. The thriving households possessed significant financial capital. Due to the availability of this, they had the capacity for instance of hiring labour to work in the homestead gardens and the arable fields (either permanently or periodically). They were also able to hire a tractor to plough the homestead garden and arable land despite the exorbitant prices charged for hiring. In turn, this contributed to high agricultural yields. Thriving households owned a significant number of livestock (more than five cattle and more than ten small livestock such as goats and sheep); had access to clean and affordable energy and proper sanitation; and possessed a well-constructed homestead. Of importance to note is the fact that these households received remittances regularly (i.e. every month) and approximately more than R4,000 from children working in different towns. A member of such households normally was a recipient as well of an old age pension.

The thriving households at some point are able to accumulate assets and savings, even when there is worsening poverty in Cala communal areas more widely. In fact, these households seemed to take advantage of poverty in Cala and somehow 'exploited' the vulnerability of other households by buying assets (particularly livestock) at very low rates from the surviving and struggling households during difficult and desperate periods. In that way, they increased their household assets and resource base. The following is the story of sixty-eight year old Sifiso and her thriving *de jure* household composed also of grandchildren:

> *In 1997 I was in Bloemfontein and working as a till operator for a BP garage and my husband was working for Transnet in Bloemfontein. While in Bloemfontein we did not forget our roots* [referring to the village]; *we established our village house here in Mnxe and during the festive holidays especially Christmas we would come with our children for holidays after closing school. In 2003 my husband was retrenched at Transnet and I had provided for the house even if he was given his retrenchment package and was receiving a monthly income* [pension]. *After five months of retrenchment he was diagnosed with diabetes and he died while asleep on the 23/05/2003. Life became hard as I had to rely on one income to provide for my five children, sending them to school and so on…The pension for my husband I invested into my children's education. Fortunately, Tshepiso* [her child] *was awarded a bursary at Fort Hare to study her social work…I relocated to Mnxe because I could no longer afford rent in town because we were staying in the company house…I am not poor because I receive money from my three children, two in Gauteng and one in Cape Town. On top of that I also receive child support grants for my grandchildren. Because I am getting old I now hire labour (especially for weeding) to work in my garden where I produce vegetables – carrots, spinach, onions, cabbages, maize. I sell most of the crops that I grow but because people do not pay what they owe…cash only…No no no credit; I have done that in the past years but I end up losing money for nothing. I also sew traditional garments because while in Bloemfontein I attended a course for knitting and sewing and I used to get a lot of time but now because I have grandchildren most of my time is spent in making sure that they have eaten. I have saved my money and I have bought sheep, goats and pigs* [she hires someone to take care of the livestock] *and at times sell the livestock to local butcheries…presently I have 12 goats, 15 sheep and 20 pigs. Life is difficult in the village but my house is managing because my children take care of me through sending the money and I also make sure that I do not rely on*

them because they have their own needs too (Life history, Mnxe Village, November 2015).

Sifiso's case is a clear illustration of a thriving household. Evidence from the fieldwork reveals that most of the thriving households derive their income from multiple livelihood activities and are financially stable and better off because of this. If one activity for any reason goes under or becomes erratic, the household can normally rely on the other activities to see them through any hard times.

4.7.2 Surviving Households – Case of Thandiwe

A further 36.9% of the sampled female heads fall into the category of surviving households. Broadly speaking, these are households meeting their basic needs but are not capable of moving out of poverty or improving their life condition. These households tend to mainly survive, as their main source of income, on child support grants as well as casual labour and at times old age pensions (in a case where a grandmother is present). Farming is on a very small scale and only for consumption (particularly 50m x 50m), with only slight surpluses infrequently to supplement household income. Generally speaking, the surviving households do not have the capacity to invest money in assets given their limited finances. They own very few livestock (for instance, one to three cattle) and some other small livestock. And they often exchange their labour in return for income. But these households engaged in livelihoods aimed at minimising risk and uncertainty by pursuing a range of limited livelihood activities spread across space and time, and generally on an ad hoc basis. At times they had to sell off assets to meet basic household consumption needs to allow them to 'hang on'. They also sought to minimise expenditures by for example resorting to the use of traditional energy sources (particularly fuel wood) in food processing because they could not afford electricity regularly.

Thandiwe's *de jure* household has most features of such households:

> *I live with my five children and among them no one is employed because there are no jobs here in Cala. Life is difficult in this village because we are struggling day in, day out. I used to be employed at Shoprite in Queenstown and I retired from working in 2005 due to my health...from 2011 life became difficult because I was the breadwinner since the day we divorced* [referring to her former husband]…*He never paid maintenance for the children… The only source of income that I get is the child support grant for my two children; my first born used to be employed by the EPWP but his*

contract was never renewed. From time to time my children have to look for part time work to bring food onto the table and this has helped the family to cope under difficult times. Thabiso [her son] *normally collects firewood and water for Nonhlanhla* [a villager] *for approximately R650…from time to time. There is a time where we get money and sometimes we do not have money and can go for the whole month without money until child support grants are out or unless my son gets some part time work to raise money. He has saved this money to buy sheep and up to now we now have three* [sheep]. *Life is not easy in this village, but I sometimes get help in the form of groceries and money from my brother working for North West Municipality to supplement what we get from our small garden. It has been very helpful for my family because we cut costs. Me and my household we are just surviving...taking each day as it comes* (Life history, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

The case of Thandiwe aptly illustrates a household that is surviving. For instance her household is unable to accumulate productive assets (such as cattle) due to limited and irregular income. Somehow, under such desperate conditions, these surviving households are able to 'get by' on a monthly basis in meeting their basic needs. But any shock of significance might turn them into a struggling household.

4.7.3 Struggling Household – Case of Karabo

Data collected from the fieldwork uncovered that Cala communal is marked by a large number of struggling female-headed households (46.2%) which are deep in poverty and very poor. The struggling households do not have access to any meaningful income from employment or even state grants (be it an old age pension or a child support grant). They have no livestock and they have small gardens and fields that are never utilised or are severely underutilised. They engage in labour intensive activities for instance working part-time in gardens and mostly for 'thriving' households, or being involved in public works programmes when operational. These households have few or limited livelihood sources to fall back on in the context of possible shocks and stresses. This concurs with the findings of Bennett (1992) about why some female-headed households exist in pronounced conditions of poverty.

Karabo is a 58 year-old widow who migrated from the Dwesa (in Transkei) in 1986 together with her late husband and their four children to settle in Sifonondile village. Mayee (2003:21) maintains that 'when a female loses her husband she discovers herself in a world of problems

– the difficulty to earn an income topping the list… [N]ot accustomed to doing works outside her home, it becomes a huge task'. Karabo has this to say.

> *Life is very difficult in the village especially when my health is deteriorating… My husband died and no one provides for the family. I can't do anything anymore, and I have to rely on my children and grandchildren. My children have been looking for work in different provinces and what they get is part time and is not sustainable. Kasebo* [her son] *was working in a farm in Elliot* [a town located east of Cala] *and after harvesting he has no job for the whole year. Other families have children who get the child support grant but for me I do not get anything…but for me NO NO NO. We struggle year in year out, we are living under a difficult situation…I hope one of the days my children will get work and support their mother and siblings. My crops always fail due to lack of rainfall, in cases where the water is coming from the tap we are not allowed to use the water for garden purposes. My children end up walking long distances to fetch water in order to water the crops for our benefit since we get our food from the garden…It's a problem again because the tractor is expensive and I end up ploughing a small place. My grandchildren have moved to live in with my sister in Elliot because I have not enough food to give them and I have now lost household labour since I do not have cattle for draught power…The ANC is doing nothing to help poor people…we are poor very poor…they only come here when it's time to vote and give us empty promises. They preach employment but none has come along to our children…we are struggling… we are a poor family. My father was poor. I am poor. If things don't change, my children will probably be poor* (Life history, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

Karabo's case is a story of desperation and of no light at the end of the tunnel. Broadly speaking, the struggling households fail to accumulate any assets and to diversify livelihoods, and they have a tendency of selling their physical assets for immediate household needs such that their asset base becomes depleted. Karabo's problems are compounded by her health status and the reduction of family labour because she had to send her grandchildren to her sister in Elliot. Though Ferguson (1999) claims that it may be possible to celebrate the coping abilities of poor rural people and acknowledge their innovative means of compensating for the 'impossibility of their everyday lives (Hecht and Simon 1994, cited in Ferguson 1999:165), it is also important to recognise that many people are not managing to cope at all

and their lives on a downward spiral. Another female head in Cala thus spoke about her circumstances in the following words:

> *My life is very difficult and I borrow money for medication and food from my neighbours …My future is uncertain because I do not have enough food and my health is deteriorating. I do not even know how I will survive for the next day, weeks, or months* (In-depth interview Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

Undeniably, the overwhelming majority of female-headed households in Cala are living under very extreme conditions of poverty – they are certainly not 'thriving'. In fact, combined, the surviving and struggle households amount to over 80% of the female-headed households surveyed. Table 4.4 seeks to show the ways in which the three categories of households can be differentiated along specific variables, many of which I have discussed above. As highlighted, there is always the possibility that a particular female-headed household moves between categories over time, depending on shocks arising or opportunities becoming available. But, overall, there are few prospects that most Cala female-headed households would ever become thriving households unless there are fundamental shifts in the political economy of contemporary South Africa.

The evidence collected for this study is inconclusive pertaining to whether *de facto* female heads are better off than *de jure* female heads or vice versa. Perhaps the most suitable conclusion is that female heads who derive their livelihoods from a number of sources of income (including from employment income, government grants, remittances and many more) are better off regardless of either being located in a *de facto* or *de jure* household. To conclude that *de facto* female heads would necessarily be better off because the husband is working elsewhere as a migrant labourer would be misleading given that the evidence collected confirmed that many male migrants do not remit back home to their families.

Table 4.4: Categories of Households

Household trajectory	Household roofing type	Flooring type	Land areas cultivated	Livestock ownership	Labour utilization	Comment
Thriving	asbestos	Cement/tiles	+ 1 hectare	1.+5 cattle 2.+ 10 goats & sheep 3. Plenty chickens	1.hire labour and have permanent helper (gardener or house maid)	1. have very strong social networks 2. does not depend on anyone for income, but rather remittances come as supplementary to available income 3. diversify livelihoods and income is stable 4. income per month is more than R5000 5. old pension grant and child support grant
Surviving	Asbestos/zinc sheets	Cement	-1 hectare	1.+ 2 cattle 2.+ 5 goats & sheep 3.limted livestock	1.at times hire and hire out labour.	1. limited social capital 2. depends on child support grants and old pension in case of an old person living in
Struggling	Thatch/zinc	Cow dung/mud	50m X 50m Some do not cultivate	1. no livestock at all	1.hire out labour	1. no social networking 2. does not receive any grants 3. household size is big 4. inadequate or limited income

Source: Field In-depth and Life Histories, November 2014.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter began by offering a situational analysis of the study area in order to provide a broad understanding of its socio-economic and political setup. I then provided a profile of the female-headed households which formed the basis for the case study in Cala. The diverse livelihood activities and strategies pursued by the female heads and their households were then discussed in detail. In doing this, I unpacked the agricultural-based activities and non-agricultural based activities which are adopted by the heads in constructing livelihoods in the three villages of Cala, and the vulnerabilities they face in this regard. Though agricultural activities, including crop and livestock production, continue to have some significance for the female heads, it is clear that other livelihood sources (and notably social grants) are critical to their livelihoods. Further, there is considerable variation between households in terms of the mix of livelihood activities present. As a general trend, the livelihoods of the female heads could be described as survivalist, but I also discussed the presence of differentiation within Cala by referring to the existence of thriving, surviving and struggling households. In the next empirical chapter (chapter five), the difficulties confronting the female heads in Cala are brought to the fore even more clearly when I examine the multiplicity of challenges emanating from their conditions of existence in a former bantustan, and the ways in which they seek to cope with these. Additionally, in raising more explicitly the question of patriarchy, I focus on intra-household and gendered relations in Cala and their effects on female-headed households.

CHAPTER FIVE: LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES AND INTRA-HOUSEHOLD DYNAMICS IN CALA COMMUNAL AREA

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has provided a detailed discussion analysis of the livelihoods pursued by both the *de facto* and *de jure* female heads in Cala. Constructing livelihoods is not an easy task but a task compounded by challenges. Two main themes characterise this chapter. The first theme of the chapter relates to the economic, social and political challenges faced by the female heads, as well the coping mechanisms they adopt to handle and counter the effects of the multiple challenges. The second theme of the chapter examines the intra-household and gendered relations in Cala communal areas as they affect female-headed households. These discussions bring to the fore the significance of patriarchal systems and practices.

5.2: Challenges in Cala communal areas

This section discusses the various challenges faced by female heads in Cala which contribute to the ongoing vulnerability of their households. Many of the challenges which exist at the level of Cala, and more specifically at the level of female-headed households in Cala, cannot be explained by purely dissecting local factors and dynamics as they are a reflection of the broader problems of political economy in contemporary South Africa. Thus, it is not a question of problematising 'the local' as the source of the challenges. If anything, the situation in Cala highlights the agency and ingenuity of female heads as they negotiate their way through the hardships and address the myriad challenges which are not of their making or choosing. Most of the livelihood challenges are stresses (pressures which are continuous and cumulative and therefore to some extent predictable), while some are more like shocks (challenges which occur typically sudden, and thus unpredictable and traumatic). In the following sections, I classify the challenges as economic, social and political.

5.2.1 Economic challenges

Economic challenges remain harrowing for villagers in the former Bantustans of post-apartheid South Africa, and this is a result of the failure by the ANC government to bring about meaningful rural development despite some notable advances since 1994. The female heads in Cala thus have limited capacity to sustain their livelihoods in a decent and dignified manner because of the absence of significant support from central government and the local municipality.

First of all, poor access (including market access) in relation to both inputs and outputs is a troubling feature of life for the Cala female heads. In fact, the evidence gathered suggests that the markets have deteriorated over the years hence compromising further their household livelihoods. Input markets are places where villagers access commodities, inputs or services that facilitate and enhance livelihood strategies. Major inputs for the Cala heads include beads (for making necklaces), wool (for making jerseys, hats and gloves) and cloth (for making dresses and other apparel). The main market where the female heads preferred to access their inputs (particularly beads and cloth) was Queenstown (located approximately 150 kilometres from Cala), but this market was too far for the poorer female heads. Better-off female heads (including *de facto* and *de jure*) were able to travel to Queenstown for inputs, and those with relatives in other towns regularly sent them to purchase inputs at wholesalers at a lower price. At Cala town, inputs are very scarce (particularly beads, cloth and wool) and, when available, they are sold at an exorbitant price. Many heads involved in petty commodity production simply cannot afford the Cala prices and, without any viable alternative, this undermines or disrupts this particular livelihood activity. Some female heads indicated that petty commodity production did not entail a regular income for them, and hence the purchase of key inputs was not an ongoing necessity. One *de jure* female head who was involved in knitting noted:

> *Knitting is a good business but because people do not pay immediately they wait for their grants at the end of the month, when they give you the money you cannot purchase the wool but what comes to the mind is to feed the family. Knitting is not an everyday business, I only do it when customers request me to do something…truly speaking the wool is now expensive so you have to go to the wholesalers otherwise if you buy from the Indian shop in Cala it's double the price and most of us we cannot afford that* (Focus group discussion, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Apart from the inputs for petty commodity production, female heads in Cala highlighted the lack of seeds for various crops including maize seeds, peanut seeds and vegetable seeds. Even if these seeds were available for purchase, the costs were quite exorbitant for particularly 'struggling' households. At times, therefore, female heads relied on each other for accessing seeds, particularly maize seeds retained from the previous harvest. Additionally, female heads at times struggled to plough their homestead garden or field, and the local tractor service hired for this purpose was not financially viable for them. In this regard, the female heads

were unanimous in agreeing that, despite their wide-ranging agricultural problems, the government did not step in, for instance by providing seeds, chemicals, fertilizer and extension services. The absence of agricultural extension services was a major talking point amongst the female heads, as was the unavailability of government veterinary officers because of problems with the health of their livestock. The significance of such support for small-scale farmers, in terms of improved agricultural yields and productivity, cannot be underestimated (Zwane 2012).

Output markets, where goods and services are sold, were of concern to the female heads. The heads mentioned four major output markets. The major output market is Cala town, with the towns of Queenstown and Eliott also being important. Female heads also marketed their products within their respective villages. However, there were key interrelated constraints raised with reference to the output markets of Queenstown, Cala and Eliott. These included the sheer distance to the output markets, the limited transport available and the exorbitant fares for transport. With Queenstown and Eliott furthest away, the female heads tended to market their goods in Cala which is less 50 kilometres from the villages of Mnxe, Lupapasi and Sifonondile. Petty commodities and agricultural produce formed the bulk of the products sold at Cala town, including maize cobs (cooked or roasted), leafy vegetables and livestock. And, even then, female heads recognised that they lacked negotiating skills for ensuring the highest prices possible for their goods. Added to this was their desperation for cash in the context of pressing household consumption needs, such that they settled for purchase prices below their expectations.

The female heads often had to sell their goods on credit with the expectation that they would be paid at the end of the month when people received their social grants. This exacerbated the problems for the female heads as they needed immediate cash for pressing household needs. In this regard, there were troublesome customers who would go for months without paying, and this was of great concern to the heads because income generated was in part normally ploughed back into the specific livelihood activity (for example, making and selling brooms) as a way of making the activity self-sustainable. Because of this, the female heads noted that certain villagers were ‘blacklisted’ because they did not pay what they owed. Some of the blacklisted villagers owed particular female heads more than R350 which was a significant amount of money in rural households which are cash stricken. As well, female heads spoke

about the intense competition amongst traders in Cala town which reduced their income. In this respect, Cala town services all the surrounding communal areas and it is a flooded or oversubscribed output market because of its proximity to most of the surrounding villagers.

Much of the agricultural produce and livestock is sold at a time of year when food reserves and household income is in the process of dwindling, which is in the months before the next harvest (from January to April) when households are desperately in search of cash – this, as well, intensifies competition and reduced market prices. As a result, buyers or customers are able to exploit the situation, as one *de facto* female head from Sifonondile remarked:

> *We are uneducated so we live by selling our agricultural produce and livestock to make ends meet. Our children need to go to school, need food and need clothes…it is difficult to be a head of a household because everyone cries to you. I mainly rely on Cala town to sell my produce and anything that I want to sell…but it's difficult because at times we are desperate for cash and we need cash instantly to buy food and pay school fees…We tend to sell our stuff at any price at all because you cannot go home without the cash. Sometimes the Chinese and Indian buyers do not care how much they pay…they just tell you take it or leave it because a lot of people flock to them to sell their products* (Focus group discussion, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Given the exorbitant transport fares, returning home from the market in Cala without making any sales is simply not an option for the female heads, amounting as it would to a complete waste of time, energy and money. For this reason, female heads often preferred to sell to other villagers including amongst themselves. This sometimes involved barter trade of various commodities including exchanging crops (such as maize) for small livestock or vice-versa. Although the local village market arrangement was viable in the sense that it did require transport expenses and was particularly important for emergency sales, female heads noted that the majority of the villagers lacked buying power and hence transacting with villagers was not very profitable.

