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**The Impact of Lesotho's Male Migrant Labour Economy
on Rural Basotho Women**

Sindile A. Moitse

A Thesis in the Department of Sociology

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

October 1992

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ABSTRACT

The Impact of Lesotho's Male Migratory Labour Economy on Basotho Women in the Subsistence Sector.

Sindile A. Moitse

The main objective of this study was to examine the impact of Lesotho's male migrant labour economy on the status of Basotho women in the subsistence sector. The study was also designed to examine whether Basotho women experience significant difficulties in maintaining the subsistence sector in the absence of shared responsibilities with men. Overall, the literature proposes that the absence of men from the subsistence sector has not resulted in the increased status of Basotho women. It also proposes that women experience considerable strain in assuming full responsibility for food production in addition to household duties in the absence of shared responsibilities with men. To verify these propositions, a survey was carried out in a rural Sotho village where a group comprised of thirty-two migrants' wives, single women and women whose husbands were not migrant workers, was interviewed. The group was thus divided to facilitate comparison in order to assess the impact of migratory labour on Basotho women.

Overall, the findings indicate that male migratory labour has not resulted in the increased status of women in the subsistence sector. However, contrary to what was expected, the findings show that the absence of husbands from households does not have a highly significant impact on the ability of women to cope with responsibilities in the subsistence sector. Rather, other household

demographic characteristics such as the presence of children in the household and the age of the women themselves, determine, to a significant extent, their ability to cope with responsibilities in the subsistence sector.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis with love to my son, Lebohang, who has patiently allowed me to complete this work over a lengthy period of time.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

One of the dominating themes in current development research has centred around the role of women in development. Interest in this field of research emerged out of a growing realisation among scholars closely identified with the Women in Development School, that the overall process of modernisation and development in the contemporary world's capitalist societies has benefitted men more than women. Contrary to the long-held liberal theory that sees women and development as part of the overall process of modernisation, the majority of women, particularly those who live in the developing world, continue to live in a state of social and economic deprivation. Renowned scholars associated with the Women in Development School, such as Achola and Seidman (1976), Boserup (1970), and Parpart and Staudt (1989), to mention a few, argue that far from benefitting from the process of modernisation, the overall economic and social status of women in developing countries has declined. They observe that the integration of the present-day developing world into the world capitalist economy, beginning with the era of colonialism, has resulted in the steady deterioration of the status of women. While most of these scholars acknowledge that patriarchy - as the organising principle of pre-colonial societies - has kept women subordinate to men, they also maintain that the integration of these societies into the global capitalist economy has brought about further and continuous deterioration in the status of women. This is based on the argument that sexism and patriarchy, which have been the central institutional props of the world capitalist system, have

served to reinforce the existing patriarchal ideologies of pre-colonial societies, thus further weakening the social and economic status of women (Parpart and Staudt 1989).

The Women in Development School argues that old development plans and strategies in much of the developing world have had a male bias in emphasizing the central role of men in development. Boserup (1970), who has been closely identified with the Women and Development School, has demonstrated that the processes of economic modernisation in the Third World have marginalised women, both economically and socially. From the onset of European colonialism, the new private property rights - wage labour, technology, credit and education - have been handed to men. As a result, it is men who have access to the more lucrative and prestigious jobs in the formal sectors of the economy, while women are relegated to the least productive and least paid activities. It is men who have received the benefits of training in agricultural productivity and have therefore been able to pursue viable agro-based businesses. Lacking property, skills, training and capital, women have experienced a steady marginalisation of their economic status (Boserup, 1982). The exclusion of women from development initiatives and their consequent marginalisation has meant that the majority of them continue to live in a state of economic and social deprivation.

One may comfortably attribute the impetus for the evolution of the Women in Development School to the inauguration by the United Nations of its Decade

for Women in 1975, and to the publication of Ester Boserup's pioneering study, *Women's Role in Economic Development in 1970*. Both of these milestones were an expression of concern about the economic marginalisation of women (Bandarage, 1982). The United Nations Conference on Women, held in Mexico in 1975, emphasized the need for women to actively and effectively participate in the development initiatives of their respective countries (World Development Bank, 1990). Such a new approach to development, particularly with respect to Third-World countries, has come about with the realisation that the high levels of poverty and underdevelopment reported in these countries are largely due to the economic marginalisation of women (Parpart, 1990). While women constitute 60 to 80 percent of the workforce in the food-producing sector in Africa and Asia, and more than 40 percent in Latin America, they have not benefitted from resources that might facilitate their work. Instead, these resources are provided to men, despite the fact that an increasing number of households in the developing world, especially the one-third or more that are headed by women, are dependent on the food-producing role of women.

The substantial contribution that women in Third-World countries make to their respective economies can hardly be denied. Largely confined to the subsistence sector, and within it, to reproductive roles, women generate labour power (their male offspring) which is later incorporated into industrial employment. Women assume primary responsibility for the care of children and the elderly in the rural sector and maintain a home to which the retired labour force (their husbands) returns, a function that greatly subsidizes costs that

would otherwise be incurred by industrial capital. Despite the significant economic contributions women make to their respective economies, their work is undervalued and confined to the most underpaid sectors of production. Consequently, much of women's work in the subsistence sector is either under-accounted for, or completely omitted from calculations of national income and productivity such as the Gross National Product. What results from this is the economic "invisibility" of women's work, the continued false belief in a universal male breadwinner role, and more seriously, the increasing impoverishment and hunger of women (Bandarage, 1982).

In the absence of new skills and training in food production, women have been unable to battle their growing state of poverty. The neglect of development to take into account women's food-producing activities - a role for which women are primarily responsible in their societies - has meant a decline in the nutritive value of their produce. This in turn has had serious consequences for the health of the industrial labour force (male offspring) that women generate, and for the growth of industrial capital (World Development Bank, 1990:2). As the food-producing sector represents most of the work of women, the neglect of women's work has not only frustrated women's development initiatives, but has also been the major cause of poverty and underdevelopment reported in developing countries.

Recognising this, new approaches to development emphasize the need to give women a central role in development. This involves providing women with

valuable resources to facilitate their full participation in the development process.

The integration of African nations into the global capitalist economy, beginning with the onset of colonisation in the nineteenth century, brought about a steady transformation of traditional African economies. Drawn into the world capitalist economy as suppliers of surplus produce, African economies have come to be comprised of both a modern sector and a subsistence sector. The modern sector was created through the introduction of western capital investment into high-profit sectors of African economies; surplus produce was then extracted from these sectors, and destined for the western market economy (Rodney, 1974; Harris, 1975). In contrast, the subsistence sector was deliberately neglected and largely transformed into a labour reserve from which a cheap supply of (male) labour power was drawn to ensure the continued extraction of surplus produce in the modern sector. The result has been a system of male migratory labour which draws labour power from the subsistence sector to take up wage-employment in the modern sector, to the benefit of the modern sector and the detriment of the subsistence sector.

Most of the economies of sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Southern Africa, are based on a migrant labour economy in which migrants' earnings derived from the modern sector have been used to supplement subsistence agriculture as a means of livelihood (Wilkinson, 1987). In Southern Africa, it is men rather than women who have come to predominate in rural-urban migration (Wilkinson,

1987). Cultural constraints, reinforced by the interests of industrial capital, have confined women to the subsistence sector to perform reproductive roles that ensure a constant supply of cheap labour power for industrial capital. The result has been the exclusion of women from full integration within the modern (formal) sector and their increased dependence on their menfolk for financial support.

Lesotho provides a classic example of a country characterised by a dual economy in which there exists a great interdependence between the cash economy and the subsistence economy (Hammond-Tooke, 1974). Faced with an impoverished land-resource base, and the consequent decline in the productivity of agriculture as a means of livelihood, the majority of the Basotho have responded to the labour demands of the South-African mining and manufacturing industries. Murray (1981), however, argues that the failure of peasant self-sufficiency in Lesotho was not only brought about by increasing land shortages. It was also a result of the deliberate strategy by western industrial capitalism which demanded not that the Basotho grow sufficient food, but that they contribute their labour to the "white economy" in the industrial heartland of South Africa (p. 22).

It is important to note that South-African influx control measures designed to deny blacks permanent residence in white urban areas in accordance with its policies of separate development, restricted the free flow of labour to the predominantly male working class. South-African influx control measures

prohibited male migrant workers from bringing their families with them to their places of work. This was a means of forestalling any permanent black settlements in what were considered white-designated areas. As a major exporter of labour to the large urban industrial complexes of South Africa, Lesotho was directly affected by these influx control measures. The result was that only men were allowed to seek employment in the South-African industrial complexes. The exclusion of Basotho women from migratory labour was further reinforced by strict border controls instituted by the South-African government in 1963, barring women from legal access to the South-African labour market (Murray, 1981).

The exclusion of Basotho women from the South-African labour market has meant that the majority of them remains in the subsistence sector. With 60 percent of Lesotho's able-bodied men engaged in wage-employment in the South-African mining industries, women constitute the bulk of the workforce in food production (Gay, 1982). The crucial role of women in maintaining the subsistence economy can hardly be denied, considering that they are left with the primary responsibility for food production and for maintaining the general social fabric of rural life. Furthermore, the increasing proportion of households under the headship of women as a direct or indirect result of male migratory labour, underscores the crucial role women play in sustaining the subsistence economy. Gay (p. 7) points out that households under the headship of women in Lesotho constitute 60-70 percent of Basotho households.

In light of the new approaches to development that emphasize the need to give women a more central role to play in development, one of the major objectives of this study is to establish whether the substantial contributions that Basotho women make to the subsistence sector have resulted in commensurate change in their status. This entails assessing the extent to which Basotho women participate in the development process, and establishing whether or not they have access to essential resources that facilitate their full participation in the production process, and enhance their status.

A study carried out by UNICEF (1985) on the situation of Basotho women revealed that not only do Basotho women assume responsibility for food production in the absence of men, but they also have to combine this activity with child-care and housework; and often they do both simultaneously. In view of the increased responsibilities which women have to assume as food-producers and home-makers in the absence of men, the other objective of the study is to examine whether they are able to cope in the absence of shared responsibilities with men.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research study is to examine the impact of Lesotho's male migratory labour system on the status of Basotho women who have been left behind to maintain the subsistence sector. The study also seeks to examine whether rural Basotho women experience significant difficulties in maintaining

the subsistence sector in the absence of shared responsibilities with men, as a consequence of male migratory labour.