Beyond questions of inputs and outputs, labour market access is a major dilemma for female heads in Cala. Conversations with female heads point to the fact that there is almost a complete dearth of formal full-time permanent employment in the area, including in Cala town itself. The only form of employment available in Cala communal area is casual labour which includes domestic work, fetching water and fuel wood, working at times in arable

fields and homestead gardens and government work programmes. This work is erratic and insecure and certainly less remunerative than more standard forms of employment. One *de jure* female head from Lupapasi aged forty-seven years of age said the following:

> *I thought things will get better since 1994 but there is no change; people are still suffering, there are no jobs at all, our small Cala town does not have any employment and people are surviving by selling products on the pavements in town. We need jobs because money from casual jobs is not predictable, and one month I get more and the other month I get less. It will be better if I get employment at a company, at least I will be getting pay every month and I will be able to invest and save the money. All our dreams are shattered; we need jobs which pay well so that we can live a better life and take our children to school and buy them clothes. Every election time, the ANC comes and promises jobs but since I have started voting I have not found one job…The government is doing nothing to change our lives in the villages…life will even be difficult for our children* (Life history, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

This is a common sentiment amongst the female heads and illustrates vividly the desperate circumstances under which they live, in which formal citizenship does not translate into a dignified life, not just for them but seemingly for their children and the latter's future. They are deeply skeptical of the government's promises and feel abandoned and almost discarded by it. This absence of secure employment clearly culminates in pronounced financial insecurity for the Cala heads, and they are unable to plan with any accurate foresight and unbounded confidence about the future of, and for, their households. It has also disabled the heads in terms of preventing them from accumulating productive assets and, without any capacity to save, they sometimes dispose of existing assets in search of income in times of crisis. But it also prevents the female heads from pursuing other livelihood activities on a vigorous basis; for example, even to hire labour to work in the homestead garden becomes a problem and hence crop yields suffer accordingly. I interpret this as nothing short of a 'vicious cycle of poverty' across generations, with high levels of unemployment playing a significant role in reinforcing this.

Access to credit could possibly counteract, at least in part, this problem of exclusion from the labour market and resulting financial insecurity, but unemployment means that credit access also becomes a problem. According to the female heads, broader access to credit loans

(beyond the informal lenders) would provide opportunities for raising the productivity of local agriculture and enhancing food security. But formal financial institutions refuse to provide credit loans to the female heads because they do not have stable employment and a guarantor to act as security if they default on the loan, or even collateral as security for any loan. Their household income is also often below the acceptable threshold set by formal money lenders. In the end, female-headed households hold mainly liquid and moveable assets (such as livestock) which are unacceptable to institutions. The fact that they do not own the land on which their homestead sits only serves to deepen this problem. Therefore, lack of credit loans, as well as the lack of an overdraft in a bank account, restricts the ability of female heads to literally finance their livelihoods, as it means that their cash buying power is limited and this inhibits even the purchases of everyday basic household necessities.

Though debt is hardly a long-term solution to their household insecurities, the Cala heads highlight that they fail at times to continue with specific livelihood activities (effectively putting them on hold) because of the non-availability of cash. This is clear in the following quotation by one *de jure* female head from Mnxe:

> *Money is a huge problem in this village…all the money that we get monthly is not enough…our children have no jobs; we also do not have jobs. The part time jobs that we do and small businesses do not give us enough money…It was going to be better if we get loans to run our small businesses; we were thinking of keeping chickens for selling but because we have no money to build a foul run and to buy the concentrates… it has remained a dream…It is our wish that government and municipality provides loans and we repay the money when the business can fund itself. Loans are important. Of all my friends no one has received a loan from any banks because we are too poor to repay the money* (Focus group discussion, Mnxe village, November 2014).

The capacity of Cala female heads to become aspiring entrepreneurs (for example, a chicken farmer) is thwarted by the problem of accessing credit, a point which Snapp et al. (2002) make more broadly. As a result of such a constraint, they tend to engage in low-rewarding livelihood activities which tend to put their households in a permanent condition of vulnerability. Vulnerability and crisis are the norm, not the exception, marking the existential conditions of Cala heads.

Additionally, female heads face the major challenge of competition, specifically with reference to informal trading. The markets for agricultural products and petty commodity products are over-saturated and resultantly profit margins are minimal. Competition existed on the input side, notably with regard to beads and wool, with these inputs being scarce at times but also expensive when available as a result of demand. Shop owners capitalised on the high demand to increase their profits. Because of this, some of the better-resourced heads in Cala bought in bulk and held stock of inputs for future use. Competition also existed on the output side. For instance, regular informal traders expressed concern about irregular female head traders and other villagers who sought to squeeze into the market when the demand for a certain commodity was pronounced, such as jerseys during winter in June and July. Severe competition as well existed at Cala town where different traders sold their products particularly during month-end when social grants were being paid. One of the *de facto* female heads who survived by selling fruits, hot-dogs, jerseys and other small items in Cala town along the pavements outside Spar highlighted the following:

> *I used to make more money when I was selling my products three years ago. But because the promised jobs by the government have not materialised a number of people are now surviving through selling in villages and in town. Among the people who sell on the pavements at Cala town I am the oldest. The number doesn't matter but the quality of service that you offer to the people is important. I can tell you my marketing skills have improved over the past three years that I started selling here. I have regular customers and I make good money every day of more than R300. A number of people like hot-dogs because they will be fresh and I also give on credit so that customers can pay at the end of the money…My family is making a living on this* (Life history, Mnxe village, November 2014).

For this particular villager, who remains able to make 'a living' despite the competition in Cala town, a good reputation along with sound marketing skills make all the difference.

Because though of the challenges of travelling to Cala town for petty trading activities, many female heads preferred to travel throughout the villages door-to-door selling their products ranging from agricultural produce to petty commodities. This increased their trading times and cut transport costs to maximise sales. But it also meant stiff competition even at village levels in Cala communal areas. Intriguingly, though, the female heads did not perceive this activity as wholly competitive as they regularly shared information among each other about

the pricing of commodities based on relations of trust. In this sense, there was a kind of moral economy at times animating the relationships between the Cala female heads.

Another economic challenge for the female heads was seasonality, as they faced seasonal peaks and troughs in agricultural and other sales resulting to ebbs and flows in livelihood strategies. Female heads rarely relied on one livelihood activity which was subject to seasonal changes, such that pursuing a multiplicity of activities involved at attempt at spreading and managing risk. In this regard, one *de jure* female head who sold tea at Mcewula marketplace where most female heads and other villagers collected their social grants indicated the following:

> *Yes I also do selling apart from gardening but it is difficult to operate both as I need to travel to Mcewula. I chose this place* [Mcewula] *because most people go there to collect their grants at month end because the pay point services a lot of people…I make tea and sell with a quarter bread which has cheese, polony and achar. But I always make a lot of money during winter because people want more tea to heat the body. So during summer people they do not want anything hot so the business will be low and I do not expect to get more money* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Another de *jure* female head had maximum sales during summer:

> *During summer, my business flourishes because a lot of people will be craving for maize, fruits and pumpkins. This is the time that I make a lot of money depending on my produce. Most of the time people come from different villages to buy green mealies so that they can resale as green mealies or roasted maize cobs. I normally charge R8 a cob. In winter I do not make money because it's not a farming seasoning… My wish is to have irrigation so that I can farm all year round. Farming is very important to me because I am able to look after my children* (Life history, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

The sales of a *de facto* female head though, like in the first quotation, thrived during winter:

> *During the time of summer when people are not buying the jerseys…I experience a lot of hardships as I have to rely only on the child support grant* [for grandchildren] *which is not much for three children…I can't wait for March 2015 when I will be sixty to get also an old pension grant. I hope my life will change because I will be having more*

sources of income than relying on knitting (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

All three female heads are fully aware of the seasonality of their sales and the need to have alternative sources of income during their respective off-seasons. Like all female heads in Cala, they do not put 'all their eggs in one basket' and thus seek to construct a livelihood portfolio which has some kind of livelihood activity or source of income throughout the year. If a female-headed household relied on one source of income and simultaneously was affected by seasonality, then the result would likely be persistent and deepening poverty. Female heads learn to survive in the midst of, and despite, seasonality and sometimes because of it in the sense that they maximise income through a seasonal product.

Labour shortages are also problematic for female heads in Cala, particularly for those livelihood activities requiring significant amounts of labour, including farming and petty commodity production. With respect to farming, labour shortages greatly affected total crop yields. The female heads in Cala communal areas in fact reported that they ended up being the main labour suppliers for their own farming although helped by grandchildren sporadically. This was a particular problem for older female heads who did not have the stamina to work long hours in agricultural activities and, because of this, their agricultural production was often quite limited. With regards to petty commodity production, female heads noted labour shortages for collecting raw materials for making baskets, clay pots, mats and brooms. Consequently, this reduced the number of commodities produced thereby also reducing the income earned. Health challenges amongst female heads in Cala also directly contributed to labour limitations, as did their poverty levels which regularly prevented them from hiring in labour for either agricultural or petty commodity production.

Inadequate water supplies are an additional challenge faced by female heads. Water taps are installed in Cala's communal areas but the water supply is erratic as communities can go for days, weeks, months and even a year without accessing running tap water. For the many Cala female heads which were heavily dependent upon homestead gardening, this was a critical problem. Cases of withering of crops were reported particularly during the summer season when the sun is scorching. One *de facto* female head aged fifty five reported the following:

This place is very hot during summer time and it is a problem for our crops. The crops die because there is no water from the taps and the nearby rivers, even our cattle suffer

also. At the end our crops especially vegetables die easily and I am not able to get money when I sell the vegetables…not only that but I substitute my relish with vegetables…We need water for our gardens so we can grow crops at a large scale for income purposes…there is no work in Cala…we need to defend ourselves (In-depth interview, Lupapasi Village, November 2014).

In this light, crop yields are greatly reduced by and large leading to reduced income and limiting the crops for own consumption, thereby increasing household income expenditure. Furthermore, during the times when water is available there is strict monitoring by the headman to ensure that the water is not wasted for gardening purposes, with water for drinking purposes prioritised.

A final challenge relating to agricultural-based activities is crop destruction. Female heads in Cala communal areas reported that farming (relating to homestead and arable farming) was affected detrimentally by crop destruction by livestock due to the lack of fencing or broken fencing thereby making it easy for livestock to access their gardens and fields. There was a unanimous consensus among female heads that crop destruction is reducing crop yields and hence affecting food consumption and income through sales. Resultantly, and in conjunction with the lack of income to purchase seeds in the first place, crop destruction has left certain female heads with no option but to abandon their arable fields which are often located far from homesteads. Female heads alluded to the fact that cases of crop destruction are reported to the headman but such cases are not taken seriously. To ensure that crops are safe particularly for homestead gardening, female heads at times have to guard their gardens during the day when livestock are left to graze freely and unattended.

5.2.2 Social challenges

Social challenges are generally those factors that change a society in such a way to bring harm to the well-being of citizens. As a result of economic challenges (particularly unemployment and financial insecurity) and compounded by social challenges, the social fibre and fabric of communal areas and individual households are threatened. In this section, I discuss some of the key social challenges.

HIV and AIDS is undeniably a critical challenge for rural households in South Africa and the region more broadly, and it affects women in particular ways. It was apparent in conversations with female heads that HIV and AIDS led to the death of male breadwinners in

Cala and this resulted in some women becoming *de jure* female heads. According to female heads, local youths and male migrants (which are often husbands) engaged in risky sexual practices including multiple sexual partners. Pronounced unemployment and grinding poverty amongst both female and male youth increased susceptibility to infection by HIV, and male migrants often sought a 'back-up' wife (locally referred to *makwepeni*) in their area of work and thereby contracted the virus. Despite the female heads' concerns and criticisms around this, they stressed that it was their duty to take care of the ill while also being expected to engage in household livelihood activities – the double burden that women so often carry. The caring for those who are HIV positive is made more difficult by the great distance to clinics and hospitals. Furthermore, access to health education but also to treatment specific to HIV (the ARV regimen) is not prevalent in the Cala area, so that HIV-infected villagers (including members of female-headed households) succumb to the health complications arising from the virus more quickly.

Female heads spoke openly about the serious implications of HIV and AIDS for their households. Firstly, they indicated that taking care of the sick robbed them of hours to engage in productive livelihood activities. Secondly, there needed to be a diversion of household resources to care for the ill person, particularly money which could be channeled into income-generating activities like trading or into household consumption. Thirdly, the labour capacity of the HIV-infected person gradually diminishes until such time as he or she is totally incapacitated and unable to work at all. In this light, I refer to the experiences of one *de facto* female head:

> *HIV/AIDS killed my son because whenever he gets money he was not coming back home, he would spend the night at Cala town drinking with his friends. The next day he comes home and he does not have anything left. I remember one time when he was bitten by a sex worker because he had not paid her and he came with bruises on his whole body…I had to nurse him…The days he was very sick I could not do anything than to take care of him…He passed on because of this HIV and I just hear rumors that he has a child in Elliot but no family has come to surrender the child. It is best to educate our children about this disease. I never want to experience the same…he is no more and he won't return* (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

The death of a breadwinner (from HIV) who resides elsewhere may impact on remittances thereby reducing urban to rural cash flows. As such, a number of Cala households who have lost a breadwinner because of the AIDS pandemic are plunged into a deep sea of poverty, particularly if they had relied heavily on remittances as a major source of income. This could have happened in relation to both *de jure* and *de facto* headed households, depending upon which member of the family died. Sibongile a *de jure* female head from Sifonondile notes the following regarding HIV and remittances:

> *Life used to be so good for me, as I used to get money from my son in KwaZulu Natal, and he worked in the Ethekwini municipality. Before his death* [from AIDS] *he used to give me money each and every month to buy my groceries and clothes for his sister's children because I only have the EPWP as my source of income. Since his departure in 2012 life has not been the same…I am struggling to buy food because I do not get the old pension grant and the child support grant is not much that I can rely on it…I have sold all my cattle and house property to take care of my family* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

It was unanimously agreed in a group discussion with female heads in Lupapasi that HIV and AIDS is a major challenge in Cala communal areas. Fundamentally, the pandemic disrupts household livelihoods and it is contributing to rural impoverishment by often claiming the lives of productive young adults who are, at least potentially, critical for agricultural production and income generation. The fieldwork evidence suggests that, in many but not all cases, social grants mitigates against the socio-economic impact of HIV and AIDS in the households of Cala female heads. But many households have resorted to selling assets as a coping strategy in the face of AIDS to raise income and provide food. This is consistent with conclusions made by Menon et al. (1998) with reference to rural Tanzania, namely, households experiencing the death of an HIV-positive adult saw a statistically significant drop in household ownership of durable goods compared to households that experienced the death of an HIV-negative adult. Similarly, survey data for East Africa suggests that households which lost an HIV patient in death show an overall reduction in assets of 40%-60% (Mutangadura et al. 1999).

Despite articulating their thoughts and experiences about HIV and AIDS, the female heads in Cala never voluntarily disclosed their own HIV status and I never sought to inquire about

this. It remains a sensitive topic for the female heads, in part because of the ongoing stigma attached to HIV. Nonetheless, informal conversations with certain female heads elicited that a significant number of younger *de jure* female heads were infected with HIV and had divorced their husbands on the basis of infidelity. Insofar as they are infected and are not consistently on ARV treatment, then they too may succumb to the ravages of AIDS. Indeed, there are cases in Cala where both parents have died from HIV and AIDS, with grandparents (and often the grandmother alone) looking after any children left behind. This of course places a major burden on the older Cala female heads. The fieldwork evidence also indicates that, and this in fact was the general view of the heads, households most affected by the pandemic were in what I classify as struggling and surviving households. There is also evidence indicating the emergence of child-headed households in the Cala communal areas.

The problems for orphans themselves (and particularly double orphans, i.e. those who have lost both parents in death through AIDS) are also extremely taxing. They have to take on greater household responsibilities and at an earlier age than normally expected. Further, they tend to often drop out of school because of lack of school fees. Furthermore, the households of orphans may depend on neighbours for survival. In this regard, one *de facto* female head noted:

> *Here in Sifonondile I have a good example of my neighbours; their parents died of HIV and it's a public secret and everyone knows that…but because I am human I am forced to share what I have in my house with them and God will bless me for that…Sifiso* [an orphan] *two years ago immediately after the mother died she was staying with her uncle in Mthatha and she did not spend more than six months. I asked her why she came back and she was saying I was told* [by the uncle] *that 'you should not think this is your mother's home whenever you ask for food or money for transport…I did not say your mom should go and sleep around and get the disease which killed her'* (Life history, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

This particular female head, who has her own set of livelihood challenges, is nevertheless prepared to assist orphans living nearby, thereby showing greater responsibility and care than a relative of the orphans.

In addition to the AIDS pandemic, female heads daily confront food insecurity in Cala. I speak about food insecurity as a social challenge as it goes to the heart of the lives of the

female heads and their desperate attempts to care for the children in their household. Although it may be argued that South Africa is normally a food secure nation, significant food insecurity exists at household levels in communal areas like Cala. The South African government committed itself to halve poverty by 2015 as a Millennium Development Goal, and it adopted the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) in 2002 as a basis 'to attain universal physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South Africans at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (IFSS 2002:13). Certainly, as this study of Cala clearly indicates, food security remains elusive in post-apartheid South Africa.

The female heads in the Cala communal areas of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi declared themselves to be severely food insecure at household level. They rely on three sources of food: the main source of food involves market purchases (63%), the second main source is own production (crops and livestock) at 30%, and third source is food-for-work (7%) which primarily entails members of struggling and surviving female-headed households undertaking labour in exchange for food from thriving households. These sources though are inadequate, as most female heads run out of food before the end of every month and scramble to feed their families for the balance of the month. Of course, the major causes of food shortages relate back to such matters as shortage of inputs which affect agricultural production levels and limited income generation activities. Importantly, conversations with female heads highlighted that food insecurity was more common among the *de jure* female heads than the *de facto* female heads. *De facto* female heads often oversee thriving households particularly because they tend to have more diverse sources of income (notably income from the husband working outside Cala) compared to their *de jure* counterparts. But there is no clear and definite distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* heads in terms of levels of food insecurity. The three stories presented in Box 5.1 shed more light on the food insecurity issue for *de jure* female heads.