CHAPTER 2

An Historical and Ethnographic Background of The Basotho

The people from whom the subjects under study are drawn, are inhabitants of a small mountainous kingdom called Lesotho, a country entirely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. The Basotho, also known as the South Sotho, are a nation comprised of persons of Sotho origin and a few of Nguni stock. Through concerted efforts at nation-building in the nineteenth century, the founder of the Basotho nation, King Moshoeshoe I, integrated the Basotho into one cultural and linguistic unit. Although persons of Nguni stock have to some extent preserved their cultural heritage, they have nonetheless been comfortably accommodated within the broader Sotho society. It would therefore seem appropriate to refer to the Basotho nation as a homogeneous cultural and linguistic entity.

The language of the Basotho is Sesuto. According to Southern African linguists, Sesuto belongs a cluster of three languages which in turn belong to the Sotho language group of the south-eastern zone of Bantu languages (Murray, 1981:4). The other two languages in the cluster are Northern Sotho, spoken in the Northern and Eastern Transvaal; and Botswana.

The Basotho are one of the youngest groupings in Africa. They trace their national origin back to 1823 when the young chief of the Koena clan, Moshoeshoe I, became the acknowledged leader of the present Basotho nation. They are descendants of numerous tribal groupings of Sotho stock that moved

into Southern Africa from the north over a long period of time to settle between the Drakensberg mountains and the Kalahari desert situated in the interior plateau of Southern Africa (Sanders, 1975:3). The South Sotho, comprised of several clans, then moved further south to settle in the valley of the Caledon River, the north-western boundary of present-day Lesotho (Stevens, 1967). These clans lived side by side peacefully under the leadership of their respective chiefs, with no single chief securing a dominant position among them. Only occasional cattle raids presented the main source of tension between the groups. The membership of each clan was based on common genealogy comprised of persons who by and large belonged to the same clan. It was not until the early part of the nineteenth century that this peaceful co-existence was disturbed by the southward migration of Nguni tribes fleeing the wars of conquest spearheaded by the chief of the Zulu clan, Shaka Zulu. The threat from the Zulu soon gave way to that presented by the Afrikaner Boers of Dutch descent trekking northwards into the interior, away from the ever-extending authority of the British Administration at the Cape, to search for grazing and arable land (Stevens, 1967). The Wars of Calamity (as they are commonly known), spearheaded by Shaka Zulu and the expansionist tendencies of the Afrikaner Boers, presented a threat to the stability and peaceful co-existence of most of these small self-governing groups of Sotho stock, with most driven off their territorial settlements. Consequently, most of them sought the protection of Moshoeshe I, then a minor chief of the Sotho Koena clan. Moshoeshe skilfully and diplomatically warded off the dangers presented by Shaka's wars of conquest and the expansionist tendencies of the Afrikaner

Boers. It was during this period of upheaval that Moshoeshoe consolidated his position in the region (Stevens, 1967). Taking most of the dislodged groups under his protection, Moshoeshoe I built what was to become the nation of the Basotho and established a kingdom based on chieftainship.

In dealing with the threatened onslaught by the Boers over the sovereignty and land of the Basotho, Moshoeshoe I sought means and ways of obtaining protection from the British Colonial government in the Cape. Moshoeshoe saw in the British a suitable European balance that would enable him to forestall the encroachment of the Afrikaner on Lesotho soil. Through the missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Society, whom he had invited to Lesotho to introduce Christianity and formal education, Moshoeshoe I sought the protection of the British Cape Colonial government. After a series of attacks by the Afrikaner Boers on the territory and sovereignty of Basutoland, the British Crown finally conceded to Lesotho's request for full protection by declaring her a British protectorate in 1884 (Stevens, 1967). It is, however, worth noting that by the time Lesotho became a British protectorate, much of her grazing and arable land had been lost to the Afrikaner Boers during the continued battles fought in the valley of the Caledon River overland. That Lesotho lost most of its best grazing and ploughing land became evident not only in the fact that its economy became pronouncedly agricultural rather than pastoral, but above all, in the fact that its domestic economy had to be supplemented with wages earned in the service of white entrepreneurs in South Africa (Murray, 1981).

It is important to note that, having established a nation, Moshoehoe I sought to break up cultural diversity among the groups under his jurisdiction in order to bring about uniformity in custom, language and political unity (Murray, 1981). This he did through the placing system by which he placed his own sons and junior relatives in charge of subdivisions of the Basotoland territory called districts and wards. The result of the placing system was a strong corporate identity among the Basotho, who not only included persons of Sotho stock but also persons of Nguni stock who had settled and fled to be under the protective cover of Moshoehoe I during the Wars of Calamity. Through the placing system also emerged a political structure characterised by a hierarchy of chiefly power comprised of twenty-two principal and ward chiefs (Murray, 1981). Lesotho's governing system today is based on civilian rule since its independence in 1966, while the substance of chiefly power is steadily eroding. However, Chiefs continue to reserve the power of land allocation for persons within their areas of jurisdiction, and to preside over meetings at the village or district level, but they have very little political clout at the national level.

The Social Organisation of the Basotho

As mentioned earlier, the Basotho are a nation comprised of persons of Sotho and a few of Nguni stock, who by and large share a common history and culture, and speak a common language. The boundaries of Lesotho are defined in the main by clear natural features that are politically significant in that they should not be crossed without special formalities (Ashton, 1956:10).

The Basotho are also made up of clans which traditionally, were territorially based. These social groupings are distinguishable by name and totem, the membership of which claims common descent from a fictitious or real ancestor. Membership in a clan is determined by birth and is acquired only through the male parent, as the society is patrilineal (Ashton, 1956).

In a patrilineal society, descent is traced along the male lineage and all rights of inheritance reside only in one's agnatic lineage. Land passes from father to son as a means of maintaining it within the agnatic lineage. Patrilineal descent, however, does not in any way mean that kin on the mother's side are not important among the Basotho (Preston, 1974). On the contrary, there is frequent contact with the mother's kin, who often form part of the temporary or permanent membership of the local residential unit and have essential roles to play in ritual activities

Residence upon marriage is usually virilocal, with a newly married woman required by custom to leave her natal village to join her husband in his paternal village. Once married, a woman ceases to be the responsibility of her biological parents, and is fully accountable to her husband's family. Thus, it is to her husband and his people that she should first turn for advice and assistance (Gay, 1982).

Large interdependent patrilocally extended family groups were typical of early Basotho society. Traditionally, the basic social unit among the Basotho was

the polygynous joint family consisting of a man, his wives and their children. This basic social unit often extended to include paternal grandparents, and children's uncles and their wives and children (Ashton, 1956). This extended family maintained a loose network of relationships among kin, both affines and consanguines, based on reciprocal obligations and mutual dependence. Being a unit of production, members of this extended family pooled their labour towards cooperative labour for subsistence production.

Among the Basotho, residential distribution is characterised by contiguous settlement (Preston, 1974). That is, homesteads of family groups are gathered close together in villages which range in size from approximately twenty to five hundred inhabitants, all of whom recognise the political leadership of a hereditary headman to whom most, but not all, are related by blood or marriage. The Sotho village is usually named after its headman, or the prominent clan of the village. The headman of every village belongs to the lowest stratum in the chiefly hierarchy. He is politically subordinate to the area chief within whose area of jurisdiction his village lies (Murray, 1981). The area chief in turn owes allegiance to one of the twenty-two Principal and Ward chiefs who constitute the upper stratum of the chieftainship hierarchical structure.

The concentration of people within a typical Sotho village is necessitated by the scarce availability of natural resources such as water, and arable and grazing land. The tendency, therefore, is for people to cluster around a territorial unit

that is within easy access to such resources. Most Sotho villages are built on level ledges situated away from arable lands and grazing areas on the hilltops, so that members travel long distances to get to them for both pastoral and agricultural farming (Sansom, 1974).

The Traditional Economic System of the Basotho

Traditionally, the economy of the Basotho was essentially based on subsistence agriculture. Thus, every citizen of the Basotho nation was entitled to land as a means of livelihood. The allocation and use of land for subsistence was regulated by the traditional land tenure system which held that all Basotho were entitled to an equal share of the land as a prerogative of citizenship (Murray, 1981).

The Paramount Chief, (also called the King) held the land in trust for the nation ensuring that all his subjects got equal access to a share of the land. However, the equitable distribution of land only granted land utilisation rights that ensured against private ownership of land that might have caused great economic disparities among the Basotho (Murray, 1981).

The administering of land titles was, and still is, the prerogative of chiefs who hold administrative title to land in the areas of their jurisdiction. They were and still are responsible for allocating arable land in an equitable manner to persons who qualify for such allocation. In terms of the land tenure system, only married men who owe allegiance to a chief under whose jurisdiction they live

are eligible for the allocation of land (Murray, 1981). Traditionally, such an allocation included three plots of land for the cultivation of maize, sorghum, and wheat. Security of usufructuary title¹ was normally granted for the holder's life unless the land remained uncultivated for a period of two successive years, or if a landholder had more fields than were judged necessary by the chief to provide subsistence for himself and his family.

Lack of security of tenure, inherent in the traditional land tenure of the Basotho, has come under considerable criticism on the grounds that it does not allow for meaningful farming investment by land title holders. While the equitable distribution of land among the Basotho was a way of ensuring equal access to land, it has often come under attack as being the major cause of agricultural underdevelopment in Lesotho (Murray, 1981). Reasons given often point to the idea that lack of security of tenure has posed a major disincentive for the Basotho to invest both time and resources towards developing their landholdings. In response to this, a land reform policy under the 1979 Land Act was introduced that allowed for long-term leases of certain categories of land for public and commercial uses, and individual licenses to cultivate surveyed plots of land which could be heritable over specified periods of time (Murray, 1981). However, ownership of land remains vested in the nation.

¹ Murray (1981) defines usufructuary title over land as the right to landholdings for the use of cultivating crops.

Today, the actual distribution of land is far more uneven than outlined under the customary land tenure system. For those who obtain landholdings, the average size of holdings is decreasing. With the increase in population, there has been a decline in land available for distribution, with the result that there has been an increasing number of landless people. This situation has been exacerbated by the declining fertility of the land-resource base caused largely by increasing population pressure on the land, overgrazing and natural climatic hazards such as prolonged drought (Murray, 1981).