Box 5.1: Female Head Experiences with Food Insecurity

Lethole's story - de jure female head

I have been living here for the past 35 years and with the death of my husband life became very difficult. It is difficult to raise a family alone in the absence of a husband. I have never worked in my entire life. Staying with my grandchildren is good because they fetch water and firewood but the problem that I have is the parents are not sending me any money. All three of my grandchildren receive grants but the mother doesn't know the children need food. The major problem that I face in this household is the issue of food. I have no one to turn to for help…all I have is my old age pension…if it wasn't for the ANC [because of the grant system] *I do not know if I was still going to live. The money that I receive is not enough for the household…I buy food but at the middle of every month I run out of food and I end up begging from my neighbours which is not good because they have their own problems and family to feed…At times when my grandchildren go and play with their friends they remain until time to eat because they know that at their house there won't be any food to eat…I think this is mainly caused by the fact that I only have the old age; if I had another source of income maybe I could be having more money to spend on food* (Life history, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Sibongile's story - de jure female head

The main source of income is the child support grant that I get for my three children and the father of the children is not taking any responsibility for his children…I have to go around looking for work, I am part of the EPWP but the money that I am getting is not enough to support my family...I run a small garden but still what I produce there is not enough because water is a problem in the village…To get more money I do extra work but it does not give again enough…My family is hungry all the time…hunger…hunger...after every two months if I do not save very well I have to borrow food from a spaza shop or money from the mashonisa to buy food…at times I have to skip a meal and save that for my children when they come back from school and at times I can even go to sleep without putting something in my mouth but I make sure that my children have eaten no matter how small it is…They can't sleep without eating…when it's really difficult I just make porridge for my children (In depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Mantwa's story - de jure female head

Not having money is a big problem in life. Yes the land is there but the rains are not adequate and the labour also is a problem. I can't work in the fields given my age and I cannot hire labour because the money is not enough. If there is a shortage of food at home, the one who suffers is the woman. The babies that the young people are having are now being affected and are having nothing to eat. Their mothers do not breastfeed their children since the breast has no milk…I wish the government would see how we are struggling and give us food parcels every month. If the situation remains like this, some of the people will start to die because food is important in our life…What else can you do; people steal from the garden to get something to cook at their house (Life history, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Source: Field work, November 2014.

These stories from *de jure* female heads are representative of the widespread food insecurity prevailing in female headed households in Cala, and they speak to the ways in which food insecurity undermines the human dignity of the heads as they go 'on the hunt' for food, even starving themselves at times to ensure that their children have the little food that is available. Food insecurity is often the case in particular for the older female heads staying with grandchildren, as they are not able to go about looking for work, or engage in food-for-work with neighbours or government work programmes because of ill-health and lack of physical stamina. And for them, as for other Cala female heads, no Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) operate in Cala communal areas distributing food parcels to needy villagers. It is again important though to reiterate the relevance of social grants in partially cushioning female heads from the blows of poverty.

If the AIDS pandemic and food insecurity were not problems enough for the Cala heads, they also have to deal with the prevalence of crime. The female heads referred to Cala as a breeding ground for criminality, with the most serious crimes noted being rape, robbery, stock theft and housebreaking. The Cala heads also identified a range of causes for such crimes, and below I quote from a focus group discussion held in Lupapasi:

> *Crime is a major problem in this village…The major cause of crime in the villages is the lack of employment. The male youths are the ones who do crime. If there were enough jobs in Cala town or in the villages, trust me, there was not going to be more*

crime than what we see today. When they have stolen something they go and sell to other people to get money…Unfortunately the money they get they use to buy drugs and beer (Focus group discussion, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

To explicate on this, one *de facto* female head stood up and emotionally said the following in the focus group discussion:

No one is coming from the other village to steal from us... It is our own sons, daughters and grandchildren who are committing crime in this village…we need to teach our children that if they continue doing this, they end up in jail. Households are hungry and the only option is to break into other people's houses and take their food…Cases are reported here and again but nothing has been done to the perpetrators…We know why no action has been taken against this…The headman is paid not to punish the perpetrators (Focus group discussion, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

These quotations highlight the significance of unemployment, poverty and hunger in bringing about crime in Cala and particularly, it is claimed, by the youth. The female heads arguably bear the brunt of high crime levels locally and they are more defenseless than households headed by men.

Several reasons contributed to female heads not reporting crime and this of course contributed to the existence of reliable official figures relating to different crimes committed. Firstly, there is the fear of victimisation as in most cases perpetrators were not tried in courts. Secondly, the distance to the nearest police station, which is in Cala, and all the associated problems relating to access to transport frustrated the female heads. And, thirdly, female heads mentioned the sheer ineffectiveness of the justice system, as criminals were released upon paying a bribe and their dockets disappeared. In Box 5.2, I recount some of the crime experiences of female heads in Cala.

Box 5.2: Female heads' experiences of crime

Kholofelo's story

I remember in 2013 I left with my daughter going to Bloemfontein for my medical check-ups. I just told my neighbour to look after my house and my chickens. When we reached Bloemfontein around 11 o'clock in the evening I received a call from Thokozani's daughter and she told me I did not lock my doors when I left because she saw a light on the veranda and the main door was opened. I asked her to go and check for me…It [property] *was all gone…I am very much sure that the people who stole my property were not from any village but Mnxe* [the village where she stays]. *They saw me leaving and knew that I was going far for days. I believe that the people brought a bakkie to collect my property. I lost my microwave, hisense television set, dvd, four plate stove, toaster and boiling kettle…oooh I forgot…all the blankets were stolen too. This was the most difficult time of my life and it really brought me down. I have to start afresh to buy my house property. They even cooked and left dirty plates on the floor. I was traumatised…if I was there maybe they could have killed me, I am lucky to survive they are so cruel these people. My daughter has fitted burglar bars on the windows and steel screens on the doors to make it difficult to break in. The Madala Tavern is responsible for bringing criminals into this village…We have complained but to date nothing has happened. After they are drunk that's when they think of stealing and they will tell you if you make any noise you will die. Whenever I hear movements during the night I become fearful…I am afraid of the thieves* (Life history, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Thandeka's story

Lack of employment and poverty is the major problem in our village but I think the Madala tavern should be closed because when they are done drinking everyone will be sleeping. And the people know that females are the heads of the houses in the village so they are not afraid of stealing. I remember in 2012…as I have said I keep sheep, goats and pigs. One night…that I will never forget 14 March 2012. I heard a car outside my yard and already in seconds there was a voice at my window saying if you scream or switch on a light or call any one…you are dead. I kept quiet and I heard them driving my sheep and pigs into the bakkie and I lost all 13 sheep and 6 pigs but the goats remained. This is my main source of income because I sell and buy pigs, goats and sheep. I reported the matter at Cala police station and the headman but no arrests were made. In the village people started gossiping about a house

which was drying meat in the sun and it was believed that the grandson of the household was one of the criminals in the village and had been jailed for a similar offense. But this time around he was left to walk free; the headman did not do anything. I struggled in 2012 to recover from this incident. They made my life and that of my house difficult. I could not provide enough for my children because I did not have enough sources of money since I am not receiving the old age pension (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Source: Field work, November 2014.

Female heads are particularly vulnerable, as thieves are 'not afraid' of women. In this sense, crime in the communal areas of Cala is gendered. Women may offer no resistance when they are under attack and the implications of theft, if the two cases from Mnxe are anything to go by, can be devastating in terms of a loss in the household's asset base (whether homestead property or livestock). Further, the time and effort required to recover the asset base, if recoverable at all, is long-term. In the meantime, basic household needs for children are difficult to meet, and emotional scars from the crime continue indefinitely.

A final social challenge relates to demographic changes and its effects on livelihood vulnerability. The female heads indicated there has been a drastic population increase in Cala communal areas since the dawn of freedom in 1994 in South Africa. The increase in Cala's population is in large part a result of children of autochthonous residents growing up, becoming adults, getting married and then setting up their own homesteads. In this respect, one *de jure* female head aged seventy years noted the following:

> *Our children do not have jobs and they cannot go anywhere…they are given land by the headman to build a house and if you want some land to farm the headman can give you…But the problem is that the whole village is fighting to survive through selling different things…The little water that is coming from the taps cannot service everyone now because we are too many* (In depth-interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

From the perspective of this head, young adults tend to refrain from moving from Cala if only because they are aware that employment opportunities do not exist elsewhere. Simultaneously, this population dynamic puts increasing strain on the available natural resources in Cala, including chopping of fuel wood for cooking and poles for cattle kraals, thus leading to the ongoing depletion of the local forests.

Furthermore, given the establishment of new homesteads for new young married couples, woodlands are being stumped and cleared to create space for arable farming (even though land for fields is often underutilised). The Cala heads, as well, highlighted that the cattle population has likewise increased. Resultantly arable lands, and even land set aside for homestead gardening, are sometimes converted into grazing fields to avoid overgrazing. This though puts grazing land closer to the remaining arable fields, which lead to livestock (and particularly cattle) feeding on unprotected crops in the fields and compromising household food security. This inevitably also contributes to conflicts between villagers. Finally, the head from Mnxe village also speaks about the pressure placed on village infrastructure (such as water) and the increased competition existing in informal trading activities, both arising from population increases.

Such social challenges seem to go contrary to the notion that rural areas are particularly bound, or so it often claimed, by the spirit of 'ubuntu'. But the female heads intimated that kinship and other social ties have deteriorated tremendously in recent years, to such an extent that few relatives are willing to help those in need. The female heads argued that the immediate household comes first and foremost and in a manner which inhibits the desire to help extended family members. This is exemplified in relation to remittances, with the heads claiming that, in the 'olden days', they used to receive money from relatives living and working throughout South Africa. The remittance was ploughed into income-generating activities and the purchasing of food which eventually made them self-sustainable. In this context, one *de jure* female head who used to get money from her sister in KwaZulu-Natal province indicated the following:

> *Siyabonga used to give me money each and every month to support my family because she knew my situation when the laundry company I was working for was closed. The money she used to send was very important because I used to buy my wool and cloth for my business. But now with the rising prices of everything she has ceased to send me money. It greatly affected my small business because now I have to wait for two or three month before I can raise money to buy my raw materials…her money was very useful* (Life history, Mnxe Village, November 2014).

5.2.3 Political challenges

The final challenges to consider for Cala female heads are primarily political in character. Of importance in this regard is land and traditional authorities in communal areas. Land

continues to be hotly contested in these areas, including in Cala, and many of these contestations involve the traditional authorities and specifically the headmen. It is noteworthy though that the female heads, in the context of the focus group discussions, were not keen on being drawn into the question of land and headmen locally, or to reveal stories about local land events, seemingly because of fear of victimisation from the headman. Nonetheless, through informal conversations, I managed to gather some evidence which is significant in that it raises points with reference to impacts on the livelihoods of the Cala female heads.

It is clear that the patriarchal system in Cala communal areas in relation to the distribution of and access to land continues to marginalise women. The *de jure* heads possess land through inheritance (in the case of widowed women) whereas the *de facto* female heads have secondary rights to land through a male in Cala communal areas (which is regularly the husband who resides elsewhere) while managing this land on behalf of the male. Interestingly, female heads in Lupapasi indicated that land (the right to occupy and use land) was – officially – in the name of their husbands, and this claim was made by both the *de facto* and *de jure* heads (which implied that land was still held officially, as held in a local register, in the name of the deceased husband). In-depth interviews conducted in Lupapasi also highlight the significance of other patriarchal practices. Preference is given, in terms of customary practice, to men when it comes to land possession including with regard to inheritance. Thus, even in the case of the death of the husband, another man of adulthood age (particularly a son) is given the land over the wife in inheriting the land. This would mean that some *de jure* heads in Lupapasi may still only access land through a male, though their husband is dead. The practice however is not common in all the communal areas under study. In Mnxe and Sifonondile, after the death of the senior male figure (say the husband), the widow has stronger rights of unmediated possession of the household's land in comparison to Lupapasi.

The following words from an eighty-year old *de jure* female head from Lupapasi expresses vividly the dilemma some heads face:

> *The land is very important. When my husband died the land remained in the name of my late husband and the headman even shared the land between me and my son who had just married. To date, I no longer own land. All was given to other people who came later to stay in the village…Was it because I was no longer using it?…I don't*

> *know. Other widows in this village still have the land of their husbands and it was never taken and redistributed to other new comers of the village. If I decide to start farming today I will never get the land again. Now they say there is no more land to be given but we hear people saying some are getting land to use for making bricks…But its only for men and not women...unless you are related to the headman. This land I hear is close to the river where they can fetch water easily for making bricks* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Women are generally marginalised in possessing land in their own right, as land access is regularly mediated through a senior male. As well, in all the villages studied, only adult sons are able to receive land in their village of birth (through subdivision of the existing land of the homestead) whereas adult girls acquire land only once married (and in the village of their husband, and only as mediated through their husband). The extent of marginalisation of women, and thus the degree of insecurity in land experienced by a female head, depends at least in part on the headman, with the headman in Lupapasi seemingly being less favourably inclined to women accessing land unhindered. The eighty-year old head from Lupapasi quoted above thus speaks about her loss of land for unspecified reasons, and about her inability to acquire any land in the future, with even 'newcomers' being given land by the local headman. The implication of this for her household's livelihoods over time is obviously quite significant. She also alleges that men and not women may receive pieces of land for, for instance, brick-making (land near water sources) and, again, it appears that the headman is implicated in this allocation of land on a gendered basis. This has far reaching consequences for female heads livelihoods.

Overall, the available empirical evidence from the Cala villages indicates that headmen (as local representatives of the customary/traditional authorities) continue to authorise gendered land allocations, including approving or denying access to land. Female heads as a result are caught in a web of poverty and patriarchy, with their means of production (particularly land) being determined by the headmen. Female heads in the villages, notably in Lupapasi, lamented what they saw as the abuse of 'office' by the headmen in matters of land. And it should be highlighted that this gendered system of land authority in communal areas has the full backing of the ANC government, which continues to rely heavily on the traditional authorities in bringing out the electoral vote for the ANC in communal areas throughout the country.

5.3 Interconnected Livelihood and Poverty Challenges in Cala

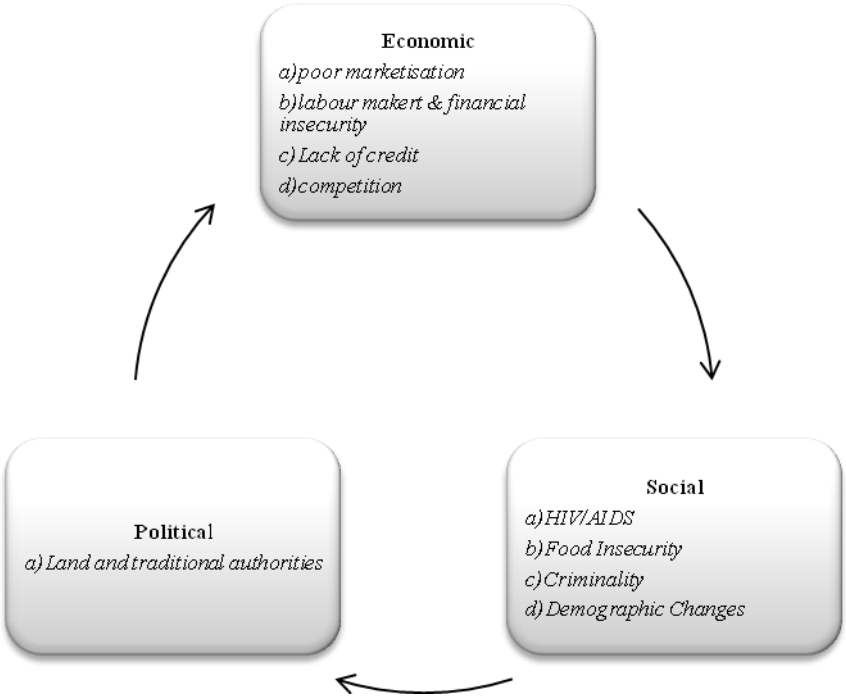
Poverty is rife in Cala communal areas, though earlier I have indicated that the level of poverty varies between the female-headed households, from thriving to struggling households. The term poverty does not have a clear and undisputed meaning and is notoriously difficult to measure objectively. As useful definition for my study though is the one offered by Gordon (2005:1):

> Fundamentally, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It means not having enough to feed and cloth a family, not having a school or clinic to go to, not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation.

Admittedly, this is not an abstract and sophisticated definition of poverty but, in the end, it is broadly applicable to the study of Cala and undoubtedly places conceptually the female heads in a position of poverty, which likewise is the experience of the female heads themselves. They speak about living in poverty and about not being able to move beyond a condition of poverty, and their own subjective and experientially-based understandings must be taken seriously if, as academics, we are to humanise our research subjects and recognise their capacity to think and reason on the world around them.

Based on discussions so far, it is therefore clear that female heads in Cala's communal areas are embedded in poverty; they literally live a life of poverty. At the same time, as I have tried to bring to the fore, they are not simply passive victims of their social circumstances. They seek to maneuver their way through the world they inhabit as reasoning and rational subjects in order to provide some sort of decent and dignified livelihood for their households (a point I discuss more fully in the next section). Nevertheless, the combination of economic, social and political challenges they face (and each female-headed household faces a unique combination of these) acts as a serious constraint on their lives and almost daily reinforces their condition of poverty. The challenges discussed I diagrammatically represent in Figure 5.1. The arrows between the set of social, political and economic challenges highlight the fact that the challenges are not isolated and discrete but invariability impact on each other, and in a negative way in terms of exacerbating poverty.

Figure 5.1: Challenges in Cala



Ultimately, these challenges involve and lead to material insecurities, including financial insecurity and food insecurity, and can be extremely disabling in terms of household sustenance and sustainability. Building the overall material base of households, notably by acquiring (productive and other) assets, is near impossible without some kind of financial security (for example, in the form of stable permanent employment). And when assets are built up over a considerable time period and with great effort and sacrifice, they can literally disappear overnight through crime; or, alternatively, the assets are slowly sold off as a household moves from one shock to another and engages in distress sales as a way of cushioning financial insecurity. As well, financial insecurity has direct and immediate implications for food insecurity, particularly when food production in gardens and fields is insufficient for household food consumption. It is not unusual for female heads to run out of food mid-month and skip on meals (for themselves and not their children) while they desperately await the old age pension or child support grant due at month's end. In this respect, a significant number of female-headed households in Cala did not how they would survive the next day, hence they described the situation as '*bazi ukuthi ngizosinda ngomuso, alo kunzima kakhulu'* (I don't know how I will survive tommorrow, it's very hard).

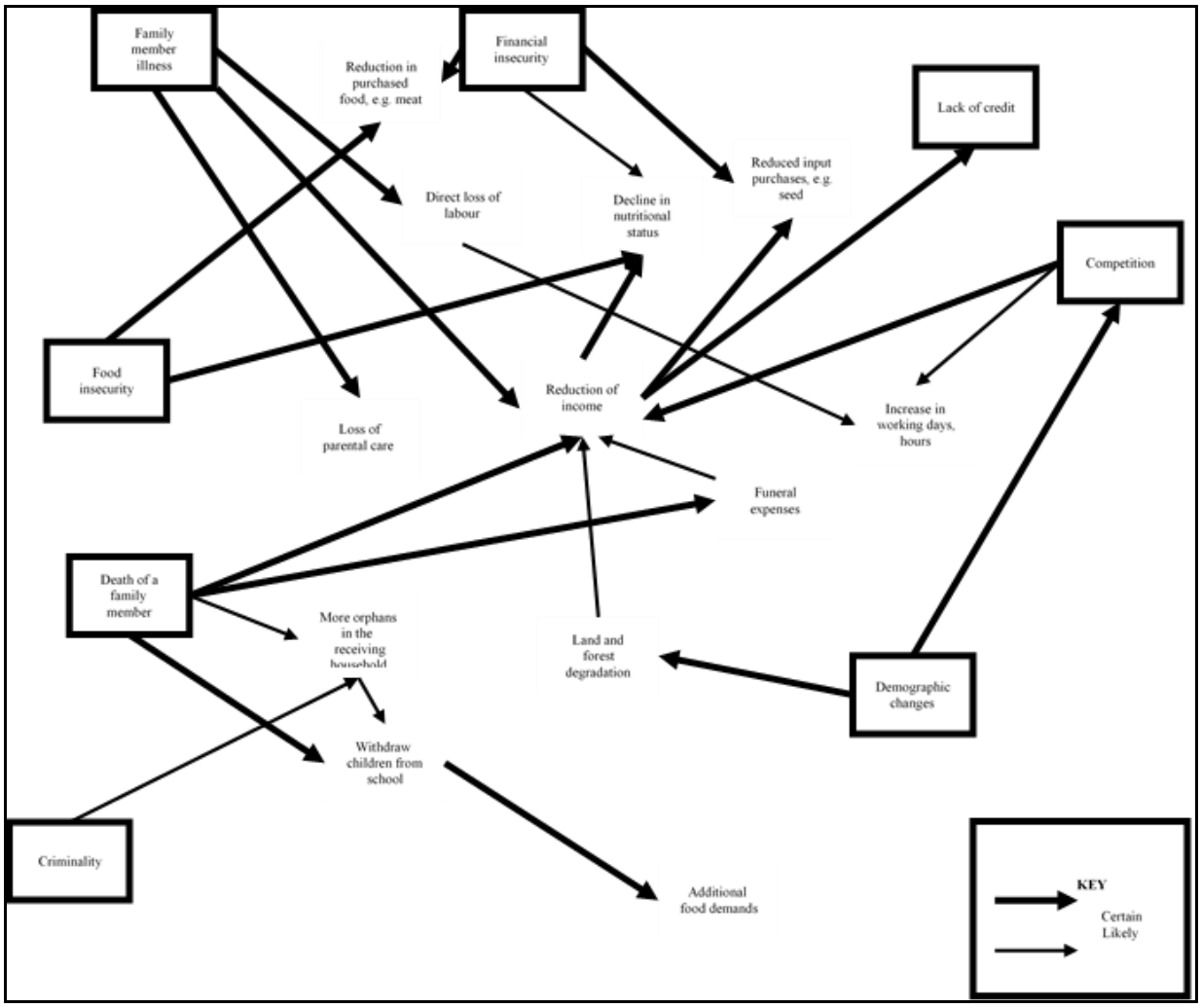
Figure 5.2 tries to depict the main challenges faced by Cala female heads as well as the consequences of these challenges for the livelihoods of their households. Some of these consequences are designated as likely, while others are labeled as certain. This Figure does not in any way seek to show definite causal relationships let alone a causal model for livelihoods and poverty in Cala. Rather, it demonstrates the complex interactions of the various challenges and how they combine in different ways to bring about consequences marking the conditions of poverty of female heads. It appears like a complicated maze and, indeed, it is meant to be. In this respect, it represents the lived world of Cala female heads on an everyday and ongoing basis. All female heads studied live in this world, or at least a particular version of it. It is a world of hardship but, as the next section shows, it is also a world in which female heads in Cala going about the daily lives by actively coping with the challenges and seeking to minimise their effects.

5.4 Coping Mechanisms in Cala

In this section, I discuss the coping mechanisms that female heads employ to counter the challenges that they face. It becomes clear from this discussion that the Cala heads are not simply submissive victims of their circumstances. Box 5.3 summarises the coping mechanisms used by female heads in Cala.

In terms of economic challenges, and specifically problems around access to markets, the heads pursued a range of coping activities to gain income by whichever way possible. First of all, because of problems emanating with input markets around inorganic fertilisers, the female-headed households made use of organic manure to try to increase crop yields in both gardens and fields. Female heads simply did not have the financial resources to purchase fertilisers. They thus used organic manure particularly from cattle kraals, chicken droppings and the use of composts, all of which was at no financial cost to the household. In this way, they saved money and channeled it elsewhere. Secondly, female heads made use of relatives and children (and occasionally locals with vehicles) to purchase certain inputs in Queenstown.

Figure 5.2: Challenges and Consequences in Cala



Therefore, instead of travelling themselves to Queenstown to purchase inputs (for example wool, cloth and beads) they were for example sending taxi drivers to purchase inputs for them. This saved time for the head, but it also saved costs, as the charge by the taxi driver for obtaining the inputs was less than the taxi charge for a passenger (as the taxi was going to Queenstown with passengers anyway). In addition, female heads with relatives and children residing in towns were used to source inputs at a wholesale price in Queenstown and larger towns hence reducing costs. Input costs in Cala were simply too exorbitant, beyond what female heads could afford. A *de facto* female head involved in knitting to supplement income said:

> *For me I have no problem they can charge that amount here but I will never buy wool in Cala town. My husband working in Jamestown always brings the wool for me from*

an Indian shop. Sometimes I end up selling to other people to get little money…He buys wool at a cheaper price (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Thirdly, female heads engaged in seed preservation. In face of inadequate inputs like maize seed, tomato seed, leafy vegetable seeds, and pumpkins and bean seed, heads would dry and preserve these after harvesting for future planting. According to female heads, the preservation of seeds has always been an important way of sustaining traditional crops and a technique utilised in the face of financial inadequacy to purchase commercial seeds. Hence preserving seeds became one of the ways of cutting costs as the seeds sold in retail stores during ploughing season become expensive and at times were out of stock in these shops. Fourthly, female heads engaged in barter trade and door-to-door selling, in relation to output markets. Female heads realised that Cala communal areas were not a good market to sell their products and it did note generate good sales and income. To overcome this, and instead of selling their products, they sometimes engaged in barter trade especially if it was agricultural products. For example a *de jure* female head in Lupapasi always exchanged her leafy vegetables with a *de facto* female head, and getting mealie meal in return. Apart from that, as a more proactive form of marketing and sales, female heads travelled door to door selling their products. Furthermore, it was noted that buying on credit was permissible in the case of some heads, with the heads being paid at the end of the month when people received social grants. This credit system however was problematic given that some people failed to pay off their credit. As a result, this became a ground for tension conflict among villagers.

Fifthly, some heads used a marketing tactic based on buy one get one free. Competition was a major challenge that greatly reduced income for heads who solely or mainly depended upon petty commodity production. Well-established petty commodity producers (with more capital resources) indicated in particular that they used the 'buy one and get one free' tactic which the newcomers in petty commodity production did not use because of fear of losing income. One *de jure* female head producing clay pots indicated the following:

I have been in this business for long now and my customers know me very well…they are loyal to pay pots and are stable [customers]. *The newcomers think they can take business from me but not now…I have increased loyalty of my customers…Whenever you buy one product I give the same or another for free. You think its only shops which*

can do that…We are also clever (In-depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

It is clear from the above that, despite the high rate of illiteracy amongst the heads, they used tacit skills and knowledge about local market conditions to stay competitive in selling their products. The reference of the female head (in the above quotation) to being clever highlights as well that heads used considerable ingenuity in coping with the vulnerability and poverty they daily experienced.

Lastly, borrowing was another coping strategy pursued by female heads. Because of problems with access to credit from banks and other financial institutions, female heads borrowed money from relatives, friends and neighbours. This might be humiliating for them, but female heads unanimously declared that the relative absence of household income (in the form of cash) was the root cause of the multiple challenges they faced. In cushioning the insufficiency of income, a significant number of female heads also resorted to borrowing money from local loan sharks. Again, this was not particularly desirable from their perspective (particularly given the high interest rates charged), but it was often necessary during mid-month when food reserves were lowest, after which the loan would be repaid (hopefully) when the monthly social grants were paid out.

Other coping strategies included stokvels (rotational groups) which, though not increasing household income, facilitated access to comparatively large sums of money for household expenses. A more problematic coping strategy involved the selling of household assets to supplement income by acquiring quick and immediate cash, and this was done at an unreasonable low selling price because of an urgent and unexpected shock. One de jure female head revealed the following:

I used to have a television but I sold it when mashonisa wanted his money and I had forgotten to pay him. But if you are not careful you end up selling all the property looking for money which is not good (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Another female head reiterated the following:

I ended up selling my fridge because I wanted to pay school fees for my children. The principal chased them…I had no option but now I am thinking what will I do when I

want to cool my water when its summer…I do not think I will ever afford to buy another one (Focus group discussion, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Thus, though the selling of assets can be considered as a coping mechanism, it is one which undermines the long-term security of female-headed households.

With regard to social challenges, and notably food insecurity, female heads pursued a variety of coping mechanisms. One which was constantly spoken about was the reduction of household consumption but not in a way which directly affected children negatively. Female heads would for instance take just one meal a day to preserve food for their children and grandchildren. While seeking to protect the nutritional status of young ones in the household, this impacted on the ability of the female heads to engage in manual labour thereby possibly limiting income or yields from homestead gardening or arable fields.

A second option was that of substitution. Female heads, in realising that income to buy food items was a major problem, often opted to substitute certain foodstuffs with cheaper commodities or substituted one retail outlet for another. Thus the heads indicated that, when they went to nearby towns to shop, they regularly purchased food from Pakistani-owned shops, and not the mainstream retailing companies Pick and Pay, Shoprite and Spar, because food items in the Pakistani shops were reasonably cheaper. It was also the case that female heads were allowed to take groceries on credit at Pakistani shops and to repay later when they received their social grants. To ensure guarantee of payment, female heads were required to leave identity documents at the shop. A female head from Mnxe indicated the significance of this arrangement:

If we ran out of food, we go to the Pakistan shop in Cala and we get what we want and pay at the end of the month…you cannot do that to Spar…thanks to the Pakistan shops... and their groceries are cheaper but sometimes they will be expired so you have to check before leaving the shop…yes… instead of having meat we can buy a big cabbage that will sustain us for a week (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, 2014).

The last point, about purchasing cabbage instead of meat, refers to another form of substitution. And the following quotation from a *de facto* female head also from Mnxe clearly expresses this:

At times things will be so hard and you have to strategise how you can sustain the household until you receive the social grant. Having meat during such a time will be a

luxury…for us Xhosa we love Umvubo…do you know Umvubo…you mix sour milk [amasi] *and crumbly paps…some people call it umphokoqo. This meal is so delicious and it is cheap to prepare…so we can go for days having that, than sleeping on empty stomachs* (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Borrowing is a third option, in this case borrowing of food. Food was at times borrowed from neighbours. While this may reflect the spirit of *Ubuntu*, the heads emphasised that reciprocity was crucial in sustaining this kind of relationship though the reciprocity did not necessarily have to the take the form of foodstuffs. Borrowing practices therefore help in keeping the connections between female heads alive and inculcating a sense at village level of mutual assistance during difficult and troubling periods.

Box 5.3: Summary of Coping Mechanisms

Strategies aimed at improving poor marketization include

i. Using indigenous manure
ii. Sending drivers, children and relatives to purchase inputs
iii. Seed preservation
iv. Barter trade
v. Door to door selling
vi. Buy one get one policy

Strategies aimed at improving financial security include

i. Borrowing money from mashonisa
ii. Borrowing from neighbours and relatives
iii. Diversification of livelihood strategies
iv. Selling household assets
v. With drawing children from school

Strategies aimed at improving food security include

i. reducing household consumption;
ii. substituting some food items with cheaper commodities
iii. borrowing from neighbors and Pakistan shop
iv. indigenous crop processing activities

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014.

Fourthly, indigenous crop processing activities were pursued. There was unanimous agreement among female heads that, in the face of food insecurity, households still preserve certain crops after harvesting for future consumption use especially when households ran out of food. Such indigenous activities in processing food included sun-drying of particularly *mororho* (dried spinach), *masonja* (mapane worms) and *mogwapa* (dried meat). This at times prevented female-headed households in Cala from sleeping on an empty stomach.

Fifthly, and as a last resort, children were withdrawn from school. The death of the main breadwinner (normally a male), or someone else contributing income to the household, resulted on certain occasions in female heads withdrawing children from school in order to save money for the purchase of food. Importantly, though, withdrawing children from school automatically added labour capacity to the household and hence potentially enhanced the ability of the household to engage in livelihood activities to increase income. However, the practice of withdrawing children from school had long-term consequences including intergenerational poverty because the children would not possess the knowledge that formal employers require.

5.4.1 Factors inhibiting coping mechanisms

Though coping mechanisms are part and parcel of household livelihoods for Cala female heads, they are not without their own set of challenges or factors inhibiting their pursuance. The field evidence also suggests that some households cope better than others. The female heads put forward various reasons for differentiation between households when it came to engaging in coping mechanisms and in the success of such mechanisms.

A high dependency ratio is one major factor constraining households in their coping practices. However it is of importance to note that it is not necessarily a question of how many people make up a particular household, as the composition of the household is crucial (for example, how many young children) as is the number of household members engaged in productive livelihood activities and the kind of activities pursued. Having idle and non-productive members in the household increases vulnerability and this is compounded by the number of members in the household. The story of Mbuyiselo (in Box 5.4) highlights some of these issues.

Box 5.4: A non-coping *de jure* household (household dependency ratio)

Mbuyiselo's story

It's very difficult to put food on the table here because my house is too big. I have five children [three sons and two daughters]. *My first born daughter is married and takes care of her children in Mthatha where she is working as a nurse; the second born son is married and was staying in Jamestown and later came back with his wife and four children…My other daughter* [Monica] *was married but divorced and came back with three children. I am staying with all of them in this house and presently no one is working and all are looking forward to my old age pension. The children did not have birth certificates and only got them in June. They have applied for the child support grant but until now there has not been any response…my children have followed up but nothing has happened. Where do I get the money to buy them food…I am sick now and I cannot get any job, they* [her children] *are lazy to farm and provide for their own children…All they want is to wait for the little that I receive monthly.*

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014.

In the case of Mbuyiselo, the monthly income received is merely the old age pension (R1350 per month). Given this income, and the fact that the majority of the household members are not economically-active and do not make any meaningful contribution to household finances, food security for the household becomes difficult.

Secondly, the health status of the main inhibits the capacity to cope. The fieldwork evidence indicates that a significant number of female heads are no longer physically able to carry out heavy duties particularly working in the gardens and arable fields. As a result, these households are forced to rely on social grants either old age pensions or child support grants or both. The health status of the female head is important as it facilitates diversification and intensification of livelihood activities to lessen household vulnerability. The case of *de jure* female head, Monica, illustrates this:

> *Yes it is only the old age pension that is sustaining me; if the government was going to stop giving me money I do not know how I will survive. Back then I used to work for myself in the garden and producing my own food but now I am sick with arthritis. All my joints are painful and sometimes I do not even wake up because it will be painful…I cannot do heavy work* (In depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

5.5 Intra-Household Gender Relations in Cala

This section focuses on the intra-household gendered relations in the communal areas of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi. Decision-making at household level is quite important in the case of female-headed households especially in the context of limited or inadequate income.

5.5.1 Decision-making in female-headed households

This section discusses decision-making in both *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households. It does so by distinguishing between the two forms of household structures and examining decision-making in these households separately. As a reminder, 83% of the households surveyed had *de jure* female heads while 17% had *de facto* heads. Overall, 83% of the female heads surveyed (all of whom are *de jure*) had autonomy to make overall household decisions, while 17% of the heads did not have the right to make overall decisions (all of whom are *de facto*).

5.5.1.1 Decision making – the *de jure* case

In this section I provide an overview of the experiences of the *de jure* female heads in Cala during the days when their spouses were still alive or living with them in the same household (i.e. before they became heads). According to the heads, life was completely different, because in Xhosa culture (like in many cultures) men are deemed to be the sole provider of the entire household. Such a status meant that the husband/father commanded great respect. In general, female heads alluded to the fact that their duties as women involved social reproduction (including for instance child rearing, cooking and dish washing) but also agricultural work in the gardens and fields.

Significantly, the now *de jure* female heads indicated that they were inadequately involved in household decision-making processes. Orders cascaded from the male head of the household to the wife, such that whatever decisions were made by the head had to be implemented by the wife. To illustrate this, I refer to the experiences of Rhoda:

> *I was married at a very young age and when I grew up my aunties* [father's sisters] *used to tell me that I should respect my husband in whatever I do. Even if he was working in Johannesburg and I was in the village* [as a *de facto* head]*…he would make all the decisions…I remember in first days in our marriage he would write the list of things that I should do and the crops that I should grow in the garden. I do not*

remember one time I would make a decision…I was always taking orders and because I was scared of heartbreak and of challenging him, and given it was him working for the money, I was left with no option than to take orders. It was hard going against your personal choices (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

The level of participation of women in household decision-making is exceedingly limited and any participation at all often depends upon the boldness of the woman to express her opinions. Overall, in Xhosa culture, women are generally supposed to be subordinate to their husbands and in doing so most rural women are disempowered within households.

Current *de jure* female-heads spoke about a range of issues in which they were not involved regarding decision-making when their husbands were around in the past. Female heads were not involved in making decisions on matters such as house building and repairs, family planning, marriage of son or daughter, education of son or daughter, household goods purchases, and crop cultivation, harvesting and selling. This is quite an all-embracing list, including the realms of production and social reproduction. The following quotation is revealing in this regard, as from an interview with a *de jure* head

Even during the time we were growing up, we knew that the father was the one making decisions but I did not like it because some of the decisions were not wise and our mothers used to just take such orders. And growing up knowing you should not disrespect the husband…[When married] *I just took orders as they come, including what to grow in the arable fields, household goods to buy. But now it is a different situation because he is late* [dead] *and all the decisions that I make I consult also my children to make sure that the decisions are well informed…I have freedom now than then* (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

These female heads, in the past, were obliged to follow the orders of their spouses without questioning, as a questioning spirit was a sign of undermining the authority of the man and offending time-honoured traditions. And disrespecting and undermining husband-hood could and did have serious consequences, including physical violence against the wife and, as a last resort, being sent back to the household of origin, or to her parents (as the wife would have moved to the husband's area on marriage). Although less pressure was on the wife, compared to the husband, in providing for household livelihoods, female heads lamented that they were heavily deprived of personal choices while their contributions in the sphere of social reproduction, including the heavy responsibility of caring for children, was rarely

acknowledged or recognised. Furthermore, female heads indicated that they never owned any physical assets or had any access to financial assets, as everything belonged to the husband. This put the wives at a deep disadvantage, as in many ways the authority and power of the husband (besides being derived from cultural history) was vested in ownership of all moveable property (as well as primary rights to land in the communal area).