Although agriculture has ceased to be a viable economic venture, many people in the subsistence sector continue to value land. Bardill and Cobbe (1985) suggest that this is largely due to the risks involved in depending on migrant earnings as a chief means of livelihood. In the event that industrial employment cannot be undertaken, landholdings provide more security. Bardill and Cobbe (1985:45) make reference to Spiegel, who stressed the importance of agriculture among the Basotho, describing it as "a residual security function'. Thus migrants still aspire to be allocated land and continue to invest in agriculture and livestock, even when they cannot ensure a worthwhile return in the short-term, in order to demonstrate their long-term commitment to the rural social system.

Sharecropping is the most commonly used form of subsistence farming by people without landholdings. In this case, a landholder who lacks capital resources will make arrangements with somebody who usually does not have

landholdings but has direct access to oxen, plough and labour to cultivate the land (Murray, 1981). Those who lack both capital resources and land often contribute their labour to a landholder for agricultural farming, and share the yield at harvest time.

Under the traditional subsistence economy, the patrilocally extended family — — comprising husband, wives and their children — — constituted the basic unit of production. The joint polygynous unit presented cooperative labour in tilling the fields, and from time to time the extended family, made up of a loosely defined network of relationships between consanguines and affines, would be relied upon to provide assistance in subsistence production.

For the polygynist, the acquisition of many wives meant wealth and prestige. The more wives and children he had, the more land he was entitled to, and the greater the productivity he acquired (Lesthaeghe, 1989). In this way, many wives and children were considered an economic asset rather than a liability. Today, the incidence of polygyny is increasingly on the decline among the Basotho. This may be accounted for, in part, by the attack Christianity has levelled against polygyny on the grounds that it degrades the status of women, and the advent of the cash economy that has made it difficult for the Basotho to sustain large families. In light of the declining dependence on subsistence farming with the advent of the cash economy, sustaining a large family has proved difficult if not impractical. Mair (1953:19) notes that the large household comprising several wives and children "is now not a source of

wealth but a burden which only the rich can bear." For most, it has proved economical to maintain monogamous relationships.

The advent of the cash economy has not only resulted in the breakdown of the joint polygynous unit, but it has also led to the weakening of cooperative labour which it presented in subsistence production. The growing importance of wage-employment as an alternative means of survival has also undermined the significance of the extended family that could be relied upon to provide assistance with subsistence production.

While there has been a breakdown in the large family unit, there has not been a perfect transition from extended to nuclear family due to the high prevalence of female-headed households in Lesotho. Murray (1981:102) argues that where thousands of husbands and wives are forced to live apart as a result of migratory labour, there is little point in identifying the nuclear family as the basic social unit. Furthermore, Murray (1981:102) points out that the notion of nuclear family in Lesotho is further challenged by the growing trend towards the establishment of matrifocal households². These matrifocal households include households under the headship of widows, unmarried women, separated and deserted women, as well as multi-generation households where many children are reared by grandparents because their parents are absent migrants (Murray, 1981:102).

² Murray (1981) refers to households under the headship of women as matrifocal households

Far from being nuclear in nature, it is estimated that 60-70% of Basotho households are female-headed (Gay, 1982:7). Male migratory labour has entailed the prolonged separation of spouses, with the result that migrants' wives assume *de facto* household headship pending their husbands' return. Bardill and Cobbe (1985) argue that the prolonged separation of spouses has brought about infidelity and adulterous relationships that have been a major source of conflict and tension. In turn, this has led to the breakdown of marriages, with women returning to their natal villages to establish their own independent households. Desertion of women by their migrant husbands is also commonplace, with the result that these women are forced to assume headship of their households.

Bardill and Cobbe (1985) point out that approximately 90% of female-headed households are headed by widows. The high proportion of widows in Lesotho has been attributed to the high rate of early mortality for Basotho miners, either due to accidents in the mines or work-related illnesses in the mines, such as silicosis and tuberculosis (Bardill and Cobbe, 1985). The second factor that has accounted for the high proportion of widows is the difficulty experienced by widows in remarrying. If a widow remarries, she loses all rights to her deceased husbands' fields, to the house and property of the household and to her children if bridewealth has been paid. As a result, very few are prepared to sacrifice the security that such rights represent (Bardill and Cobbe, 1985).

The traditional division of labour in the Sotho domestic economy was based on sex and age. It can generally be said that the differential sex roles played by Basotho men and women are closely related to their socialisation process. Sansom (1974) describes the day-to-day lives of boys and girls among Bantu speakers as being almost similar up to the age of six. From then on, their lives diverge, with girls socialised to assume domestic roles, while boys spend more time away from home herding cattle in accordance with their defined roles.

Traditionally, all domestic tasks were performed by women. These included preparing food for the household, grinding grain, brewing beer, maintaining the household and looking after the young. Young girls were socialised to assume household responsibilities, often assisting mothers with some household tasks, such as fetching water and collecting firewood (Sansom, 1974). Outside the home, the major brunt of agricultural work was borne by women who were responsible for weeding fields, harvesting, threshing, winnowing and bringing the harvest home from the fields. While men occasionally helped, these tasks were primarily the responsibility of females (Sansom, 1974).

Men performed some of the heavier agricultural chores such as the clearing of new fields and tilling the soil for cultivation. They also assumed primary responsibility for the care and management of livestock, a domain women were effectively excluded from in view of traditional belief in their ritual impurity caused by menstruation (Sansom, 1974). While young men looked after cattle, boys herded sheep and goats. As heads of their households, men controlled

the family property. They organized the cultivation of land and assumed ultimate decision-making responsibilities with respect to the running of the family estate (Sansom, 1953).

The introduction of the money economy, which necessitated cash earnings to sustain a livelihood, altered the traditional division of labour and gave way to a new division of labour between adult men and women. As providers of their households, men have had to seek employment away from their homes to earn cash while their wives remain at home to look after the family. The result has been the large-scale migration of men to centers of employment (notably the Republic of South Africa) to earn cash income that will provide for the needs of their households, while women remain at home to supervise domestic routine, including the cultivation of fields and the allocation of cash earnings (Mueller, 1977).

In the absence of men, women have had to assume roles previously performed by men, in addition to their own prescribed roles. In the absence of young boys or elderly men to take care of livestock, some women have had to take on this responsibility themselves, contrary to the dictates of the traditional sexual division of labour that kept women away from cattle (Mueller, 1977). The changing roles of men and women with the advent of male migratory labour have no doubt put considerable pressure on women, who have had to assume sole responsibility for both household and agricultural concerns. Bardill

and Cobbe (1985) endorse this view by noting that male migrant labour has placed considerable responsibility and stress on those women left behind.

Traditionally, the Basotho attached great importance to cattle which were mainly used as a source of wealth and bridewealth and in ritual ceremonials. Except for their milk, cattle did not and still do not furnish food, but are rather used as a status symbol. As a source of bridewealth, the transfer of cattle from the agnatic group of the man to that of the woman, was used to legalise a marital union (customary marriage). The number of cattle involved in bridewealth varied according to the social status of the families involved, but on average it has remained at twenty to twenty-two head of cattle. With the advent of the cash economy, the proportion of bridewealth transfer paid in cash has risen dramatically.

By the transfer of bridewealth, certain vital rights over a woman, and consequently over any children she may bear, are transferred from her father or guardian as representative of her family, to her husband and his family (Preston, 1974). The rights over a woman which are transferred to her husband and his agnatic group include rights in her both as a wife (rights in uxorem) and as a mother (rights in genetricem). Rights in uxorem include rights of sexual access to the woman, and access to her labour, both domestic and in the fields. Thus, these rights are matched by duties on the part of the groom and his agnates to provide the woman with a house, fields and lifelong security. Rights in genetricem refer to the procreative powers of a woman.

Thus, rights in genetricem acquire for the husband and his lineage legal control over all the children born to a woman, unless and until the marriage is dissolved by divorce. Furthermore, through this transfer, the husband is entitled to the labour and earnings of his children and to their support in his old age. Divorce proceedings among the Basotho are frequently complex and involve the return of all the bridewealth to the agnatic family of the husband with the result that separation is the much preferred option in the dissolution of a marriage. For this reason, divorce is rare among the Basotho (Preston, 1974).

The conception of customary marriage as binding the lineages of both spouses as well as the spouses themselves was reflected in the provisions made on the death of the male partner. If a husband died, his wives were expected to remain with his group and were inherited by his younger brother or some other junior agnate of the dead man, a practise known as the levirate custom (Preston, 1974). The levirate custom was observed to ensure the continuation of the original marriage in the event that the male spouse died. To this end, the most important duty of the levir was to beget children for the deceased. This custom is no longer in practise among the Basotho since the inception of Christianity, which condemned it as degrading to the status of women.

The institution of bridewealth also came under fierce attack by Church missionaries who began to introduce Christianity into Lesotho in the nineteenth century. Philips (1953) observes that the general tendency among earlier generations of missionaries was to interpret the transfer of bridewealth as one

which involved the purchase of a woman. Consequently, they condemned bridewealth on account of what they described as unchristian implications. The Church substituted civil/Christian rites for the payment of bridewealth in order to validate marital unions. Despite the almost universal acceptance of Christianity among the Basotho, bridewealth continues to form a fundamental part of the marriage agreement, and is practised for more than half of the marriages in Lesotho. Bardill and Cobbe (1985) note that bridewealth takes place among the vast majority of both Christian and civil marriages.

The legal system of Lesotho

Lesotho currently has a dual legal system based on Customary Law and Roman Dutch Law inherited from the British Colonial Administration. Although formerly a British protectorate, English Common Law is not practised. Instead, the British Colonial government introduced Roman Dutch Law that was in practice in its other colony at the time, the Cape Colony which is now part of the Republic of South Africa.

The High Commissioner proclamation of 1884 directed that the law to be administered in Lesotho, then Basutoland, should be the same as the law in force in the Cape Colony (Seeiso, 1986:1). However, the proclamation also declared that Basutoland was also to retain its customary law. The influence of western culture and values that came with Colonisation necessitated the adoption of a western legal system to accommodate the lifestyles of people guided by western perceptions. However, it was also equally important for the

Basotho to preserve customary law in order to ensure the continuity of the traditional Sotho heritage. Today, the two legal systems operate side by side.

The co-existence of the two legal systems has not been without difficulties in terms of deciding on the applicability of a particular legal system to a given case and individual. To decide on the applicability of a particular legal system, focus and attention has been placed on the way a person lives. If the judicial courts are convinced that a person does not lead a European mode of life, Customary law is used to administer his or her case. Two of the criteria used to reach such decisions are: whether or not persons earn their living from employment in the professions, commerce, industry or government service; and whether persons are married under civil law or customary law (Seeiso, 1986:2).