Despite the cultural norms of respecting husbands, these presently *de jure* female heads did not fully accept the patriarchal practice of men being automatic heads of households and they highlighted that they were being deprived of their rights as women and wives in having input into household decision-making processes. This dramatically disempowered them, particularly as they did not have an independent means of income and one which they controlled in terms of expenditure. As a result of all this, female heads were often marginalised from making decisions on matters affecting them even when the husband was away.

Income-generating activities undertaken by the wife was highly disregarded by husbands particularly because women, it was claimed by the husband, would meet other men and as a result engage in extra-marital affairs while they (the husbands) were away. In this regard one current *de jure* female head from Lupapasi aged seventy-two said the following:

> *My husband was working in Ventersdorp farms and he would come home after every month. Life was difficult those days because during the rainy season he would not come because it will be busy* [at this work] *and sometimes I would sell vegetable to gain a little money to buy mealie meal and other stuff…But the day he heard from his brother that I was selling vegetables in the village door to door he shouted at me…I was still young and he believed that I was going to be taken in his absence, but already I had one son* [my first born]*… how was I going to survive without money?* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Female heads indicated that, while their husbands were away, they were generally not permitted to interact with men other than their direct and close family members. In fact, women who have affairs outside marriages are normally considered as prostitutes while, for men, it is regularly considered as appropriate and indeed ‘manly’. Clearly patriarchal norms in such ways became responsible for creating dependency, subordination and uncertainly for these once-married (now) *de jure* female heads in Cala.

Now however, as *de jure* female heads, they make their own household decisions without any significant interference from a male figure (either former husband or other senior male) compared to the current situation of *de facto* female heads, as discussed later. Table 5.1 provides a list of decision-making powers held by *de jure* heads in Cala today. If this table were altered to show those who made decisions in their households prior to becoming *de jure* heads, all "x's" would appear in the right hand column under husband. *De jure* female heads currently embody the previous roles of the husband.

Table 5.1: Decision making in *de jure* female-headed households

Activity Involved	**Wife**	**Husband**
Cultivation	X	
House making/repair	X	
Livestock	X	
Expenditure of items of the household	X	
Investments	X	
Savings	X	
Consumption within the household	X	

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014.

5.5.1.2 Decision making – the *de facto* case

In this section, I focus on the current *de facto* female heads and decision-making. Evidence gathered from the fieldwork indicates that, during the times when *de facto* heads' husbands were working and being remunerated well, decision-making solely rested in the hands of the men. But when husbands become retrenched or suffer the loss of employment for other reasons, this may reshape intra-household dynamics including where the locus of power rests in the household. In fact, the prevailing *status quo* of manhood and masculinity is likely questioned and the automatic assumption that maleness means power and authority. In this regard, as Morrell (2001) argues, work has always played a major role in defining masculinity and lack of employment poses key questions about men and masculinity.

In Cala communal areas it has become apparent that, due to the loss of work by husbands, women take on a greater role in contributing to household economic well-being. From the in-depth interviews I conducted with *de facto* female heads in Lupapasi, Mnxe and Sifonondile,

it was clear that many husbands are no longer able to meaningfully generate income for their households; and, some cases, *de facto* female heads are the main breadwinners. Fundamentally, such evidence leads to the conclusion that, in Cala communal areas, there is a shift in household sustenance from men to women in these households. To support this claim, I provide the following quotation from one *de facto* female head:

> *Life is no longer centred on one income; my husband is now working part time and he does not get enough money to provide for his family and I have to chip in and help…I work very hard and I even get more money than him…He takes an amount for drinking from his salary whereas all the money I get I use it for my family…But if we would use the two salaries life could have been better for our house… we need money for food, school fees and electricity* (In depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Generally speaking, most *de facto* female heads clearly indicated that husbands do not want to be questioned on how much they earn and how they spend the money. Similarly, Shove (1993) found out that women simply do not have access to their husbands' money. And without women, a significant number of Cala households would be plunged further into poverty, especially given (as this quotation indicates) that women are considerably more responsible than men in the expenditure of household income.

Though a significant number of husbands are no longer remunerated as before, and hence their capacity to provide for the household has declined, the female heads indicated that this is not leading to a reversal of roles. Husband and wife jointly decided on matters affecting the household even if, in some cases, husbands still sought to sustain the *status quo* of masculinity in matters affecting households. One *de facto* female head indicated how her household operated:

> *I respect my husband even if he is now not getting a lot of money; I consult with him on everything. I make sure that we do all our calculations of the monthly income and we budget the money so that during the month we do not run short of food. I like the way we do our things even though we do not get enough money to spoil ourselves and our children but I thank God for an understanding husband like him* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Another *de facto* female head said the following concerning how she used her income, which is the only source of household income:

> *You see, my husband is currently not working but is looking for work in King Williams town and I have since taken the duty of sole provider. I consider my income belonging to the family. I involve my husband and children in decision-making processes. He is still culturally the breadwinner even though he does not pay anything at the moment* (In depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

On that note, this study refutes the assertion made by Jayatilaka (2002) who found that bringing money into the household leads to a sense of unrestricted entitlement to decide on how it is spent.

Most unemployed husbands, according to the female heads, refused to undertake paid work which they felt was demeaning to them. And those who did some kind of at least part-time work failed to ensure that the earnings made were put into a common household income pool. Hence the female heads have to do whatever it takes to put food on the table. Over and over again, they strongly indicated that they were prepared to do any job considered demeaning or undignified by men to ensure that their children survived. And even though they were on the hunt so to speak each and every month for further income sources (through, for example, casual work) and were often also involved in their gardens and fields if only in some small way, they were simultaneously responsible for the domestic sphere.

The existence of households in which the *de facto* female head shares some form and level of decision-making with the husband (who is away for extended periods) is not necessarily the norm, certainly the cultural norm. Even those female heads involved in decision-making still recognise the moral authority of the husband. Sometimes, decisions are simply delegated to the wife by the husband because of force of circumstances, because he is away and household decisions need to be made in his absence. According to *de facto* female heads in Cala, even if the husband's contribution to household income and sustenance is minimal, all final decision-making remains embodied in the husband (as Table 5.2 shows). More specifically, decision-making with regard to crop production, livestock, savings and investments continue to rest in the hands of the husband while expenditures on different household items particularly groceries are decided upon in the main by the wife. This means that decision-making powers, and the respective powers of husband and wife, are not neatly rooted in differential contributions to household income. Even when women contribute more, the power of the

husband remains and any powers granted to the wife are contingent on specific household dynamics, including the negotiating skills of the wife and the good-will of the husband.

Table 5.2: Decision making in *de facto* female headed households

Activity Involved	**Wife**	**Husband**
Cultivation		X
House making/repair		X
Livestock		X
Expenditure of items of the household	X	X
Investments		X
Savings		X
Consumption within the household	X	

Source: Fieldwork, November 2014.

Conversations with female heads thus strongly indicate that cultural and traditional customs still weigh heavily on Cala communal areas, with final decisions as made by husbands being beyond question by the wife, even when the wives hold the purse-strings so to speak. The following quotation by a *de facto* female head demonstrates this point:

> *Yes I make decisions in my house like buying groceries, school uniforms but my husband has to tell me how much to spend; if I exceed the budget I will have to use some of my money. But most of the decisions that I make are not major decisions. I can choose to do something with the money like buying and selling second hand clothes but my husband has to approve that and if he does not then I may not go ahead. If he is not around I have to call him so that he approves, otherwise if I do anything he will be angry with me and I do not want to seem like I am disrespecting him* (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, Village 2014).

Traditional customs in most communal areas, as in Cala, continue to disempower women even though their household role in generating income has increased.

In confirmation of the points already made, I deliberately asked the *de facto* heads specifically what influences the power held by the husband or wife in their household. In outlining the points raised by them, I also draw a comparison with the *de jure* households. The *de facto* heads clearly articulated that employment and income generation differentials

between wife and husband did not translate into the extent of decision-making power and authority exercised. In other words, 'political' power in the household could not be read off from 'economic' power. Culture continued to be critical to decision-making power in the *de facto* households as, even when the wife contributed significantly to household income (and indeed more than the husband), the husband still remained the main locus of power and dictated the control and usage of income, including income generated by wives. *De facto* female heads also strongly indicated that husbands intentionally disempowered their wives to make sure that they remain heads of the household. They also intimidated that the extent to which they as wives and mothers determined or influenced household expenditure influenced the time during the month when household foodstuffs would dwindle and become scarce. This is due to the fact that (generally speaking) wives as mothers are more responsible than men (or husbands) in caring for the basic needs of the household and especially the needs of children. Without their decision-making input, the future of their households would be bleaker. Though this may fit into their domestic role of social reproduction as defined by the local patriarchal system, and not challenge it as such, the *de facto* heads used this role to defend the livelihoods of themselves and their children. This situation of course is vastly different from the *de jure* heads but it is interesting to note that these heads share responsibility of decision-making with their children and grandchildren, at least in terms of consulting them.

The question of household assets also comes into play on this matter. Patriarchy plays a critical role in the distribution of these assets in the Cala communal areas of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi. The *de jure* female heads possess significant assets which they literally call 'mine', which is vastly unlike the *de facto* female heads. It is unclear whether the *de jure* heads lost any assets when becoming a widow or divorcee, either to their ex-husband's relatives or to their ex-husband (in the case of divorce). But, currently, many of them own assets which existed in the household prior to being a divorce or widow, and they have also acquired assets subsequently. The *de facto* female heads indicated that household assets (including livestock) belonged to the husband hence there was a heavy dependency by *de facto* female heads on their husbands' survival. As such, it became clear that husbands have the prerogative for instance to sell the livestock at any given time, even if this entails ignoring the importance of draught power for farm activities. The wife's livelihood activities may have led to the acquiring of certain assets, but this does translate into her owning them.

The husband's ownership of household assets puts the *de facto* heads in a subordinate position within the household, as they have no asset base whatsoever and this can be used (and is used) by husbands against them, particularly when there are serious problems in the marriage. But even during good times, female heads were often not granted the right to utilise specific assets which would provide additional income for the household (such as renting-out cattle to neighbours for ploughing). Furthermore, *de facto* female heads went so far as to claim that they were the personal property of their husband, or at least that is how it came across to them.

From this, it is fundamentally clear that patriarchal discourses and practices are deeply embedded in Cala as exemplified in the lives of the *de facto* female heads and the ways in which decisions are made in their households. Of course, as indicated earlier, current *de jure* heads also highlighted this point as well prior to the loss of their husband. Women may have some decision-making authority in *de facto* households, but this is delegated authority from the husband. This is in agreement with the arguments made by Woolley and Marshall (1994) who introduce the notion of 'orchestration power' in which husbands make the important and broader decisions while women make the relatively less important and less consequential ones.

5.6 From breadwinner to a burden

All this is taking place at a time when husbands of *de facto* heads, at least amongst those surveyed in Cala, are making an increasingly smaller contribution to household sustenance, such that they are turning from breadwinners into burdens for the female heads. Because this regularly does not lead to increasing autonomy for women in household decision-making, tensions between husband and wife tend to emerge. The status of their husbands, in terms of manhood and fatherhood, is invariably put into question by their failure to provide for their households, and their willingness to defend their manhood at all costs (to prevent the wife from taking on the status of 'man of house') also creates problems between husband and wife. The power of men has the potential to erode but this is not inevitable because of the ongoing prevalence of patriarchal systems. In this regard, one *de facto* female head said the following:

> *There is no employment here in Cala…My husband used to work for a Caltex garage in Queenstown and in March 2014 he was retrenched because the owner was moving to overseas. Now he is no longer working and he is always drunk, maybe because of*

stress. I am the one running around doing work to get money and buy food…The money that I get from the child support grant is not enough to buy everything necessary for the house…For you to be a true father, you have to make plans and put food on the table for your family otherwise hunger can kill your family…A man without a job is nothing…If you have money [as a man] *you are well respected in society* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Female heads in this study commonly agreed that work plays a significant role in defining the position of men in the household and that, without work, the husband could never be considered as a 'true father'. Traditionally, employment in the formal economy has been viewed in a masculined manner, with the traditional worker being defined in large part as a male worker. To refer to Morrell (2001) again, work has a significant part to play in defining masculinity. In Xhosa culture, and more generally, men are seen as responsible for household sustenance. However the increasing rate of unemployment amongst husbands of *de facto* heads in Cala poses a challenge for these men, and also in how they are perceived by their wives and the local community at large. In a sense, they are becoming impotent economically yet they defend their masculine role as breadwinner and decision-maker in the Cala households. Whereas men are unable and unwilling to move outside and beyond their role as defined in terms of patriarchy, women are prepared to do so by not only carrying the burden of social reproduction but also the burden of production (even so far as becoming the main breadwinner). And they are prepared to do this without becoming the ultimate decision-maker in the household, because ultimately their main concern is household sustenance and the well-being of the children in the household.

At the same time, there is evidence that *de facto* female heads may be becoming bolder in the relationship with their husbands and that they no longer respected them as before because their power was being subverted, at least potentially, by the undermining of their status as household breadwinner. As well, husbands were becoming increasingly irresponsible with whatever money they generated through work. Kamo a *de facto* female head whose husband now works only part-time in Queenstown expressed the following:

Yes…my husband is still alive, he used to work in Queenstown as a police officer but he was suspended…He never became open about his suspension but I hear from people that someone gave him a bribe and he removed the person's docket from the files. He

never told me the truth. Since his suspension life has not been easy in my house; he at times shouts at me when he is drunk. Since his suspension I learnt to use my hands and I can tell you today that he is not supporting his three children; it is me who is supporting the children…I am working at EPWP and I am also knitting jerseys to make a living for my children and at times he borrows money from me. From his money from the part time work…he buys himself beer forgetting that he has a family. He is no longer a responsible man now, he can't afford to buy a single 2kg of ACE [mealie meal] *but he can buy beer for his friends* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile Village, November 2014).

The irresponsibility of men, as both husbands and fathers, was leading to the *de facto* heads disrespecting them, particularly given the immense efforts made by the heads in providing for their households. In this regard, Kamo went on to say the following:

I used to respect my husband and I was very loyal to him because he was responsible and taking care of the family and now that he does have a proper job…In fact he does not have a job because he never buys nothing for the house…He is now useless for the family…I do my own decisions; I do not have to consult him because of his behavior;…as a man, he should provide for his family. It is his behaviour which causes me not to respect him otherwise I do (Life history, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

For Kamo, her husband has now become a burden and she even claims that he is not working despite having part-time work. To work means to then provide for the household, but Kamo's husband does not do this. His manhood therefore is questioned not simply in terms of having work or not, but in relation to the extent to which he cares for his wife and children. These thoughts resonated with the thoughts of the *de facto* heads more broadly in Cala. The heads indicated that husbands are able to regain their (wives') respect insofar as they engaged in responsible behavior, no matter their work status.

Bearing in mind the importance of patriarchal culture, values and norms in Cala, the headship of husbands in *de facto* female-headed households, though often questioned by the wives, ultimately continues to be pervasive. The following statement from a *de facto* female head is revealing in this regard:

I was told that a husband remains the head of the household no matter his economic status…Even though my husband no longer has enough money [earns enough money]

compared to previous I will always respect him otherwise if I disrespect him he will think that I am challenging him. I was told back home [from her parents] *that you earn respect from a man by respecting him…and today I am still doing that despite the fact that he is not permanently employed and I also get money which is more than his at times* (In depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Thus, generally, the *de facto* heads feel compelled to respect their husbands and to be obedient to them, even though some husbands have become burdens to their wives. In this way patriarchy is not being challenged by the heads. The heads continue to operate within patriarchy while also ensuring, through their own livelihood activities, that the livelihoods of their households are not compromised by the unemployed status or irresponsible practices of their husbands. As the female heads put it, while their husbands have lost their role as sole providers of the family, their traditional role of being heads of households is still maintained. And this continues even in the face of the prevalence of domestic violence in Cala.

5.7 Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a sign of unequal power relationships and it continues to shape relations in households with regard to both the *de facto* and *de jure* households in Cala communal areas. Overall, 40.3% of *de facto* and 19.2% of *de jure* female heads said that they are subject to, or have been subject to, domestic violence while 40.5% (both *de jure* and *de facto*) responded in the negative. It should be highlighted that, overall, the heads refrained from speaking openly to me about their stories of domestic abuse because of the sensitivity of this matter. They also seemingly do not always speak to each other about it, such that it becomes their hidden and dark secret that they carry around with them daily. Thus the evidence I collected no doubt only scratches the surface of the scale of abuse in Cala households. To understand domestic violence in female-headed households in Cala communal areas, I discuss the situation for *de facto* and *de jure* female heads separately.

5.7.1 Domestic violence – *de facto* case

Domestic violence is certainly not a new phenomenon in South Africa and particularly in communal areas. The evidence suggests that domestic violence in *de facto* female-headed households in Cala was common. A number of factors contributed to domestic violence and these included alcohol abuse, shame from loss of employment by husbands, and general feelings of hopelessness. Because of this, intra-household relations are riddled with tension

and conflict. To understand this, I provide the story of Martha (in Box 5.5) who has been abused by her husband, who she loved dearly.

Box 5.5: Domestic violence in *de facto* female headed households

Martha's domestic violence story

Everyone knows about this, it's not a secret that my husband beats me and shouts at me. So many times I have been rescued by my neighbours. He was not like this before but after he was retrenched he started drinking too much. He works in Cala at a service station but he is no longer earning as much money as before. Every time he comes home drunk he starts shouting…telling me that I do not respect him because he no longer has money and that I tell my children not to respect him. I remember in 2013 he said that I told the children that he was not their father which is not true. He would beat me and chase me out of the house. What angers me the most is that, at the end of the month, he gets paid but he doesn't support his family…we have three children. At the month end he demands the child support grant saying that the money belongs to him because he is the father. I have reported him to his sisters but he has not changed his behaviour. At times I lose money because I am not able to go and do my piece jobs due to injuries and bruises…It is hurtful I never thought that one day he will raise his hand to beat me in front of my children (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Martha's story is just one of many stories from Cala, as many *de facto* female heads lamented that domestic violence was rampant in Cala households, and this abuse affected them emotionally, physically and economically. And, time and again, they made reference to unemployment amongst their husbands as a root cause of abuse and the strain this put on household finances and food security. A *de facto* female head from Mnxe, who always provides support for the abused women, said the following:

> *Domestic violence is a problem in our houses; men have become animals, how can you beat someone you love. Women always come here for comfort after being beaten by their husbands …Gone are the days when men used to work and provide for their families…and now they have limited income to support and they feel challenged when women spend the whole day working and gaining money…Children also have fueled*

the situation by consulting their mother on major issues rather than their fathers and as such fathers feel like they are being replaced. Women affected really need support; otherwise if this persists some women will leave their houses. All I do is to listen and support them…and encourage them to have dialogue with their husbands (In depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

Unemployment leads to a loss of masculinity and manhood for their husbands, and even children (according to this quotation) see their mothers (and not their fathers) as the basis for household sustenance and thus the ones to be consulted on critical matters. Disrespect for their wives emanates from such a situation, with husbands offloading their loss and frustrations on their wives and children. *De facto* female heads also claimed that men blamed the democratic transition away from apartheid for the contemporary situation in their households, as post-apartheid changes have brought about 'too many rights' for women and hence domestic violence is instigated, from the perspective of women, to 'teach women their place'.