Indeed, the criteria used in deciding upon the applicable legal system for individual cases has not been without shortcomings. While people's lifestyles and perceptions have been influenced by western values, certain traditional practises continue to form part of their new western lifestyles. Similarly, the Basotho whose lives may be described as traditional have not been untouched by the influences of western culture. This is illustrated by the fact that a substantial proportion of Basotho, both rural and urban, have their marriages effected through both customary and civil law (Seeiso, 1986). Kimane (1986:75) explains that such marriages, often called dual marriages, occur where a couple goes through all the "customary law rituals and formalities required for a valid customary marriage and later either goes to Church to

"bless" the marriage.... or to a District Administrator's office to contract a civil marriage". Nevertheless, in terms of the overall criteria used to assess lifestyle, the majority of the rural population are subject to customary law.

A current economic profile of Lesotho

Although an independent country, Lesotho is economically almost completely dependent on South Africa. Lesotho provides the broadest market for South-African export consumer goods within the Southern African region. Similarly, over 80% of its exports are destined for South Africa.

Lesotho's economy is highly dependent on the exportation of its male labour force to the South-African mining industries; migrants' remittances make up just under fifty percent of the country's Gross National Product (The Economists' Intelligent Unit, 1989). Migrants' remittances are made in two basic forms: deferred payments equivalent to 30% of total migrant earnings, transferred through the deferred pay-fund mechanism; and discretionary remittances which are disposable income that can also be transferred to Lesotho at the migrants' request (The Economists' Intelligent Unit, 1989).

It was not until 1991 that deferred pay constituted only 30% of the remainder of migrants' remittances, in response to increased pressure by the migrant mine workers unions to effect the change. Over the years 1975-1983, deferred pay formed an average of 12% of Lesotho's gross domestic product (The Economists' Intelligent Unit, 1989).

Agriculture in Lesotho is a declining sector in terms of output, but still provides some income to 70% of the domestic labour force. According to the latest issue of the *Economists' Intelligent Unit* (1991:44), agriculture fell from fifty percent in 1973-1974 to eighteen percent in 1989 as a proportion of the Gross Domestic product. In a survey of both lowland and mountain areas conducted in Lesotho by Arie van der Wiel in 1975 and 1976, it was found that agriculture contributed only 17% of total rural income (Bardill and Cobbe, 1985). Domestic off-farm activities provided another 12%, while by far the largest contribution came from migrants' remittances, which provided 71% during the same period. Alan Whiteside (1986) endorses these figures as he points out that subsistence activities on which the agricultural sector is mainly based, have not been sufficiently productive to provide a satisfactory livelihood without supplementary incomes from migrant workers. The situation has been exacerbated by the growth in population that has increasingly put pressure on the meagre resources available. As a result, individual landholdings today in Lesotho are small, fragmented, and exhausted; and an increasing proportion of the population is landless (Murray, 1981:6).

Since a good proportion of male persons have spent at least a third of their lives in the South-African centres of employment, it is not unusual for a large proportion of rural Sotho households to have at least one male member absent at any one time (Gordon, 1980). By 1982, it was estimated that 60% of Lesotho's men of age to enter the workforce, were migrant workers, leaving women in the same age group with primary responsibility for household

management and agriculture (Gay, 1982). That the male Mosotho migrant spent an average of 15 years of his life in South Africa during the period when he was young and strong meant that he could not take the lead in rural development.

Also significant has been the fact that many of the men who return home (after spending the best years of their lives in the mines) are crippled, ill, or otherwise handicapped by hardships encountered in the migrant labour experience (Gay, 1982). Consequently, women are largely left on their own, either temporarily or permanently, to bear the brunt of household responsibilities and the domestic economy.

Lesotho's external relations have been dominated by the country's dependence on South Africa, which has not diminished since it gained independence in 1966. This has been evident in the manner in which South Africa has used migrant labour and trade links as either a reward or punishment for Lesotho's political stance vis-à-vis the policy of apartheid and the black liberation struggle over the years (Matlosa, 1991).

It is, however, important to note recent developments and changes in the South-African mining industries in the last decade have significant implications for the migrant labour economy of Lesotho. These include, among others, the increased mechanisation of production, and the internalisation of the labour complement of production and labour stabilisation in the South-African mining

industries (Matlosa, 1991). The overall effect of these policies has been to cut foreign labour from neighbouring states, including Lesotho. Despite these reductions in foreign labour by the South-African mining industries, Lesotho still remains the largest exporter of labour within the Southern African region.

CHAPTER 3

Review of the Literature

As mentioned in Chapter one, one of the objectives of this study is to examine whether male migratory labour in Lesotho has resulted in the increased status of women who have been left behind to maintain the subsistence sector. Lesotho, like several other African countries, was drawn into the capitalist economy at a period that coincided with the beginning of colonialism in the nineteenth century. Even though western imperial forces (notably the British colonial government under whose colonial rule Lesotho fell in the mid-nineteenth century) had little interest in her natural resources, Lesotho's human resources were geared for the South-African mining industries. The exportation of Lesotho's labour resource was exclusively restricted to men, since women were denied legal access to the South-African labour market. For this reason, Basotho labour migrants have been predominantly male, while the majority of women have been left behind to assume responsibility for the subsistence sector. Consequently, women have come to constitute the bulk of the workforce in the subsistence sector (Gay, 1982).

Given the fact that the workforce in the subsistence sector is predominantly female, this study seeks to examine whether rural Basotho women are given a central role to play in the development of the subsistence economy. This entails examining the extent to which women exercise control and decision-making power in the subsistence sector, and the extent to which they have access to essential economic resources that would help facilitate their work as

food producers and enhance their overall status. In view of the fact that male migratory labour has left women largely responsible for the maintenance of the subsistence sector, the other objective of this study is to examine whether women experience significant difficulties in the absence of shared responsibilities with men.

In order to address the main objectives of this study, the first part of this chapter outlines a general theoretical perspective developed by a number of scholars closely identified with the Women in Development School regarding the general situation of women in Africa. This discussion is developed within the context of African countries whose economies were restructured by the needs of the world capitalist economy in order to provide cheap labour power and surplus produce for western industrial capital.

The theoretical discussion is grounded within an historical period that dates from the pre-colonial era to the full integration of developing Africa into the global capitalist economy, effectively beginning with the period of colonialism. It involves both a descriptive and an explanatory discussion of how patriarchy as an ideology, embedded in the social organisation of pre-colonial and contemporary African societies, has defined the overall status of women. Drawing mainly on the ideas of Parpart and Staudt (1989) and Achola and Seidman (1976), the discussion seeks to demonstrate that the integration of African economies into the world capitalist economy and the consequent withdrawal of men from subsistence production in order to produce for the

world market economy has done little to alter traditional views of female subservience and subordination. Instead, patriarchy, which has been the ideological and institutional prop of the world capitalist economy has interacted with pre-colonial patterns of male authority to give men ultimate power and control over the means of production and over women.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the current situation of Basotho women in the subsistence sector. It highlights a number of structural constraints that hamper the ability of rural Basotho women to fully participate in the development of the subsistence sector by denying them direct access to essential economic resources, despite their role as food producers. The latter part of this section addresses the question of whether rural Basotho women experience significant difficulties in maintaining the subsistence sector in the absence of shared responsibilities with men. The third and final part of this chapter is based on a critique of the literature regarding the situation of Basotho women with a view to exploring areas that require further investigation.

The Theoretical Discussion on the Status of Women

The term "status of women" as it used in this discussion is based on the definition provided by Achola and Seidman (1976:1), who view it as "women's socially defined access to the means of production and their participation in the production process". The focus in this study, therefore, is on the way that social and cultural institutional structures have defined the role of women in society, from the pre-colonial era to the contemporary period; and how these

in turn have determined women's access to the means of production and participation in the production process.

(a) The status of women in pre-colonial Africa.

Parpart and Staudt (1989) maintain that women have always been relegated to an inferior and subordinate status relative to men since the pre-colonial era. They argue that while the relations of production in pre-colonial subsistence economies have been described as egalitarian, patriarchal ideologies ensured the dominance of men and their consequent command over the means of production. These patterns of male dominance were to be later invoked by men in the name of custom and used by colonial governments to justify women's exclusion from economic opportunities and control over resources under the contemporary capitalist economy.

The views held by Boserup and Mullings (as presented by Lindsay, 1981:13-14) appear to challenge the argument that in pre-colonial societies women were relegated to a status inferior to that of men. They argue that prior to colonialism, the role of women was based to a large extent upon equality with men. While they acknowledge that there existed a sexual division of labour in pre-colonial subsistence economies, they argue that it was largely based on complementarity of tasks where both men and women were engaged in productive activities necessary for the survival of the household or community. They maintain that what existed then was an interdependence between men and women without which the "equilibrium of the natural order upon which

traditional societies are based would be destroyed" (p. 13). Thus, while women may have assumed roles distinct from those of men, they were equal partners in the production process.

However, Lindsay herself (1980), refrains from using the concept of "equality" to describe the pre-colonial production relations between men and women, on the grounds that they were assigned different roles and different status. Instead, Lindsay describes male/female relations in pre-colonial times as asymmetrical: a situation where both were assigned different roles and different status which formed the basis for gender inequalities.

Parpart and Staudt (1989) are in full agreement with the view held by Boserup and Mullings that the production relations of men and women were based on a complementarity of tasks. However, they also argue that the patriarchal ideology on which the social organisation of traditional societies was based, worked against the notion of equality between men and women. The following discussion highlights some of the pre-colonial patterns of social organisation and customs which gave men ultimate power and control over women and command over the means of production.

In patrilineal African societies, men stood at the apex of existing hierarchies of power and authority at both the household and national level (Parpart and Staudt, 1989). The control of male elders over juniors, and men over women formed the organising principle of society. Authority within the kinship system

was patriarchally organised. At the household level, men assumed full authority and by custom were legally responsible for the actions of their wives and children (Sheddick, 1953). Men represented the family and assumed the role of household head (p.28). As heads of their households, vested with authority over their wives and children, men exercised control and full command over household property, notably the land and cattle on which the traditional economy was based.

Parpart and Staudt (1989) point out that in patrilineal societies, men's direct access to land was guaranteed solely on the basis of membership in a patrilineage, the pre-colonial landholding unit. Women's access to land, on the other hand, was indirect and thus ultimately insecure. They possessed no independent, autonomous rights to land; rather, their access to land was mediated through men — either their fathers, their adult sons, or most notably their husbands (p. 25). At marriage, a husband was required to give a portion of land to his wife, on which she was obliged to grow crops for the family's subsistence. The husband retained control over unallocated fields, and reserved rights of disposal over produce, while his wife generally possessed the right to dispose of surpluses from her food gardens. A woman enjoyed the right to use land for as long as her marriage was harmonious. However, in the event of the dissolution of the marriage, a woman not only lost her land rights, but she also risked losing land rights for her children (Lesthaeghe, 1989).

When a man died, it was his eldest son, and not his wife, who inherited the social position as head of the household. And it was through the eldest son that a woman was able to retain access to land. Like mothers, daughters inherited little or nothing from their fathers. While women in matrilineal societies enjoyed more social and economic security than women in patrilineal societies, the fundamental domestic principle of patriarchal rule still prevailed. Men, rather than women, controlled the land.

Sansom (1974) emphasizes the need to note that once a portion of land was allocated to women by their husbands at marriage, women did enjoy a certain degree of control and power over their assets. In each house, for example, the specific rights of wife and children were protected against paternalistic authority by the possibility of appeal to other kin, in the event that the husband should alienate or dispose of property without consulting his wife (p. 164).

Thus, although the husband managed the family estate, he was required by law to respect the rights of his wives and their children. He could not dispose of their property without consultation. Even though men controlled land and were managers of the production unit, the assets they managed were encumbered by a certain amount of power and control exercised by their wives over the property allocated to them.

The institution of bridewealth, which is still a commonly practised custom in contemporary African societies, is another feature of African traditional custom that was a source of oppression for women and helped to ensure male

dominance and control over women. The transfer of bridewealth that has been used to validate marital unions in most African societies, the Basotho included, has had significant implications for the power and control a man was allowed to exercise over his wife. Preston (1974:187) argues that the handing over of bridewealth, usually in the form of cattle (particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa), meant the transfer of certain vital rights over a woman, from her father (or male guardian) as representative of her family to her husband and his family. The rights that were transferred included: rights of sexual access to the woman, rights to her labour both domestic and in the fields, and legal control over all the children born within the marriage (p. 187).

Another African traditional custom that accentuated male dominance and control over women in patrilineal pre-colonial societies was rooted in the institution of polygyny. Lesthaeghe (1989) argues that the acquisition of many wives in the institution of polygyny provided men with considerable privileges and wealth. With several wives, polygynists had an indispensable source of labour over which they exercised control. The more wives they acquired, the more land they were entitled to in order to provide for the joint polygynous unit, and the greater the productivity they came to enjoy, derived through the labour of their wives.

While this discussion on African traditional patterns of social organisation may not be exhaustive, it does highlight some of the traditions that were invoked by men and by colonial authorities in the name of custom to justify continued

male dominance even under the capitalist economic system. Parpart and Staudt (1989) endorse this view by noting that pre-colonial patterns of male authority, command over basic resources such as land, and control over women, only served to justify and reinforce male dominance and control over the means of production in the colonial and post-colonial period. During the period of colonialism, when African economies were drawn into the world capitalist economy, it was to men who stood at the apex of existing hierarchies of power and authority in the traditional social structure, that essential economic resources were directed (p. 37). Where colonial export enclaves were created, meetings arranged by colonial officials were held with chiefs and influential male elders to urge the adoption of export cash crops. Since it was men who controlled the traditional subsistence economy, it was to men that colonial states delegated the supervision and control of cash-crop production. It was men who received the necessary training in agricultural farming and the use of new technology.

The following discussion focuses on the impact of colonialism and the subsequent integration of African economies into the world capitalist system, on the status of women. The discussion demonstrates how colonial institutional structures introduced by colonial governments - partly to serve the interests of world capitalism - reinforced and institutionalized the marginal status of women.

(b) The status of women under colonialism

The integration of present-day developing Africa into the world capitalist economy began in the nineteenth century during the period of colonisation (Rodney, 1972). The purpose of colonisation was to extract surplus produce from the colonised territories to benefit the European market economy (p. 162). Among the surplus products extracted were: mineral deposits, raw materials and export crops. In pursuit of the extraction of surplus produce, colonial administrators everywhere granted foreign European firms and white settler communities the right to exploit vast mineral deposits, and resources from extensive plantation farms in the colonised territories for export to the European home market (Achola and Seidman, 1976:4). In this way, the colonised territories were transformed into Colonial export enclaves.

Apart from raw materials and mineral deposits that were extracted for export to the European market economy, the growing of cash crops also constituted a major part of the colonial export economy (Achola and Seidman, 1976). In West Africa and Uganda for instance, where existing powerful African kingdoms rendered white settler farming difficult, African farmers were encouraged to retain their landholdings in order to grow cash crops (p. 5). They were then required to sell the cash crops only to foreign trading companies at low prices, fixed by the trading firms; the crops were then sold at profitable prices in the European home market (p. 5). Thus, cash crops were not grown to benefit local African economies but were introduced for the sole purpose of benefitting the European market economy.

The extraction of surplus produce from the colonised territories necessitated the creation of a large supply of exploitable labour that could only be derived from within the colonised nations. To this end, a number of coercive measures were enforced to ensure a steady supply of exploitable labour on both foreign-owned mining industries and farms; and, where they existed, on African-owned cash-crop farms (Achola and Seidman, 1976). Measures included the forceful dispossession of the black population from the best grazing and arable land; and the introduction of the compulsory hut and poll tax that was payable only in cash (p. 6). Faced with an impoverished land resource base, and the compulsory hut and poll tax, the African peasantry was left with little option but to take up wage-employment in foreign-owned mining industries, plantations and where they existed, African-owned cash crop farms.

In what is now South Africa (which was then under British colonial rule) the dispossession of the black population from the best arable and grazing land was effected through a series of land acts in 1894 and in 1936-1937 (Mafeje, 1978:58). Mafeje (p. 59) argues that the effect of these land acts was to squeeze the black population onto a mere 13% of the total available land area, in regions that were largely infertile and unsuitable for viable agricultural pursuits. Lesotho, then Basutoland, was not unaffected by the enactment of these land acts across its territorial boundaries. Murray (1981:23) points out that some of the dispossessed peasantry in South Africa fled into Basutoland

in search of land, only to put pressure on Basutoland's already limited land-resource base³.

In Basutoland, (which became a British protectorate in 1884), the British colonial administration was by no means indifferent to the question of an adequate supply of labour for western industrial capital in mining and plantation complexes in South Africa (Murray, 1981). Unconcerned about the economic development of Basutoland, the British Colonial administration's attitude was clearly sensitive only to the broader interests of western imperialism. This is evidenced by the remarks made by the Resident Commissioner in 1899:

Basutoland has an industry of great economic value to South Africa, viz. the output of native labour...to [those] who urge higher education of natives, it may be pointed out that to educate them above labour would be a mistake...(Murray, 1981:24).

Therefore, to ensure a steady supply of labour power to meet the needs of white industrial capital in what is now the Republic of South Africa, the hut and poll taxes were introduced in Basutoland. Murray (1981) explains, however, that introducing the poll and hut tax in Basutoland was not only a means of creating a migrant labour force for the interests of British imperialism across her borders. It was also introduced as a way of ensuring that Basutoland would finance the British colonial administration⁴, without the British colonial administration incurring any costs. To this end, the Governor's Regulation of

³ Basutoland had already lost a considerable amount of land to the Afrikaner Boers in the first half of the nineteenth century.

⁴ That the Basotho should finance the colonial administration had been one of the conditions of political incorporation under British colonial rule effected in 1884.

1871 fixed the rate at ten shillings per hut (p. 24). Therefore, faced with a limited land resource for subsistence farming and the imposition of the hut tax, the majority of the Basotho had little choice but to earn wages in the service of white entrepreneurs in what is now the Republic of South Africa.

The imposition of colonial law left Africans in many areas with little opportunity to earn cash except by joining the growing migratory labour force required to expand the production of foreign-owned mines and plantations (Achola and Seidman, 1976). Through the enforcement of these coercive measures, a steady supply of exploitable labour was created, manifested in the migration of a predominantly male proletariat towards the centres of employment. For much of Southern Africa, Lesotho included, this meant the large-scale migration of Africans to the major mining-industrial complexes and the neighbouring white settler farms in what is now South Africa.

The extraction of surplus produce on which the viability of the world capitalist economy depended, necessitated an international division of labour realised through the exploitation of male and female labour within the colonised countries (Bisilliat and Fieloux, 1987). This division of labour came to greatly bear on women in the colonised territories who became increasingly confined to the subsistence sector to perform reproductive roles that would subsidize the costs incurred in reproducing labour power. Thus, while men were the preferred source of labour power, women were confined to the food producing sector. The reproductive roles to which women were increasingly relegated

included the biological reproduction of future labour power, food production, and caring for the young, the sick and the elderly (Mies et al., 1988). Western industrial capital could not incur these costs if profits were to be accrued in the colonised territories.

Without incurring any costs in the reproduction of labour power, industrial capital would feed off the unpaid labour of women in the subsistence sector, and appropriate surplus produce by paying labour power a wage that did not cover the minimum which Marx defined as essential even under capitalism (Achola and Seidman, 1976). Unrewarded in monetary terms, the reproductive roles of women have not been considered productive activity despite the fact that they remain an indispensable precondition for male productivity in the industrial centres of employment (Mies, 1986:58). While the integration of African economies within the global capitalist economy resulted in the exploitation of a predominantly male proletariat, women have been the hardest hit in terms of being denied full integration within the formal sector. The confinement of women within the subsistence sector and their consequent exclusion from the modern sector was a deliberate strategy by western imperial powers to ensure that women would continue to perform reproductive roles that would subsidize the cost of reproducing labour power for industrial capital (Bisilliat and Feiloux, 1987).

Achola and Seidman (1976:8) point out that the exclusion of women from the so-called "productive work"— that is, work producing raw materials for

export — under colonial rule, was also reinforced by their exclusion from cash-crop production. Colonial administrators discouraged women from producing crops for export although in some instances, women had previously been the primary producers of the same crop for local use. In Uganda, for example, cotton, which became one of the nation's two primary export crops, had been traditionally grown by women. In 1923, the European director of agriculture arbitrarily ruled that men alone should be responsible for the crop. Similarly in Lesotho, where wheat was briefly introduced as a cash crop by the British colonial administration and missionaries, men were primarily responsible for its production and sale in South Africa's mining towns (Gay, 1982:41).