Whether arising from the loss of unemployment or not, alcohol abuse by husbands was constantly raised by the women as an immediate cause of domestic abuse. Oddly, this alcohol abuse is taking place in the context of reduced household income insofar as the husband has lost his employment or now only works part-time or on a casual basis. But alcohol abuse is not a new phenomenon. When husbands came home to Cala after an extended period as a migrant labourer (or instance, on the mines), they tended to utilise their brief period in Cala to meet with friends and drink at local bottle stores and shebeens instead of spending time with their families. But the current prevalence of alcohol abuse by the husbands is seen by the female heads as symptomatic of the overall unproductive activities and irresponsibility of the husbands today. A *de facto* female head with four children explained the following:

My husband works in Stutterheim and he always comes home every month end. But the problem is he loves his beer too much, to the extent that he can finish all the money before the middle of the month. He returns home drunk every time he is here instead of spending time with his family which he stays far from…When you ask him, can you leave money for school fees and uniforms, he fumes at me and shouts at me in front of the children. He can afford to buy beer for his friends but cannot provide school fees for his children…It hurts me so much at times. Without his support I work to provide

> *for my children in the hope that they will work and take care of me in future* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Though the extent of the abuse suffered by this female head is unclear, she speaks of her husband almost as if he was dead to her. In other words, with the abuse comes a total lack of interest on the part of her husband in the welfare of the household, such that she needs to act as if she were not married in terms of planning for her household's future.

What this means, in terms of household income and expenditure, is that women are far more responsible than men in terms of looking after the needs of their households. Male patterns of expenditure, according to the female heads, involve favouring the purchase of 'alcohol and cigarettes' at the expense of the children, and this only serves to further undermine the legitimacy of the husband in the eyes of the *de facto* heads. Whereas husbands spend selfishly, the wives are far more altruistic in their expenditure and, when wives challenge their husband's irresponsibility in this regard, they sometimes become subject to abuse and violence. In addition, children are exposed to domestic violence and resultantly they grow up disliking their fathers. When asked what husbands do in Cala, one *de facto* female head expressed it in the following way:

> *Eat and sleep then wake up and go drinking again…Some of the women you talked with in the village have separated with their husbands because of alcohol...Their husbands started selling property ... to get money for alcohol* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Such a situation of perpetual drinking by husbands, which may be a way of managing stress by the husband, not only exacerbates the tension between husband and wife as it also leads to far-reaching consequences for household livelihoods in cases where the husband sells household assets (which he would claim are his to sell) to pay for his addiction. And it also may lead to the complete break-up of the household through divorce.

In such extreme cases, traditional authority structures (such as headmen), neighbours, churches and police were mentioned by female heads as institutions of reconciliation to avoid legal and professional counseling, and ultimately separation and divorce. But the female heads claimed that certain local institutions are deeply patriarchal themselves in their discourses and practices (notably traditional structures and police) such that, when these institutions are contacted and visited, nothing positive is forthcoming. In many cases, and

because of seemingly nowhere to turn, female heads remain silent about the violence they suffer. The following statement is revealing in this regard:

> *Reporting domestic violence is not easy. I once went to the police to report about my husband and I was told that if I was good my husband would not treat me harshly but nicely. From that point in time I have never attempted to visit the police again* (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Female heads are often wary of reporting domestic violence to the police, in part because they simply do not get any help but also because reporting their husbands may lead to an intensification of domestic violence because of the bitterness of the husband. On rare occasions have men been jailed.

5.7.2 Domestic violence – *de jure* case

Domestic violence in *de jure* female-headed households took place in the past, when the husband was still alive or the head was married to her husband (i.e. before becoming a widow or divorcee). But even now there is still domestic violence or at least abuse, with victims in the *de jure* households including grandmothers and grandchildren, and the perpetuators regularly being young men and women who reside in the household. The *de jure* heads linked this to unemployment amongst the youth, and to local taverns and shebeens selling alcohol to youth without any age restriction. One of the *de jure* female heads in Mnxe claimed the following:

> *These days children are now drinking at a very younger age and they become violent. I have a problem with my grandson, he is 22 years but when he is drunk he starts beating his siblings without them having done anything wrong to him. I have reported him to the headman but nothing was done because even me I can't rebuke him…Last time he wounded me and nurses had to put a plaster on my leg…I am tired of his behaviour…It only happens when he is drunk* (In depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

In a similar vein, another *de jure* female head from Mnxe village said:

> *Even young ones are now drinking and smoking marijuana and their behavior is not acceptable. Most of them are school dropouts and they have nothing to do than drinking …there is nothing that can keep them busy in Cala* (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

The *de jure* female heads, as well as the *de facto* heads, insisted that the taverns and shebeens should be closed down because of the excessive drinking being done there by youth and male adults.

Amongst the *de jure* heads surveyed in Cala, there were many elderly women who had grandchildren living with them. The grandmothers (over sixty years of age) claimed that their older grandchildren accessed and misused their old age pensions and often demanded their (the grandchildren's) child support grant. The grandmothers were the care givers for these children (in the absence of the parents) and hence were responsible for managing the expenditure of the monthly child grant. In accessing grant funds, the older grandchildren misused these funds and spent it on alcohol and other non-essentials. In this light, one old *de jure* female head said the following:

> *The young ones are a problem. We are not their parents and that's maybe why they do not listen to us. I use their child support grant to pay school fees and sometimes they lie that they are going to school only to hear that they were drinking at a tavern…they are spoiling their future…If you ask them why they are not going to school they will tell you to shut up. Most of the time I lose my money and it is only recently that I found out my grandson* [Thabo] *was stealing the money from the wardrobe and since then I have changed the position* [where the money is kept] (In-depth interview, Lupapasi village, November 2014).

Grandmothers are tasked with a responsibility to take care of the grandchildren but their position is seriously weakened by the abuse they experience in their households. The evidence indicates that these *de jure* female heads are emotionally, physically and psychologically traumatised because of the violence and abuse. And the grandchildren (most of whom are double orphans) do not seem to realise how important their grandmothers are to their current and future lives.

It also became apparent that granddaughters and daughters in *de jure* female-headed households lacked respect for their guardian (grandmother or mother) and regularly sneaked out of the house or simply walked out openly from it to go to the taverns and shebeens. The main reason for this, for the heads, was the absence of a male figure to control the behaviour of youths in the household. The young women went to drinking establishments not merely to drink but quite often for purposes of attracting men and obtaining money from them in exchange for sexual favours. Commercial sex among the young women was in fact a livelihood activity for them (and an income source they controlled entirely) but sex work is deeply despised in Cala. It was also discovered that some of the clients of these young

women included husbands of *de facto* heads and this caused further conflict between them because of infidelity.

The prevalence of drinking places in the Cala communal areas and the associated commercial sex work has a bearing on the spread of the AIDS pandemic. One of the concerned female heads said the following concerning the risky sexual practices of the male youths at a popular tavern called Vukani in Sifonondile village:

> *The children are abusing alcohol too much... Some children have finished matric and did not go further with their studies and can't find work now... so drinking is the business of the day. They* [male youths] *drink with their brothers, uncles and at times fathers…for the whole day…when they are drunk they do unprotected sex and that's why most of our children are dying here* (In-depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

The prevalence of drinking amongst the male (and female) youth is found amongst both the *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households, and it is something with which the female heads are struggling to cope. The fact that it leads to the possibility of being infected by the HIV virus only undermines the capacity of livelihood survival in the long-term, given the potential significance of healthy youth in generating income for their households. As well, caring for the HIV-infected depletes whatever household income exists.

Domestic abuse takes on different forms amongst the *de jure* and *de facto* female-headed households and it is linked to range of other matters: unemployed husbands and fathers, the loss of a sense of masculinity amongst husbands, disrespect for women as heads of households, excessive drinking, sex work, infidelity and the HIV pandemic. Together, these issues lead to growing conflicts and tensions within Cala households which not only have a gender basis to them but also a generational dimension. They also add considerably to the burden of female heads, and this burden has a pronounced emotional element to it. According to the female heads in this study, feelings of isolation and depression are pervasive amongst them, and this contributes to the weakening and ceasing of some livelihood activities on their part and sapping their capacity to tackle the everyday challenges that come their way. Furthermore, some *de facto* female heads revealed that, on a number of occasions, female heads have opted for suicide in response to domestic violence but I could not confirm this. For *de jure* heads, their status as *de jure* heads often arose because of past domestic abuse by

husbands (which led to separation and divorce). Without doubt, domestic violence marks and indeed scars the present lives of the female heads.

Despite all this, what emerged is that the female heads still sought to develop and hold onto relations of cooperation within their household. Female heads did all they could to maintain their households in the context not only of financial and food insecurity but in the face of the trying emotional problems arising from strained intra-household relations. The heads spoke of intra-household cooperation and solidarity as the only solution to deal with the household challenges of domestic abuse, poverty and alcoholism. And they sought to take the lead in ensuring this. One of the *de facto* female heads put it this way:

> *He* [my husband] *used to work and earn a better income that would support the family the whole month but now it is a problem…He is always in search of ways to earn extra income. And I am also working to get some income; my older daughter also helps by doing some domestic work in the village to get income and get food for our children because I can't rely on his efforts alone. If I was getting paid from the age old pension it was better but I am still far from receiving the grant* (In-depth interview, Mnxe village, November 2014).

The female heads claimed that the best solution for resolving all the problems coming their way was to encourage all adult household members to be responsible in seeking some kind of livelihood activity and therefore ensuring joint contribution to household sustenance through a multiplicity of activities. A sixty-two year old *de jure* female head in Sifonondile made a similar point:

> *It is difficult for me to work for long hours now because of my age and frequent illness. I stay with my grandchildren and they strive to get income from doing all sorts of work fetching water and firewood for elderly people in the village. This gives them money and at times they buy groceries... Their sister* [Nathi] *spent eight hours outside home washing clothes and cleaning houses in the village* (In depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Thus forms of intra-household cooperation do exist but it is not an easy task for female heads to ensure that this is sustained over time. In fact, the female head from Sifonondile quoted above added that the money earned by their grandchildren in the main is used for purchasing alcohol. Unless though there is some level of cooperation, it is likely that the female-headed households would disintegrate and become unviable as functioning units of existence.

5.8 Intra-village relations

Cala communal areas are also riddled with conflict between households or at intra-village level. For instance, although female heads were critical for the survival of their families in Cala, it became apparent that they were marginalised in so far as allocation of employment opportunities were concerned, at least with regard to the government's expanded public works programme (EPWP). In this regard, female heads expressed disappointment with their village heads as they claimed that the latter were corrupt in allocating work under the programme and this led to clashes with the traditional leaders. They also claimed that their children and grandchildren were discriminated against in accessing the programme. Additionally, besides the problem with headmen, the female heads argued that other factors inhibited their involvement in the EPWP, including their totem, their church and the ANC. The right totem, the right church and open support for the ANC, they argued, ensured at least potential access to the works programme, a point I illustrate in Figure 5.3. But there was also unanimous agreement among the female heads that the absence of a male figure (husband) was a major disadvantage given the local patriarchal tendencies which generally sideline and marginalise women. As a head from Sifonondile village put it:

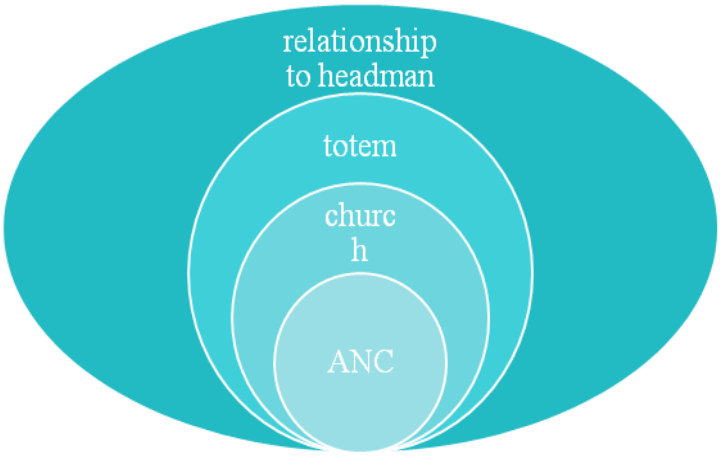
> *We have approached the municipality in Cala concerning the allocation of EPWP jobs in our village but nothing has happened. Families which are friends to the headman you find them having two or three people working for the EPWP whereas other families which deserve to have more than one member employed by the programme are not given the opportunity. This is corruption and the district office is not doing anything to solve that* (In depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

Another female head reiterated this point:

> *We are now tired of the headman who is bribed by other families to offer jobs to their grandsons and daughters…I was personally told that if you need the job, you should agree to pay me* [the headman] *R150 per month as a sign of appreciation. That money I can use it for something else. I have no idea how we can solve this problem and people are afraid of approaching him…if our husbands were still alive maybe they would confront him* (In depth interview, Sifonondile village, November 2014).

The authority of the headman, rooted in a patriarchal bias according to the heads, thus has implications for the livelihoods of female heads.

Figure 5.3: Factors contributing to allocation of EPWP opportunities



Source: Fieldwork, November 2014.

According to female heads in Cala communal areas, inter-household conflict existed because grandsons and sons of female heads were impregnating granddaughters and daughters of other villagers (including other female heads). In the case of a son or grandson of a female head impregnating someone from a village household which was not headed by a female, the degree of conflict and the eventual consequences were particularly severe. In other words, these cases were dealt with differently than cases where the offending son or grandson was from a male-headed household. Traditional authorities were responsible for handling such matters and, again, bias crept in by way of their rulings, according to the female heads. For instance, if the son or grandson of a female head impregnated a female in the village they were obliged to pay damage in terms of livestock (cattle or goats) or money to the female's family through the headman. But, if a daughter or granddaughter of a female head was impregnated, no compensation was necessary or given. Patriarchy thus once again raised its ugly head and thereby disadvantaged in particular the households of *de jure* and *de facto* heads.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter began by discussing in-depth the challenges (including social, economic and political) faced by both *de facto* and *de jure* female heads in Cala communal areas. I argued that the threefold challenges affected female heads' livelihoods directly and indirectly. It became clear that female heads are in a serious predicament of poverty with a significant number of female heads describing their situation as '*ukukhathazeka ngenkinga yangalelo langa*' (taking each day as it comes). But female heads are not submissive to their conditions

of existence and are active (and even proactive) agents in seeking household economic well-being through adaptive and coping mechanisms. I also discussed the intra-household and gendered dynamics of the lives and livelihoods of the Cala female heads and this is where the difference between *de facto* and *de jure* households is most pronounced. *De jure* heads have significant decision-making power at household level whereas, for *de facto* heads, their capacity to make decisions varies and is contingent on negotiations with the husband even when the wife is the main source of household income. In this regard, patriarchy plays a key role. Hence patriarchal norms and practices in Cala communal areas continue to disempower women and specifically female heads and this becomes vividly manifested in cases of domestic violence against women.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This thesis set out to understand and explain the livelihoods of female-headed households in former bantustans (now communal areas) of post-apartheid South Africa, focusing particularly on the former Transkei and, more specifically, the Cala communal villages of Mnxe, Lupapasi and Sifonondile. It is clear from the thesis findings that female heads endure systemic challenges which are beyond their capacity to rectify. Nevertheless, within their structured conditions of existence, they manoeuvre and negotiate a path which seeks to maximise the well-being of their households. The preceding empirical chapters of this thesis, on the one hand, highlighted issues surrounding or related to the contemporary livelihood strategies which female heads employ to sustain a living and, in doing so, the chapters examined how these livelihood activities change according to different circumstances. On the other hand, the chapters also highlighted the resources or assets which are owned, controlled and used by female heads to construct household livelihoods as well as the intra-household dynamics of the female-headed households.

This concluding chapter seeks to amalgamate the arguments contained in these preceding chapters to illuminate more fully the conceptualisation of the livelihoods practiced by female heads in Cala communal areas. It does so as well by drawing upon the theoretical standpoints (namely, the livelihoods framework and feminist perspectives). To that end, I first address how the two empirical chapters speak to the subsidiary goals of the thesis. Following that, I look at how the two theoretical frameworks underpinning this thesis allowed me to fulfil the main thesis objective. I end by considering the implications for development policy and practice arising from the thesis and identify areas for further research. Throughout the chapter, I also outline the contributions of the thesis to existing academic literature.

6.2 Reflections on the Subsidiary Goals of the Thesis

The main goal of this thesis is to *understand* and *explain* the livelihood strategies of rural female-headed households in the former Transkei bantustan in South Africa, more specifically Cala near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape. To fulfil this main goal (or objective), several subsidiary goals were raised, as follows:

1. To identify and analyse the sources of livelihoods and the strategies pursued by female-headed households.
2. To identify the various factors that affect female-headed households' access to and control over resources and the impact of these on livelihoods.
3. To understand the various challenges and coping mechanisms adopted by female-headed households in the face of poverty.
4. To investigate how intra-household, and notably gendered, relations affect distribution of resources, decision making and authority.
5. To identify and examine the diversity of female-headed households in terms of for instance marital status, and how this diversity influences household livelihood activities.

Chapter four of this thesis answered the following subsidiary goals: one, two and five. In relation to the first goal, it was found that female-headed households (both *de jure* and *de facto*) are surviving on a fluctuating mix of agriculturally-based livelihoods and non-agriculturally-based livelihood activities. The study established that the agriculturally-based livelihoods encompassed activities using natural capital (land and forests), and this included homestead gardening and arable fields farming. Livestock keeping was identified as another agricultural livelihood activity, though the levels of livestock holdings varied considerably between households. Non-agricultural activities are absolutely fundamental to the daily lives of female heads, including receiving the old age pension and child support grants, as well as commodity production (and trading) and remittances.

Following on closely from the first goal I revealed, in relation to the second subsidiary goal, that female heads have access to and control over some assets but that, broadly speaking, their asset holdings are exceedingly low and this detrimentally impacts on their capacity to construct and pursue meaningful livelihood strategies. Having said that, in displaying considerable ingenuity in a variety of ways, female heads utilise whatever is at their disposal to gain income and to put food on the table. Over and above everything, the conclusion is that female heads live vulnerable and insecure lives which also undermine their human dignity.

In terms of the fifth subsidiary goal, relating to differentiation between the female-headed households, chapter four uncovered difference as encapsulated in the notion of thriving, struggling and surviving households, with the slotting of households into one of these

categories depending on the sources and forms of livelihood trajectories. Two points are important in this regard. First of all, particular households move in-between categories over time and, secondly, in some ways the better-off thriving households are able to bolster their households by taking advantage of the desperation of specifically struggling households.

In chapter five, I addressed the third and fourth subsidiary goals. With regard to the third goal, I examined in detail the diverse economic, social and political challenges faced by female heads in the Cala communal villages of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi. However, in doing so, I argued that both the *de facto* and *de jure* female heads are not submissive to their conditions of existence, but are active agents who devise and deploy coping or adaptive mechanisms in facing their vulnerability and challenges. Overall, though, the combination of the three challenges presents a major obstacle which jeopardises the already struggling livelihood activities in which female heads are engaging. In struggling against their vulnerabilities, they simply struggle within vulnerability and not beyond it.

The fourth goal raises questions about intra-household dynamics of both *de facto* and *de jure* female heads. Decision-making in the *de jure* female-headed households is in the main in the hands of the female heads because of the absence of the husband (and father) whereas, in the *de facto* female headed households, husbands were the main and final decision-makers despite the fact that some of them earned less than their wives and were absent for long periods of time. Patriarchal practices still prevail in these communal areas and, as such, the decision-making powers of *de facto* female heads are undermined. Further, given the dearth of unemployment in South Africa and particularly in Cala, men's traditional status as household breadwinners has been questioned and men sometimes seek to retain the *status quo* through domestic violence.

The empirical chapters of the thesis reflect the realities of how rural people in communal areas, and particularly female-headed households, bear the burden and brunt of the failures of post-apartheid economic and political restructuring, failures which came out clearly in chapter three on the political economy of land. While some of the empirical findings of this thesis are not novel, my study contributes new empirical data on female-headed household livelihoods in contemporary rural South Africa and specifically in former bantustans. My study is particularly crucial given the sheer prevalence of female-headed households, either

de jure or *de facto*, in post-apartheid South Africa. A range of other empirical studies, in both urban and rural spaces, highlight women's participation in informal and formal employment, the activities of female-headed households in contending with HIV and AIDS-related hardships, causes of vulnerability in female-headed households, and the socio-economic determinants of poverty amongst female-headed households (Francis 2000, Siedman 1993, Sekhampu 2012, Schatz et al. 2011, Rogan 2011). These are all important studies and they overlap with many of the themes raised in my thesis. But, as a general tendency, current studies do not place sufficient weight (in terms of empirical evidence) on the social location and day-to-day experience of women – as women – and thus on the multiplicity and depth of challenges that women face – including, in my case, in the former bantustans.

6.3 Theoretical Insights – Addressing the Main Thesis Goal

In this light, I move to the theoretical insights of the thesis by discussing the two interconnected theoretical frameworks for the thesis: the sustainable livelihoods framework and feminist perspectives. From my perspective, and as a broad theoretical point, it seems clear that livelihood frameworks must by necessity be infused with a gendered perspective and not added onto when and if deemed necessary.

The basis of this thesis is grounded around the sustainable livelihoods framework in that the main objective was to examine household-based livelihoods. From the onset the framework argues that, in order for meaningful livelihoods to be constructed, there is need for full utilisation of available capitals or assets. Different capitals (i.e. human, social, physical, natural and financial) are deemed to underpin livelihoods at the level of the individual or household, but also involving inter-household relationships. Following the framework, it therefore becomes necessary to understand how rural people utilise these capitals to pursue a living and, in the process, to raise questions around vulnerability, challenges and coping mechanisms in the process. And my analysis in the thesis did just this, by demonstrating the diverse ways that female-headed households in the Cala communal villages of Mnxe, Sifonondile and Lupapasi make use of different assets for household livelihoods in the face of troubling circumstances not of their own making.

In terms of the livelihoods framework, I raise the following four critical comments. These comments do not distract from making use of the framework, but they do call for some revision and more significant reworking of the framework.

First of all, the notion of sustainability is hugely problematic and does not seem to be of any particular value in using the framework. A livelihood, with reference to the framework, is said to be sustainable if a household can recuperate from crises of different kinds without undermining the asset base for future generations. In a context where livelihood asset portfolios are minimal and constantly subject to threats, as in the Cala communal villages, crisis is not the exception but the norm, and sustainability is simply not within the capacity of these households. In the case of Cala, the coping and adaptive mechanisms of households are suboptimal and do not go beyond the vicious cycles of poverty, vulnerability and un-sustainability.

This relates to the second point, namely, that the framework needs to more forcefully address the ways in which locally-based household livelihoods are structured and undermined by the broader agrarian and national political economies of a country (in my case, South Africa) and indeed global restructuring, something I sought to do by way of chapter three of the thesis. If this is not pursued with vigour, then there is a strong possibility that household agency and capacity will be over-privileged in sociological analyses and that, quite possibility, the failures on the part of households to construct meaningful livelihoods will be understood as failures intrinsic to the households themselves.

The third point though in a sense provides a counterweight to this argument. I have repeatedly shown and emphasised that Cala female heads enact agency and this is expressed though the choices they make, the strategies they devise and the activities they pursue. In other words, they are not victims of structures, as structures do not only constrain but at times enable by providing opportunities for action. Admittedly, in Cala, female heads act within existing structures but there are signs that they are seeking to act against such structures, including challenging in discreet and sometimes direct ways the prevailing system of patriarchy which so dramatically shapes their lives. At times, the opportunities available within structures (such as the vulnerability context) may be of advantage to some households and not to others, as when (in Cala) thriving households accumulate assets (including livestock) at the expense of struggling households. Overall, I deployed the framework in a manner which is sensitive not only to ‘structure’ but also to ‘agency’, in recognising that the female heads are not ‘trapped’ in structures but seek to negotiate and manoeuvre their way in and through these structures.

Finally, the argument about structure and agency points to the importance of ensuring a gendered perspective ingrained within the very constitution of the livelihoods framework which, as it currently stands, is gender blind. It is simply not enough to add feminism to an existing analytical framework (to tack it on so to speak). The patriarchal system is fundamental to the contemporary social order and all lives, of women and men, exist within this system. Patriarchy enables some and constrains others but, even for those constrained, there are spaces within patriarchy (as an always incomplete system of domination) which within to manoeuvre. For Cala, the importance of patriarchy cannot be overemphasised, especially given the presence of so-called traditional authorities. For example, the rights of female-headed households (and mainly for *de jure* female heads) in terms of access to land is invariably compromised and jeopardised under locally-based patriarchal arrangements, and this has clear implications for livelihood security. To preserve male supremacy, as Walby (1990:20) argues, "women labour power, women reproduction, women sexuality, mobility and property as well as economic resources" are under patriarchal control. This is the lived reality of women in the rural areas of the former bantustans in South Africa and, without a feminist standpoint, this reality will remain misunderstood and under-analysed.

6.4 Contributions to Development Policy and Practice

This thesis provides knowledge and insights that might prove useful for government policy makers and development practitioners in the field of livelihoods in South Africa and beyond. The findings of this thesis could thus inform the actions of practitioners (for example, in non-governmental organisations) and their responses to circumstances that female heads are facing in Cala communal areas and promote development programmes and projects which facilitate more firmly-footed rural livelihoods. At a policy level, the thesis provides empirical evidence which supports existing literature (particularly rural livelihoods studies about the former bantustans) which comprehensively shows the ongoing subordination and marginalisation of rural communal areas twenty years after the end of apartheid. This speaks to the continued existence of the grand apartheid spatial-racial geography of the country which the current government has failed to tackle in any meaningful way.

My thesis, based on the recognition that female heads are not victims but are innovative and ingenious agents, invariably encourages participation of rural people in deciding what effectively works for them. This entails the encouragement of a new *modus operandi* which genuinely involves deeply-rooted participatory development approaches, whether in relation

to non-governmental organisations or national, provincial or local governments. Top-down approaches are unlikely to offer relevant development solutions in large part because they fail to recognise and appreciate the very problems encountered locally by for instance female heads in Cala. It becomes critical then, as a first step, to understand the lived experiences and everyday understandings of female heads in Cala before any development policy is formulated and prior to the implementation of a development programme.

Of course, as highlighted, of particular importance in development initiatives would be the question of gender and patriarchy. The evidence presented in this thesis identifies structural inequalities and other factors which constrain access to and control over assets for women and specifically female heads such that, in development, women-specific barriers need to be clearly identified during the conception, design and planning process if implementation is to have any meaningful impact on the lives of women. Identifying and addressing gender-based constraints to resource access (including land, credit and physical assets) can lead to a virtuous development cycle where female head's increased livelihood opportunities may lead to improved overall development outcomes. In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, a significant barrier for female heads in Cala is patriarchy as manifested in the ongoing chieftainship system. Regrettably, as a barrier, this will only be subject to change insofar as the racial geography of the country is fundamentally restructured.

6.5 Areas for Future Research

In terms of areas for further research, an issue which emerges from the thesis is the complicated question of the concept or concepts to be used in capturing the world and lives of households in former bantustans. Given the livelihood activities of female heads in Cala (which are strongly non-agriculturally-based), it would seem inappropriate to speak of them as for instance small-scale farmers or any other concept which is rooted in the relationship to land. Such a conceptualisation fell outside the parameters of the thesis, but the thesis does raise the complexity and diversity of rural livelihoods with which any conceptualisation would need to grapple.

Secondly, though the thesis provides a nuanced understanding of the livelihoods of female heads in Cala, the empirical work underpinning the thesis is mainly synchronic. A more longitudinal study, with greater historical depth, is important in tracing the ebbs and flows of

the lives of female heads. This would ensure, additionally, that the specificities about the current situation are properly identified and analysed, at both household and village levels.

Thirdly, another area which provides a fertile ground for further research is an exploration of the meaning of 'head of household' with communal areas such as Cala. Headship brings to the fore critical points about power, authority and control at household level but, based on the findings of this thesis (at least the case of the *de facto* heads), headship is likely negotiated and contested within the household. Pursuing this further would invariably entail a study not just of women but also of men, and this speaks to the broader issue that feminist studies is about gender and not simply women.

Finally, the thesis makes no definitive claim to representation in the sense that the livelihoods of female heads in areas of former bantustans beyond Cala are the same as those of female heads in Cala. Of course, given the broad similarities (such as chieftainship systems) across any diversity existing in the former bantustans, there is strong grounds for arguing that female heads elsewhere face similar circumstances and challenges to those of female heads in Cala. But this should not undermine the importance of comparative work (along with the historical work raised above) either within or between former bantustans. This would undoubtedly lead to the identification of similarities, but it would also bring to the fore how the socio-economic, political and broadly geographical location impinges on female heads access, control and ownership of various resources.

Clearly, then, significant research is still required on the former bantustans and specifically with reference to women and female heads. It is hoped though that this thesis has made a contribution no matter how small to the existing literature and also stimulates further research on related topics.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

RURAL LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN THE FORMER BANTUSTANS OF POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF CALA

DATE OF COLLECTION	
QUESTIONNAIRE NUMBER	
TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD	
VILLAGE NAME	

a) BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Name of the respondent……

1. Age of respondent (Check **X** only one)

A. 0-20	**B.** 21-30	**C.** 31-40	**D**. 41-50	**E.** 51-60	**F.** 60-70	**G**. 70+

2. Type of household (Check **X** only one)

A. De jure female head		**B.** De facto female head	

De jure= no male is present at any given time
De facto=the male head is away from the homestead

3. What circumstances led to be one of de jure or de facto (check **X** only one)

A. Divorced ☐
B. Widowed ☐
C. Husband is a migrant worker ☐

4. Are you the head of the household Yes=1 ☐ ☐ No=2

3. Highest educational level attained by household head.

A. Illiterate ☐
B. Primary school ☐
C. Matric ☐
D. Tertiary ☐

4. Number of people in the household with the following education

	1	2	3	4	5
A. illiterate					
B. Primary school					
C. Matric					
D. Tertiary					

5. What is your household type? 1=Hut 2=brick3=shack4=other

A. Hut		**B**. brick		**C**. Shack		**D**. other	

6. Is the house in good condition? **A**. Good=1 **B**. Fair=2 **C**. Poor=3

7. Is the household enough for your needs? **A**. Yes=1
B. No=2

8. If NO specify the problems you face? **X** the most appropriate problem
A.1=weather **B**. 2=safety **C**. 3=other (specify)

9. How many people are in the household? (Check **X** only one)

	1	2	3	4	5	6+
A. Number of people in household						
B. Number of children						
C. Number of men in household						
D. Number of women in household						
E. Number of elderly in the household						
F. How many contribute labour to farming or other income activities						

10. Are there any absent household members? (Check **X** only one)

A.1		**B**.2-3		**C**. 4-5		**D**. 6+	

11. Why are they absent? (Check **X** only one)

A. Seasonal labour migration	

B. Staying with family elsewhere	
C. Education	
D. Married somewhere	

12. How many people are employed?

A. 1=Formal employment
B. 2=Informal employment

b) LIVELIHOODS AND STRATEGIES

1. What is your livelihood activity (Check **X** and its possible to choose multiple answers)

Livelihood Activity		Seasonality-when is it carried out	Estimated income per /month	Estimated income per/ year	Rank income sources based on est. amount (1=most…)	Who is involved in the activity
A. Agriculture-selling crops						
B. Remittances						
C. Wages from jobs						
D. No income						
E. Social welfare	**i**. Foster Grant					
	ii. Child Support					
	iii. Old Pension					
	iv. Disability Grant					
F. Small business						
G. Casual jobs						
H. Sale of livestock						
I. Trading and self						

employment						

Involved in activity>1=husband 2= Wife 3= both spouses 4= son 5= daughter 6=other (specify)
Estimated income per/month> (1)=less R1000 (2)=R1000-R2000 (3)=R3000-R4000 (4)=R5000-R6000 (5)R6000+
Estimated income per/year> (1)=less R12000 (2)=R13000-24000 (3)=R25000-R48000 (4)=R49000-R73000 (5)=R

730

00+

2. How much do you need to support your household per month? (Check **X** only one)

A. (1)=less R1000 ☐
B. (2)=R1000-R2000 ☐
C. (3)=R3000-R4000 ☐
D. (4)=R5000-R6000 ☐
E. (5)=R6000+ ☐

3. Indicate the estimated costs of the household on various items per month in (R)ands

Type of Expenditure	Estimated costs per month	Rank in terms of importance	Rank Expenditure that has increased sharply
A. Groceries			
B. Consumer goods (clothes etc)			
C. Health care			
D. Education			
E. Education			
F. Energy (electricity, gas, firewood etc)			
G.Transport			
H. Payments of accounts (fashion shops, funeral cover, medical aid, life insurance, borrowed credit loans)			
I. Savings for future			
J. Other			

(1)=less R1000 (2)=R1000-R2000 (3)=R3000-R4000 (4)=R5000-R6000 (5)=R6000+
Rank of importance/Expenditure on a scale of 1-10 that is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 [1-Highest]

4. Is your overall income per month enough to cater for the household expenditures? If NO answer [Q 5]

A. Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

5. Why is the income NOT enough, **X** the appropriate one (only one)

	X only one answer please
A. Increase in prices	
B. Less income available in the household	
C. No stable employment	
D. Household size is too much	
E. Death of a breadwinner	
F. Too much needs that need money	

6. Do you consider your household under the following categories?

A.1=improving		**B**.2=coping		**C.**3=declining	

c) RESOURCES AVAILABILITY

Natural Capital (Check **X** only one)

1. Do you have access to a garden? **A**. Yes ☐
B. No

2. How big is the garden? **A**. 0-1ha **B.**2-3 ha ☐ **C.** 4-5ha **D**. 5ha
[ha=hectares]

3. What are the reasons cultivating at homestead?

Reasons for cultivating garden	X the appropriate one (only one)
A. consumption	
B. selling	
C. Donating to family, friends, neighbours	
D. Cultural value	
E. Improve food access	
F. improve food supply and nutrition	

4. If you produce to sell (crops and fruits) approximately how much is earned per month
A. Less R100 **B.** ☐ R101-200 ☐ **C.**R201- 300 ☐ ☐ ☐
D. R301-400 **E.** R401+

5. What kind of crops do you produce?

	X every crop grown	Fruit tree	**X** every tree available
A. Beans		Orange	
B. Groundnuts		apple	
C. Pumpkins		peach	
D. Spinach		lemon	
E. Tomatoes		pawpaw	
F. Cabbages		guava	
G. Onions		mango	
H. Maize		banana	
I. Other			

6. How many hours are spent per week on farming activities?

A. Less 1hr		**B**. 1-2hrs		**C.** 2-3hrs		**D.** 4-5hrs		**E.** 5hrs +	

7. What is the importance of crop production? **X** only one, the most applicable

	Importance of crop production	**X** only one
A	supplement income	
B	improve food supply and nutrition	
C	improve food access	
D	culture obligation	
E	no alternative	

8. Do you have access to your own land (fields) besides the garden? **A.** Yes=1 ☐
B. No=2

9. How big is the field (s)? **A.**0-5ha ☐ ☐ **B.**6- 10ha ☐ ☐ **C.**11-15ha ☐
D.16ha-20 **E.**20ha+

10. What are your main sources of seeds? If multiple sources, *choose the main source*

A.1 = retain home-grown seed, **B.** 2 = seed crop **C.** 3= NG0 **D.** 4=Government, **E.** 6=Purchase **F.** 7= Borrow.