The exodus of the majority of able-bodied men from the traditional subsistence sector towards the centres of employment meant that women, children, and older men were left behind to face the difficulties of maintaining the levels of agricultural productivity previously attained. Bujra (1986:124) argues that, even though women had always played a major role in agricultural production in the traditional subsistence economy, the departure of men intensified their burden of work. They had to perform their own tasks in addition to those previously done by men without any significant improvement in tools or technology to alleviate the burden of their tasks. Women continued to use traditional farming tools such as hoes and sickles that were labour intensive. Whatever new technology was brought in was designed solely for cash-crop farming, and for the extraction of surplus produce that would serve the interests of industrial capital. Achola and Seidman (1976) argue that the food-

producing sector was deliberately neglected by the colonialists who felt that any improvement in the conditions of production in the subsistence sector would threaten the elastic supply of labour and thereby undermine the colonial economic base. Parpart and Staudt (1989) observe that missionary activity in Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, coincided with and acted in collaboration with colonial interests. Brydon and Chant (1989:18) endorse this view by noting that the doctrines of the Church promoted patriarchy and the ideology of female subservience and subordination to men. The Church encouraged women to be good wives and defined the situation of women as that of conformity with the obligations of domesticity and motherhood (p. 18). Wherever these teachings were spread, they helped to keep women out of so-called "productive activity", in line with their defined reproductive roles. In this way, Church missionaries acted in close collaboration with the colonial state to keep women out of so-called "productive activity".

Where the colonial states and Church missionaries played a major role in introducing agricultural technological innovations (such as the ox-drawn plough and the tractor) they helped to ensure that men, not women, would be taught how to use them (Parpart and Staudt, 1989:38). Using stereotypic notions about the capabilities of women, the colonial state and its agencies believed that crop cultivation would be better managed by men. To this end, women were kept out of this domain, which became a male preserve.

Since cash-crop production was extended almost entirely to men, colonial educational institutions established for the purpose of providing techniques and skills for productive activity in the export enclaves were, in the main, open only to boys (Achola and Seidman, 1976). The colonial governments established government farms and agricultural training centres at which young men received instruction in the uses of the new technology, and where ploughing demonstrations were organised. By denying women access to training and modern farming techniques that could have increased their agricultural productivity in the food-producing sector, the colonial governments marginalised the economic status of women and impeded their economic advancement.

As cash-cropping expanded and land shortages increased, there was a rise in the value of land as property. To ensure the continued viability of cash-crop farming, the colonial state initiated land reform programmes, which gave individual land title deeds to men (Parpart and Staudt, 1989:39). The colonial states were convinced that agricultural development would only come about through an instituted system of individual land tenure. However, these land reform programmes served to consolidate male ownership over land while denying women similar autonomy. Indeed, the only effect this had was to increase the already fragile position of women in relation to access rights to land.

Hahn (1982) observes that the land reform programmes instituted by colonial governments only served to curtail the rights of women, and reduce the security they had enjoyed with respect to rights of land use. Under the African traditional land tenure system, no one was vested with the right to private ownership of land. Men, to whom land was transferred, were not given the right to alienate land (Hahn, 1982). Rather, each holder was restricted to using the land for the provision of his family's subsistence. Women, by virtue of their position as wives and daughters of landholders, were entitled to use land for agricultural purposes from which they were expected to feed themselves, their children, their spouses and the extended family. In this way, women were protected by the emphasis on user's rights, sanctioned by the traditional land tenure system.

Hahn (1982) argues that the granting of individual land title deeds to men instituted by western colonial legislation, served to undermine and weaken the role of women as food producers. The consolidation of male ownership over land, instituted by colonial land reform programmes, came to undermine women's access rights to land and to agricultural support services for which men, as the recognised farmers, were eligible. Such support services included membership in farmers' cooperatives, access to credit, and extension technical assistance. Again, this served to marginalise the status of women as food producers.

Not only did colonial governments ensure the economic marginalisation of women through a series of laws that gave men control and access to essential economic resources, but they also ensured that women would remain subject to the authority of men. Through the formalisation of customary law, in which men were vested with authority and power over women under the traditional African social organisation, women were defined as minors subject to the legal guardianship of their fathers, husbands, or other kinsmen (Ashfar, 1991). Through the introduction of civil law, married women were also confined to the minority status, subject to the authority and legal guardianship of their husbands. Charlton (1989) argues that the provisions of family law under the civil legal code were infused by Christian principles promoted by Church missionaries who were greatly opposed to polygamy but encouraged female subservience. Marriage under civil law came to closely resemble Christian marriages which upheld monogamy and male authority.

Colonial policies and western legislation introduced into Africa during the colonial era have left a legacy which continues to deny women access to essential economic resources that would facilitate their economic empowerment and their ability to engage in meaningful development pursuits. Patriarchal institutions that promoted female subservience prior to the post-colonial period continue to render women powerless and subordinate to men. The following discussion highlights most of these institutional structures, which have been carried over into the post-colonial period to ensure the continued subordination and economic marginalisation of women.

(c) The status of women under the post-colonial period

The political independence of the former colonised territories in much of Africa has done little to alter the fundamental institutions that have caused the subordination and economic marginalisation of women. Instead, male-oriented institutional structures that kept women subordinate to men during the colonial period, have been carried over into the post-colonial era. Due (1982) argues that this is because the power structures governing post-colonial Africa are run exclusively by men.

Land tenure systems, adopted from colonial land reform policies, continue to consolidate male control over land. It is important to note, however, that in some African countries, recent government policy has favoured the use and ownership of land by the community or the state (Bezzabeh, 1982). In Lesotho, for instance, traditional land tenure arrangements have been allowed to continue as a consequence of the legacy left behind by the founder of the Basotho nation, Moshoeshe I, that land could not be sold or mortgaged (Murray, 1981). King Moshoeshe I strongly resisted private ownership of land in an effort to ensure that all citizens of the Basotho nation should get an equal share of land. By restricting landholdings to utilisation rights, he ensured against private ownership that might have caused great economic disparities among Basotho citizens. It was not until the introduction of the 1979 land reform policy in Lesotho, long after it gained independence in 1966, that certain categories of land for commercial and public use could be leased out on a long-term basis and be heritable over specified periods of time (p. 66).

Nevertheless, ownership of land still remains vested in the nation. However, customary land tenure arrangements continue to restrict land usufructuary titles to men. Thus women's access to land continues to be facilitated through men.

At this point, it is worth noting that there has been an increase in female-headed households in much of Africa, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Brydon and Chant (1989:145) attribute this phenomenon directly or indirectly "to the twin processes of industrial and urban development", as African economies entered the global capitalist economy. In sub-Saharan Africa, where men largely predominate in rural-urban migration, female-headed households are very common in the rural sector. Such households are either under the de facto headship of women, where the latter assume everyday managerial responsibilities for households during the temporary absence of their husbands engaged in migrant labour; or under the de jure headship of women who are recognised by law as heads of households (Brydon and Chant, 1989:55). The latter category of female household heads described as "single" by Ashfar (1991:148) encompasses women who have never set up home with the fathers of their children, or who are legally or permanently separated from them because of divorce, desertion or widowhood.

Ashfar (1991:147) notes that the estimates for female-headed households in the subsistence sector in much of sub-Saharan Africa, generally range between 20-50 percent. For example, in Botswana, the figures range between 20-42 percent; and in Malawi, 28-35 percent. Lesotho, however, has a significantly

higher percentage of female-headed households, ranging between 60-70 percent (Gay, 1982:7). The relatively high proportion of female-headed households in Lesotho has been attributed to its enormous dependence on male migratory labour upon which its economy is largely based (Ashfar, 1991). Bardill and Cobbe (1985) point out that the high incidence of female-headed households in Lesotho as a result of male migratory labour has been accelerated by the early mortality of Basotho miners, either due to accidents in the South-African mines or to work related illnesses incurred during their working careers as miners. Furthermore, they point out that the prolonged separation of spouses which male migratory labour entails has also undermined the stability of the family with the result that there has been a growing number of deserted and separated women who have had to establish their own independent households.

Ashfar (1991:148) argues that despite the increasing incidence of female-headed households, numerous studies in southern and elsewhere in Africa attest to the structural constraints women face in gaining autonomy. While women are for the most part responsible for the domestic unit and the production of household economic resources in the absence of men, there has not been an improvement in their status. The formalisation of customary law during the colonial period, which confined women to the status of jural minors under the "tutelage of husbands, fathers or other kinsmen" continues to limit and constrain their freedom of action and decision-making power (p. 146). Women with absentee husbands may have daily responsibility for household

affairs, but frequently lack *de jure* power and authority to make crucial decisions independently of their husbands. Thus, women find their freedom of action limited by law and custom, particularly by the restrictions placed on them as legal minors.

Discriminatory practises and attitudes regarding the work of women in the food-producing sector adopted during the colonial era, have also been carried over into the post-colonial era as evidenced by the marginalisation of women as agriculturalists. Charlton (1984:32) observes that today in Africa, where old methods of cultivation have been replaced by plough cultivation, men have taken over the ploughing, and it is men rather than women who operate the main farming equipment. In short, men represent modern farming in the village while women represent the old drudgery.

Women still have limited access to and control over resources such as land, technology, credit and training (Due, 1984:23). They face numerous constraints in gaining access to credit from formal credit institutions. Such constraints include cultural, customary and legal restrictions, lack of information, lack of opportunity and lack of collateral and monetary savings to meet interest charges tied to credit loans (p. 23). Due (p. 23) further points out that for some women, the concept of borrowing money may be unfamiliar, while some are often restricted by social norms in interacting with men who frequently control the extension of credit to applicants. Due to custom and male-dominated management, Agricultural Development Banks extend credit

primarily to men, who are the recognized farmers in the agricultural sector (p. 24). If women wish to borrow, they are forced to do so in their husbands' names or in their father's names.