11. How did you acquire the land (Check **X** only one)

Method of Acquisition	**X** only one
A. Formally allocated	
B. Inheritance	
C. Invasion	
D. Purchase	

12. Have you ever missed cultivation during a main season, what are the reasons?

	A. Primary (1st most)	**B.** Secondary (2nd most)	**C.** Tertiary (3rd most)
Have you ever missed cultivation during a main season, what are the reasons			

1=Lack labour 2=Lack seed 3=Lack draught power 4=Lack rain 5=Fallow 6=Lack fertilizer

13. Have you received any agricultural advice? **A.** Yes= 1 **B.** No= 2

14. If YES who provided this agricultural advice (check the most applicable *see codes*)
A. 1=Agriculture Extension Officers **B.** 2=NGOs **C.** 3= Neighbour **D.** 4= Community Leaders

15. Do you use any chemicals/fertilizers? **A.** Yes=1 **B.** No=2

16. If NO what is the reason (*see codes*)
A. 1=Cannot afford it B**.** 2=Not available **C.** 3=Don't know how to use it **D.** 4 = Prefer not to use

17. Does the household have livestock/Animals?

Livestock/animals	**X** multiple answers	number	Who owns the livestock
A. Cattle			
B. Sheep			
C. Goat			
D. Chicken			
E. Donkey			
F. Horse			
G. Pigs			
H. Ducks			

I. Guinea fowls			
J. Rabbits			

1=husband 2= Wife 3= both spouses 4= son 5= daughter 6=other (specify)

18. What are the reasons for keeping livestock?

Type of livestock/animal	Tick the most appropriate use	How much is an item when exchanged for money value (R) for item chosen	Average amount per month (R)	Reason for selling (codes below)
A. cattle				
B. sheep				
C. goat				
D. chicken				
E. donkey				
F. horse				
G. pigs				
H. ducks				
I. Guinea fowls				
J. rabbits				

Usage>(1)=milk(2)meat (slaughter)(3)=hides(4)=cash sales(5)=savings(6)=manure(7)=draught power(8)=transport(9)=social obligation
Money Value> (1)=less R1000 (2)=R1000-R2000 (3)=R3000-R4000 (4)=R5000-R6000 (5)=R6000+
Reasons for selling> (1)=No longer needed (2)=Pay daily expenses (3)=Buy food (4)=Pay medical expense (5)= Pay for school fees

19. Does the household collect resources outside the village (firewood, berries, plants etc)? X the appropriate one

A.Yes		**B.** No		**C.** Sometimes	

20. What are the purposes of these natural resources? **X** the appropriate one

Purpose	X the most appropriate	Amount per month if sold (R)	Amount per annum if sold (R)
A. Indigenous wood for fencing and fuel			
B. Wild fruits for consumption and sale			
C. Wild herbs for consumption and sale			
D. Medicinal plants			
E. Thatch grass			

21. Are there places where you cannot collect the natural resources?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

22. If yes to [Q 14], what factors affect your usage of natural resources?

Factors	**X** appropriate (only one)
A. Availability	
B. Accessibility	
C. Institutional control	
D. Personal and cultural preferences	
E. Population densities	

Financial Capital (Check **X** only one)

1. Do you have family member how work in the towns or cities?

A.Yes		**B.** No	

If YES answer the following applicable questions

2. How many members work in the towns or cities?

A.1		**B.**2		**C**.3		**D.**4		**E.**5		**F.** 6+	

3. Of those how work in the towns or cities, how many remit back to the village

A.1		**B.**2		**C.**3		**D.**4		**E.**5		**F.**6+	

4. How much is remitted back to the village?

A. (1)=less R1000		**B.** (2)=R1000-R2000		**C.** (3)=R3000-R4000		**D.** 4)=R5000-R6000		**E.** (5)=R6000+	

5. How many in the household work in the village or nearby place (townships etc)?

A.1		**B.**2		**C.**3		**D.**4		**E.**5		**F.**6+	

6. How much is earned (relating to Q 4)

A.(1)=less R1000		**B.** (2)=R1000-R2000		**C.** (3)=R3000-R4000		**D.** 4)=R5000-R6000		**E.** (5)=R6000+	

7. Do you make any savings?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2		**C.** Sometimes	

8. Do you have access to loans/credit?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

9. If YES to [Q 7] what are the major credit providers in your area?

Credit Provider	**X** appropriate one (only one)
A. Formal credit providers e.g banks, registered cash loaners etc	
B. Informal credit providers e.g not registered institutions, individuals etc	

10. Are you part of a savings group (stokvel etc)

A.Yes=1		**B.**No=2	

Human Capital (Check **X** only one)

1. Number of people in the house who can read and write any language

A.1		**B.**2		**C.**3		**D.**4		**E.**5		**F.** 6+	

2. Do the children have access to education?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

3. Do you have access to health e.g. hospitals and clinics

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

4. How many people in the house have acquired skills through the following?

Skills	X appropriate one (only one)	number
A. Formal training		
B. Informal training		
C. General knowledge		
D. No skills at all		

5. How many in this family cannot work (elderly, sick, education etc)

A.1		**B.**2		**C.**3		**D.**4		**E.**5		**F.**6+	

Physical Capital (Check X only one)

1. Productive assets

Type	**A.** Owned Yes =1or No=2	**B.** Number owned	**C.** Owner of asset
Hand tools			
A. hoes			
B. axes			
C. wheelbarrow			
D. Knapsack sprayers			
Animal driven			
E. plough			
F. Cultivator			
G. harrows			
H. planter			
I. yoke			
J. Scotch carts			
ridger			
Power driven			
K. tractor			
L. plough			
M. Disc harrow			
N. Water pump			
O. borehole			
P. Taped water			
Q. Vehicle (any)			

Owner of assets (1)=husband (2)=wife (3)=both spouses (4)=son (5) =daughter (6)= joint family ownership

2. Do you have access to the listed above assets?

A.Yes=1		**B .**No=2		**C.** Sometimes=3	

3. Non Productive assets

Type	**A.** Owned Yes =1or No=2	**B.** Number owned	**C.** Owner of asset
A. Television			
B. radio			
C. bicyle			
D. cellphone			

E. fridge			
F. Cooking stove, gas, electric			

Owner of assets (1) =husband (2) =wife (3) =both spouses (4) =son (5) =daughter (6) = joint family ownership

4. Do you sell productive and non productive assets in times crisis

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2		**C.** Sometimes=3	

5. Are there years that you were forced to sell much more possessions than usually?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

6. Have y our possessions increased, decreased or stayed the same over time?

A.Yes=1		**B.**No=2		**C.**3=Stayed same	

7. Do you have access to infrastructure?

Access	**X** multiple answers
A. Transport	
B. Secure shelter and buildings	
C. Adequate water supply	
D. Toilet system	
E. Sanitation and clean affordable energy	

8. Is your household connected to electricity supply network?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

9. What source of energy do you use for cooking?

Source	**A.** X the appropriate ones	**B.** cooking	**C.**lighting	**D.** If answer is fuelwood-who is responsible for collecting	**E.** If answer is fuel wood-how much time is needed to collect
A. Charcoal					
B. Kerosene					
C. Electricity					
E. Gas					

(LPG)					
F. Fuelwood					
G. candles					
H. generator					
I. Other					

(1)=husband (2)=wife (3)=both spouses (4)=son (5) =daughter (6)= joint family ownership (7)=purchased

Time= (1)=less 30mins (2)=30-1hr(3)= 1hr-2hr(4)=2-3hr(5) =4hrs +

10. What is the primary source of water? (Drinking, cooking, washing) (*see codes*)

1=tap 2=borehole 3=deep well 4=shallow well 5=family well 6=river 7=unprotected well

11. What type of latrine does your household use? (*see codes*)

1=No latrine available 2=Blair latrine with hand washing facility 3=Blair latrine, no hand washing 4=Bucket system

Social Capital (Check **X** only one)

1. Relatives in village and assistance

	Yes=1	No=2
A. Do you have relatives in the village?		
B. Do you help each other with farm or any other work?		
C. Do you give or receive food to/from these relatives?		
D. Do you give or receive cash to/f rom these relatives		

2. Have these forms of mutual aid (referring to Q 1) increased=1, decreased=2 stayed the same overtime=3

A. Increased		**B.** Decreased		**C.** Stayed the same over time?	

3. Relatives outside the village and assistance

	Yes=1	No=2
A. Do you have relatives outside the village? (of Nonaliti or KwaNdindwa)		
B. Do you help each other with farm and/or other work?		
C. Do you give or receive food to/from these relatives?		
D. Do you give or receive cash to/f rom these relatives?		

4. Have these forms of mutual aid increased=1, decreased=2 stayed the same overtime=3

A. Increased		**B.** Decreased		**C.** Stayed the same over time?	

5. Have your household received any assistance from (NGO, church etc)

	A. Yes=1	**B.** No=2	**C.** Sometimes=3	**D.**Frequency	**E.** Type of assistance
A. Church					
B. NGO					
C. well-wishers					
D. CBO					

Frequency>1=once a month 2=twice a month 3=once per 6months 4=once a month
Assistance>1=food 2=money 3=clothes/blankets

6. During the past 4 months, did you or any member of your household borrow money?

A.Yes=1		No=2	

7. If you borrowed money, what were the reasons to borrow money? (*see codes*)

A) Primary (1st Most)	**B**) Secondary (2nd Most)	**C**) Tertiary (3rd Most)
1 = Food 2 = Health care 3 = Funeral 4 = Social event 5 = Avoid selling assets 6 = Agriculture inputs 7 = School fees 8=Pay Debt		

8. If you borrowed money, from whom did you borrow money? (Check **ALL** that apply)
A.1=Relative/Friend 2= **B.**2=Money Lender **C**.3=Savings Group **D.**4= Micro Finance Institute
E. 5=Bank

d) DECISION MAKING, AUTHORITY AND CONFLICT

1. Are you involved in decision making with regard to the following?

	A. Yes=1	**B.**No=2	**C.**Sometimes=3
A. Crop production			
B. Livestock			
C. Expenditure of different items of the households			
D. Investments			
E. Savings			
F. Consumption of the household			

2. Are you involved in decision making with regard to selling livestock, crop produce and various assets

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2		**C.** Sometimes=3	

3. Following the above Questions, who then makes the final decision making for the household?
1=husband 2= Wife 3= both spouses 4= son 5= daughter 6=joint household decision

4. Do you experience any conflict in the household?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2		**C.** Sometimes=3	

5. If YES to [Q 4] who will be involved in conflict. **X** the appropriate one (only one)

A.1=husband & wife		**B.** 2=son & daughter		**C.** 3=husband & son		**D.** 4=husband & daughter		**E.** 5=wife and son	
F. Wife & daughter									

6. What cause the conflict in the household? **X** the most appropriate one

	X only one
A. Lack of assets/resources	
B. Lack of unemployment	
C. Inequality between members of household	
D. Distribution of roles and duties between different members of the household	
E. Persistence of poverty	

e) LAND AND GENDER

1. Do you own any piece of land?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

2. If NO to [Q 1] do you know of any women in the community who own land

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2	

3. If YES to [Q 2] what is their marital status?

A. divorced=1		**B.** widowed=2		**C.** Married=3	

4. Do women receive any services to use land productively?

A.Yes=1		**B.** No=2		**C.** Sometimes=3	

5. For the following statements, please **X** the number that best represents your opinion by using the following key:

1- SD - Strongly disagree
2- D - Disagree
3- UD -Undecided
4- A - Agree
5- SA - Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5
A. Chiefs/headmen have influence on how land and resources are allocated in the community level					
B. Gender/Sex has an effect on the access to land and resources at household and community level					
C. Women participate in matters that affect them (land, etc)					
D. Women always experience problems/barriers when it comes to accessing land					
E. Does women's suppression to own land increase their vulnerability					
F. Land/Resources in communities are distributed according to sexual orientation					
G. Women's call to equal access , control and ownership of land is suppressed by male counterparts					
H. chiefs/headman only serve masculine interests/favours men interests					

f) CHALLENGES/PROBLEMS/FACED BY HOUSEHOLDS

1. What are the immediate challenges that you face as a household? **X** the most appropriate

	X only one
A. Lack of income	
B. Lack of food	
C. Lack of employment	
D. Theft	
E. Insecurity from male counterparts in the village	
F. Lack of credit	
G. Animals destroying crop produce	

2. What are the long term challenges that you face as a household? **X** the most appropriate

A. Lack of land to cultivate	
B. Lack of employment	

C. Lack of income	
D. Water	
E. Lack of food	
F. Skills	

APPENDIX 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW GUIDE

RURAL LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN THE FORMER BANTUSTANS OF POST- APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF CALA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your marital status? [de jure or de facto]
2. if de jure, what circumstances led you to be one.
3. if married does your husband stay at homestead or stays where he works
4. where does the husband work
5. Who is the breadwinner of the household (and WHY)
6. Are they absent members of the household besides the husband and WHY are they absent?
7. Do these members help you with any assistance and WHAT assistance.
8. can you describe the quality of your household [in terms of good, poor, better] and WHY

LIVELIHOODS AND STRATEGIES

9. What sort of livelihood activities do you engage in to survive? And WHAT motivated you to engage in
10. Among these activities which one is your main source of income and WHY?
11. Aside from this/these activities are there any other major sources of income.
12. Has the number of income sources increased/decreased for the past years and WHY?
13. What are the reasons behind reliance on these activities?
14. How are the livelihoods organized, diversified and maintained at one specific period of time?
15. What role do household members play in carrying out various activities? [Probe on roles by father, sons, daughters, extended family or even neigbhours]
16. Who decides and invest money on a certain livelihood activity.
17. Is the money you get monthly or annually enough to cater for your needs?
18. If NO what is it that the money is failing to meet?
19. Can you describe how you spend the income you get from these activities? [expenditure]

20. What are the major items that the household income is spent on
21. Can you describe how your livelihoods have sustained your household and how significant are they.
22. Are you satisfied with the present livelihood in the village and why
23. What are the major challenges affecting your livelihood activities.
24. how do you overcome the challenges and how effective has this been
25. To what extent are the challenges affecting you and do you think they can be overcomed?
26. How do you foresee the households‟ future situation to be like in ten years time (improving or

    worsening) and why?

RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

27. What kind of assets do you own (financial, natural, social, physical and human)? [make you sure every assets is discussed]
28. can you describe how you access these assets?
29. Among these resources which one is the most valuable to you and WHY?
30. Which one of the resources do you rely on for your daily activities?
31. What sort of problems do you encounter in accessing these resources? [probe on the issue of institutional constrains, availability, accessibility etc]
32. Does everyone [particularly female heads] have equal access to the assets in the community?
33. Do you get any kind of support from relatives, neighbours and family members outside
34. Can you describe the kind of support that they offer [prove to any kind of support rendered be it goods, services, emotional etc]
35. What is the overall significance of such support?
36. Do you receive any kind of support from the state, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, burial societies, stokvels etc [probe on how these came about and how the household got involved] [names and their numbers are essential]
37. What kind of support or assistance do they give [probe on the each and every support rendered]

38. Can you describe the significance of support or assistance for the household?

39. What other issues do the NGOs, CBOs, church focus on?

DECISION MAKING, AUTHORITY AND CONFLICT

40. Are you involved in decision making in the household?

41. If NO WHY are you not involved in decision making?

42. If YES Can you describe what kind of decisions do you make and WHY

43. Can you describe WHAT happens when you make a decision you are not supposed to make, WHAT are the implications

44. Do you experience conflict in the household, happens between who? And WHAT causes the conflict [probe on the conflict in de facto and de jure households]

45. How is the conflict resolved [probe in both de jure and de facto]

46. How is income and time distributed in the household between especially those with disposable income.

47. can you describe what kind of conflict is found outside household (community)

48. How is this conflict resolved and by WHO [probe on the channels followed]

LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION

49. Do you have access to land and if YES how did you acquire the land

50. Can you describe how you balance out growing crops and other livelihood activities [off farms activities] which one take more preference?

51. Which one [between farm and off-farm] brings more money?

52. What is the major source of food in your household?

53. What are the crops that you produce [and for what purpose]

54. Do you produce enough for the household consumption?. What significance does it have to the household.

55. How long does it last before the next harvest?

56. What are the major challenges affecting your production

57. How do you overcome the challenges affecting your production and how effective has this been

58. Do you keep livestock [what types and what for?]

59. What do you feel about land access in your village? [probe on patriarchy]

60. How have you tried to organize yourselves in order to lobby relevant authorities to assist you for the issues you need assistance with?

TRIBAL AUTHORITIES AND LIVELIHOODS

61. What kind of relations exist between you and the induna or chief [insist on the positive and negative relations]

62. What kind of resources does the induna or chief control in your village/community? In your own opinion why are there restrictions/ what are the reasons for restrictions. *** hint/probe on land rights, natural resources

63. Does the induna or chief interfere with your livelihoods?. What livelihoods are mostly affected by such interference?

64. How do you cope with such interference?

APPENDIX 3: LIFE HISTORY GUIDELINE

LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES OF FEMALE-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN THE FORMER BANTUSTANS OF POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE OF CALA

1. Can you give an account of yourself [hint on year born, where, educational level, and when the respondent got married ?]

2. An account of your work history if you were employed before or the various activities that you were or you are engaged in that ensure your living. [starting with most important to the least one's]

3. Have your sources of income changed over time [compare with presence or absence of a male breadwinner]. What may be the causes of such changes

4. Give an account include that various assets that you have accumulated in your life time and how these have been helping you to meet the life needs

5. Give an account of life experience when the spouse was still alive/present [de jure], what challenges have you encountered since the departure of the spouse [what are the major challenges]

6. Can you give an account including the various assets that you have accumulated in your life time and how these have been helping you to meet the life needs

7. Can you indicate the various people or organizations [NGOs, CBOs, FBO's ect] that have been offering their services to you and indicate how that has been beneficial to you.

8. What do you understand about land ownership in the village [particularly women having tenure rights], How does ownership and not ownership of land influence livelihoods

9. Can you give a description of how you relate with your [induna and chief] a). Does the herdman and chief have influence on the livelihood activities [insist on the positive and negative influence and how it enhance and affect the livelihoods] *** land, tenure rights, natural resource access, grazing space for livestock, wood for fuel, grass for thatching, medicinal plants. b) does the induna or chief determine which people in the village benefit from any activity under his control (agric projects etc).

10. Can you give an account of a time when the induna or chief consulted with the community members and what was the matter in consultation.

11. What are the immediate challenges and long term challenges that you face? [What do you think are the causes of such problems?]

12. What are the three main coping strategies if any, to counter both the immediate and long term challenges [insist on the positive and negative coping strategies].

APPENDIX 4: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINE

1. What are the livelihood strategies commonly practiced in this village? And point out the ones you think are very significant for the day to day running of the household

2. What are the differences between livelihoods of the de jure and de facto household? And if they are differences what can be the causes of the differences.

3. What kind of capitals [natural, social, physical, human and financial] do you own as a community and those not as a community and what influence does these have on your life.

4. What kind of assistance do you render to each other [when and how] what is the importance of this assistance

5. Can you give a brief account of your life in the village [is it good or bad-if either way WHY]

6. Are women involved in the decision making of matters affecting the community [if YES or NO=WHY]

7. Can you detail the overall owning of land by women in the village and do they have title deeds to the land or belong to someone?. What is the importance of owning land in your women right.

8. Can you give a description of how you relate with your [induna and chief] a). Does the herdman and chief have influence on the livelihood activities [insist on the positive and negative influence and how it enhance and affect the livelihoods]

9. What are the challenges that you face in your households and the village. In the account give the most immediate challenges and why they are most pressing.

10. What coping mechanisms do households and village at large adopt in countering the varies challenges [insist on the negative and positive coping strategies]