Although women have been excluded from the formal credit system, some have made use of informal credit facilities available to them in the rural villages, such as village-revolving credit associations, informal cooperatives, or the borrowing of money from neighbours and relatives (Due, 1982:24). Revolving credit associations, which are common throughout the developing world, consist of groups of women who agree to contribute regularly to a fund which is paid to each member in turn on a regular rotation. However, this credit facility has not been without problems in view of the fact that in order for it to be equitable and function effectively, all members are required to contribute regularly. The fact that women do not have ready access to regular cash earnings has presented difficulties in ensuring such regular payments.

The following discussion focuses on current institutional constraints that rural Basotho women face towards gaining autonomy and effectively contributing to the development of the subsistence sector. Focus is also placed on examining whether rural Basotho women are able to cope with domestic and food production responsibilities in the absence of shared responsibilities with men.

(d) Current structural constraints: the case of Basotho women

The discussion pertaining to the constraints which Basotho women face in gaining autonomy and increased status is based to a large extent on a study carried out by UNICEF (1985) on the situation of women in Lesotho. Scholars like Maope, 1984; Seeiso, 1982; and Gay, 1982; to mention a few, have written extensively on rural Basotho women. Most of these scholars argue that most of the constraints that Basotho women face in gaining autonomy are rooted in their legal status, which in turn determines their contractual capacity, decision-making powers and access rights to land and credit. They also argue that cultural attitudes reinforced by male oriented institutional structures have continued to deny women wage-employment opportunities in the modern sector. and access to mechanised technology in the agricultural sector.

As mentioned earlier, men predominate in rural-urban migration in Lesotho, leaving women behind to assume full responsibility for household management, agriculture and the maintenance of rural social life. The lack of job opportunities within Lesotho has left men with little choice but to migrate to the industrial heartland of the Republic of South Africa to seek employment.

A number of factors account for the confinement of women to the subsistence sector. The first of these points to the South-African influx control measures instituted by the South-African government. These measures denied women legal access to the South-African labour market (Murray, 1981:27). By means of these influx control measures, the white South-African government forbids

male migrant workers from neighbouring countries to bring their families with them to their place of work. Thus, the present system of labour migration in Lesotho is such that when a man crosses the border to work in the Republic of South Africa, his family is left behind. This forces him to return to his rural base at the end of or between employment contracts. The result, therefore, is the oscillation of male migrants between the rural areas and the South-African mining industries (p:26).

Murray (1981) argues that while such influx control measures were designed to prevent inter-racial contact, in line with the South-African government's policy of Apartheid, they were also instituted to serve the interests of industrial capital. By confining women to the periphery of the industrial centre, the preservation of the social fabric of rural life could be ensured, in turn helping to subsidize the costs incurred by industrial capital in the reproduction of male labour power. Faced with impermeable barriers to full integration within the modern sector, Basotho women have had to remain on its periphery (notably the subsistence sector), reproducing its labour force (Gay, 1980). Gay (1982) describes the "deep sense of frustration" that many rural women experience because they are denied the opportunity of taking their place in the life of the modern industrial world.

A second constraint that rural Basotho women face in gaining access to wage-employment opportunities in the modern sector is imposed by negative male attitudes to female migration to the towns. Wilkinson (1987:233) explains that

Lesotho is a male-dominated society in which men expect women to play a subservient role, remaining in rural areas to perform their allotted domestic tasks while men are absent working in the Republic of South Africa. From these attitudes springs the hostility to female emancipation and the consequent deep suspicion toward the migration of women to urban centres of employment.

The third constraint which women face in migrating to the city to seek wage-employment is imposed by domestic obligations that necessitate their presence in the home. These include child-care and the maintenance of the household and of the domestic economy, responsibilities which conflict with the demands of migrant labour.

The lack of wage-earning opportunities for rural women in the modern sector has left them highly dependent for financial support on their husbands who are migrants workers or other working male relatives (Gordon, 1981). Faced with the aforementioned constraints to their free entry into formal employment in the modern sector, Basotho women have virtually no way of earning enough money to support themselves and their children through their own efforts.

Bardill and Cobbe (1985) argue that households under the permanent headship of women - usually single women who are unattached to a spouse - face the worst form of economic deprivation. Denied access to migrant earnings and work opportunities in the modern sector, these women make up a substantial

percentage of the poorest of the poor (p. 94). Not only do they experience considerable difficulty in satisfying their consumption requirements, but also in obtaining the necessary cash inputs for more successful agricultural and off-farm activities (p. 94). Gay (1982) points out that often-times these women are forced to engage in small scale income generating activities to sustain a means of livelihood. Such activities include petty commodity production or petty commerce trading, which, according to Brydon and Chant (1989:176) are characterised by low capital investment and pay so low that it often falls well below the average minimum salary for formal sector workers.

Gay (1982) points out that the oldest and most common form of petty commodity trade on which most rural women in Lesotho depend to sustain a means of livelihood, is the brewing and selling of sorghum beer. Other subsidiary activities include the making of fat cakes, handicrafts and garden produce for sale in the streets. However, the making of handicrafts often requires training and skill which most women in the rural areas of Lesotho do not have. For this reason, the selling of home-brewed beer and fat cakes has by far been the commonly used form of income generation (p. 46).

Gay (1982) also points out that domestic labour such as babysitting, and housekeeping for more prosperous rural households, are two other occupations in which rural Basotho women predominate, and are also often characterised by low pay and exploitive working conditions. The prominence of women in such occupations is not only brought about by the aforementioned constraints

which prevent their integration into the modern sector, but also by the flexibility of working schedules which these occupations allow, accommodating and closely resembling their own domestic responsibilities.

The disadvantaged economic status of rural Basotho women is also evidenced in their marginalisation as food producers. Men continue to be the recognised farmers despite the fact that women constitute the bulk of the workforce in food production. While women are primarily responsible for feeding their families, they do not have direct access to advanced agricultural technology. Instead, it is older men or migrants (only when they are at home on leave) who operate the modern farming equipment.

Gay (1982) points out that all mechanised farming activities are done by men since they are the ones with the skills to operate and maintain modern farming equipment. Consequently, women must obtain male labour for the initial ploughing and planting that is done with modern agricultural equipment. All labour-intensive operations - which make up 83% of total agricultural labour inputs - are carried out by women (Gay, 1982:41). The tasks women perform in food production are almost entirely those done by hand without animal or mechanical assistance. If crops must be carried home from the fields without the help of tractors, ox-drawn carts, or cattle⁵ it is invariably women who do

⁵ Hammond-Tooke (1974: p. 159) points out that among the southern African Bantu, notions about the ritual impurity of women caused by menstruation continue to keep them away from cattle which they believe are subject to mystical contamination by females.

so (p. 41). Gay (1982) argues that since it is men who control cattle, ploughs and planters, men who drive tractors, men who earn wages with which tractors can be purchased or hired, and men who control most of the government agricultural assistance programs, it is primarily through their relations with men that women can find the means to initiate cultivation (Gay, 1982:38).

The most oppressive institution that has undermined the autonomy of women and hampered their ability to engage in meaningful developmental pursuits in Lesotho is the legal system. For purposes of this study, focus will be directed on the legal status of Basotho women in relation to personal laws, i.e. the effect of marriage on their legal status, their property rights, and their access to essential economic resources.

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, Lesotho has a dual legal system based on Customary law and Roman Dutch law. As Seeiso (1986) explains, Customary law is applied to persons whom the judicial courts have reason to believe that their lifestyles and values are influenced to a large extent by tradition. Similarly, civil law is applied to persons whom the judicial courts are convinced lead a European mode of life. Seeiso (1986) argues that life in the rural areas is in many ways still very traditional, and for this reason the majority of rural Basotho women, with whom this study is concerned, are subject to Customary law. For this reason, special focus must be directed toward the provisions of customary law regarding the status of women, and how these impinge upon women's rights and autonomy. Since Lesotho has a dual legal system, the

provisions of both customary law and civil law regarding the status of women will be discussed.

Maope (1984) observes that the co-existence of the two legal systems in Lesotho in relation to their provisions regarding the status of women, has amounted to double oppression for women. Maope points out that "If one system of law does not incapacitate her, the other often does" (p. 7). Under Civil law, unmarried women who have reached the age of twenty-one years, attain majority status. Majority status implies full legal capacity where a person is permitted by law to do all things possible under the law. This means they can enter legally binding contractual agreements, appear in court independently of a guardian, sue and be sued, and own immovable property. In short, they enjoy legal autonomy. However, once they get married, they automatically fall under the legal guardianship of their husbands and assume minority status (UNICEF, 1985:79).

Under Customary law, however, there is no age of majority in so far as women are concerned. As Maope (1984) observes, Customary law in Lesotho renders women perpetual minors from birth to death. As jural minors under Customary law, women do not enjoy full legal capacity but remain under the legal guardianship of a male representative, either a father, husband, eldest son, father-in-law or brother-in-law where there is no son.

Moitse (1989:12) quoting Boberg in *The Law of Persons and the Family*, states that "of all human institutions, that which exerts the greatest influence upon the status of women in the field of private law is marriage". At marriage, men are defined as heads of their families under both civil law and customary law. As family heads, they assume full authority over the wives and their view predominates in all household affairs.

A Civil/Christian rites marriage is in community of property, unless the two parties concerned have entered into a pre-nuptial contract. Community of property means that both spouses commonly own the property each brought into the marriage as well as that acquired during the marriage. In theory, this means that both spouses have equal shares in the property, (UNICEF, 1985:76). In reality, however, this ideal is never realised because of the unequal status the law accords to the parties at marriage. In terms of the property regime governing such a marriage, the husband assumes the marital power, which automatically gives him authority over his wife's person and property. By marrying in community of property, the wife becomes a minor and her husband becomes her guardian, not only as regards her person but also as regards her property (p. 76). The guardianship which the husband exercises over his wife's property gives him the exclusive right to manage and administer all the property belonging to the joint estate. He may freely alienate, pledge or mortgage his wife's movable or immovable property without her consent (p. 77). Seeiso (1986:8) points out that the marital powers of the husband in a joint estate were endorsed by the 1968 Deeds Registry Act which directs that

no immovable property shall be registered in the name of a woman married in community of property. This, therefore, makes it easy for the husband to do as he pleases without the wife's knowledge or consent.

Like all minors, a woman married in community of property has no judicial capacity or *locus standi in judicio*⁶, and therefore cannot enter into any contract without the expressed or implied consent of her husband (UNICEF, 1985:77). Any legal agreement entered into without the said consent of her husband is considered void and would bind neither her nor her husband.

The study carried out by UNICEF (1985) of the situation of women in Lesotho demonstrates that the proprietary and personal consequences of civil marriage for women are similar but not the same as those provided under customary law. While there is a semblance of community of property in customary marriages that could resemble civil marriages, the husband is not allowed to deal with the property of the joint estate as he pleases (UNICEF, 1985:79). If he alienates any property of the joint estate without consulting his wife, such a transaction is challenged and might even be invalidated by other family members. Nevertheless, the husband is sole administrator of the joint estate, and in the final analysis, his view predominates in household affairs (Moitse, 1989:25).

⁶ *Locus Standi in Judicio* refers to the ability to represent oneself in a court of law, to sue and be sued directly in any civil matter.

As head of the family under customary law, the husband acts as an intermediary between the family and the outside world. Any business deals entered into by any member of the family including his wife are effected through his intervention and consent. During the marriage, there is a semblance of community of property, but in actual fact the husband owns all the property of the joint estate (UNICEF, 1985:79). Such absolute ownership becomes evident when the marriage comes to an end, since the wife would only be entitled to take with her her personal effects. As in marriages contracted under civil law, a man married under customary law assumes legal guardianship over his wife and children alike, who are minors under the law (p. 79).

As mentioned previously, under Customary law, all women, regardless of marital status, are perpetual jural minors falling under the legal guardianship of male relatives. Unmarried women and women who are separated, deserted or divorced, fall under the guardianship of their father. Upon the father's death, they fall under the legal guardianship of the heir of the family, who is usually the first male child of the parents; or, where there is no such male child, the father's brothers or uncles. A married woman automatically falls under the guardianship of her husband and her minority status continues even after her husband's death, in which case she is answerable to her late husband's brothers, uncles or son, if he has reached majority status (Seeiso, 1986).

As jural minors under Customary law, women do not have legal capacity and cannot enter into contractual agreements without the expressed consent of their legal guardians. Lack of contractual capacity means the inability to enter into a legal agreement of any sort - employment for example - or to apply for a loan or credit from a formal credit institution without the expressed consent or intervention of a male guardian (Maope, 1982). Under customary law, only majors may hold title to immovable property such as land (Moitse, 1989). Therefore, as jural minors, women cannot hold title to immovable property such as land, and their property rights are restricted to mere use rights over land that is registered under the name of either a husband, if she is married, or another male relative, if she is single.

After carrying out a study on the legal status of women in Lesotho, Moitse (1989) observed that many of the injustices of customary law impinge more on married women, who by virtue of their marital status, are subject to the authority and guardianship of their husbands. While customary law confers minority status on women regardless of marital status, in practise there "exists a tentative acceptance of a form of tacit emancipation for single women" (p. 24), who often set up their own independent households and become recognised heads of their households. However, Moitse does not explain in what way single women enjoy this tacit form of emancipation which would give them more autonomy than married women. On the whole, the minority status of Basotho women as defined by the legal system has serious implications for their status. Not only does it impinge upon their social

autonomy but it also blocks their opportunities for attaining economic empowerment. As minors, they are unable to gain access to essential resources that would enable them to engage in meaningful development pursuits and enhance their economic autonomy. This means they cannot hold title to land, and cannot get access to credit from formal credit institutions as credit is often based on command over land or other valuable assets that serve as collateral. Similarly, formal credit institutions will not extend loans or credit to women independently of a male representative, which in itself may pose a disincentive for women to initiate development activities. Women's lack of contractual capacity not only hinders their ability to enter contractual agreements with a view to getting credit, but also, in the case of married women, affects their ability to seek employment without the consent or intervention of their spouses. In fact, married women must obtain their husbands' consent in order to enter into employment contracts. A husband, if not consulted, is empowered by law to remove his wife from her place of employment (Moitse, 1989). Again, this affects a woman's autonomy and opportunity to enhance her own economic position independently of the willingness or intervention of her spouse.

Equally instrumental in undermining the status of women and frustrating their developmental initiatives is the marital power which men assume at marriage, giving them the ultimate say in household affairs. UNICEF (1985:25) makes reference to an observation made by Madland (1977) who points out that even when men are absent migrants engaged in wage-employment at the South-

African mines, they continue to be recognised by law as household heads who reserve the right to make final decisions regarding household affairs. While wives are left behind to assume sole responsibility for managing the domestic economy, women nonetheless often find it difficult to advance their own ideas since it is still their husbands who make final decisions. This factor has been a serious constraint on the autonomy of women who are left behind to run the domestic economy and the household.

In Lesotho today, there exist two major formal credit institutions at the national level, namely the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank and Co-op Lesotho. The Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank was established in 1976, but only became operational in 1980 to support the needs of individual farmers and to agricultural credit to agriculture at the district and village levels. However, it has not been able to extend much credit to women for lack of collateral.

It is, however, worth noting that women in Lesotho have not always taken a passive and helpless stance despite the structural constraints they face in acquiring credit. On the contrary, most rural women have joined informal village credit associations or cooperatives as a means of obtaining credit for small scale agro-based income generating activities (Gay, 1982). However, credit received from such cooperatives is often not sufficient to pursue viable agricultural initiatives. Furthermore, women's informal groups and associations face many problems when seeking financial assistance from the formally established financial institutions. This is because cooperative members usually

do not have enough valuable assets to pledge as security when applying for credit, since formal credit institutions normally require a minimum security level of at least fifty percent of the loan value (UNICEF, 1986:20). Even when individual members are in a position to pledge their own assets on behalf of the cooperative, they still face the problem of having to seek the expressed permission of their husbands before using these assets as collateral for the benefit of the group (p. 20). The study by UNICEF (1985) also revealed that another factor which has greatly hampered the ability of women's groups to get financial assistance from formally established credit institutions is the tendency for women's groups not to be formally recognised by law.

Not only do rural Basotho women face these structural constraints in gaining autonomy and enhanced status, but the absence of the majority of able-bodied men from the subsistence sector because of their engagement in migrant labour, has placed a considerable amount of strain on women. The departure of men from the subsistence sector as a result of industrialisation has increased the amount of work women have had to shoulder in the household and in the domestic economy. Olenja (1990:268) makes the very important observation that in the traditional food-production system in Africa, there was a clear, balanced and complementary division of labour such that men would clear the fields, women would cultivate, and both would be involved in harvesting the crop. Today, it is no longer possible to identify any society which strictly adheres to this model. The entrance of most developing countries into a

broader system of production depletes the subsistence sector of the manpower essential to it, and affects the functioning of the household.

In the absence of a significant proportion of manpower, Basotho women have had to assume full responsibility for agricultural activities in the subsistence sector in addition to household responsibilities. A study carried out by Gordon (1981) on the impact of male migratory labour on the lives of wives of migrant workers, reveals that in the majority of cases, migrants' wives felt overburdened with responsibilities. The study further revealed that the majority of migrants' wives experience a considerable amount of strain in view of the added roles they have to perform as sole mentors of their children and managers of their households and domestic economy.

Gordon (1981) argues that far from the commonly held assumption that women receive assistance from related kin in the absence of their husbands, women are basically on their own. She argues that the ties of the extended family which provided cooperative labour under the traditional subsistence economy, have loosened. This is partly a result of migration, which absents many men from family and kin group, leaving few men available to take over the responsibilities of those who are away (p. 62). The few who are left clearly cannot begin to fulfill all the functions of those who are absent. Since a considerable number of women are left behind, including women who are single and basically on their own, sympathy for a particular woman's plight may not be forthcoming. The fact that, on average, a migrant's absence from Lesotho

may extend over a period of fifteen years or more, has also played a part in the dispassionate attitude toward supporting women in their plight(p. 73). While a kinsman might feel some obligation to help a woman left alone for a limited period, he may be hard-pressed to feel such enthusiasm when it means permanently taking her responsibilities upon himself.

On the basis of the available literature pertaining to the situation of women in Lesotho, it appears that male migratory labour has done little to enhance the status of women left behind in the subsistence sector. While women assume full managerial responsibilities for their households and domestic economy in the absence of their migrant spouses, custom and statutory laws subordinate them to the overriding authority of their husbands or male relatives. Subject to the authority of their husbands, women have limited decision-making power in the subsistence sector, a factor which appears to constrain their development initiatives. Furthermore, being defined as minors under the legal system, women have limited access to essential economic resources, which may only be acquired through male representatives who hold majority status.

The disadvantaged status of rural Basotho women is also evidenced by their limited access to cash earnings derived from work in the modern sector. Restricted by cultural norms, and by discriminatory laws instituted by the South-African government to deny women legal access to the South-African labour market, rural Basotho women remain confined to the subsistence sector.

Those who cannot rely on migrants' remittances are forced to engage in low-paying occupations within the confines of the subsistence sector.

Furthermore, while rural Basotho women are primarily responsible for food production in the subsistence sector, they have limited access to advanced agricultural machinery. All mechanised farming operations are undertaken by men who, as the recognised farmers, have direct access to such equipment and the skills to use them.

Finally, the literature argues that the large-scale withdrawal of men from the subsistence sector to take up wage-employment has caused rural Basotho women a considerable amount of strain in view of the increased roles they must perform in the absence of men. In the absence of shared responsibilities with men, women have had to assume sole responsibility for maintaining both their households and the subsistence economy.

Critique of the literature

Overall, the literature highlights most of the key structural constraints that rural Basotho women face in participating in the development of the subsistence sector, and in gaining direct access to essential economic resources. The literature demonstrates that most of the constraints women face in the rural sector are rooted in the cultural and legal structures of the Basotho. These structures are male-biased, institutionalising male authority and control over

essential economic resources. However, there is a general lack of empirical data to substantiate these views.

Literature pertaining to the legal constraints that women face provides a general review of the provisions of the legal system regarding the legal status of women and the effects of that system on women's decision-making power and their ability to gain independent access to vital economic resources. The literature also tends to generalise about the legal constraints that Basotho women face, without addressing the specific situations of three different groups of women in that society: migrants' wives, single women and women whose husbands are not migrant workers. There is, therefore, a need to more closely examine the specific legal situations of each of these groups of women, in order to determine whether all women in the subsistence sector do, in fact, face legal constraints or if there are informal means by which they may exercise legal autonomy. This would help to better establish whether male migratory labour has had significant impact on the legal status of women left behind.

As mentioned in the literature, Moitse (1989) argues that even though all women, regardless of marital status, are defined as minors under customary law, single women enjoy tacit emancipation. This gives them more legal autonomy than married women. However, the literature does not substantiate this view by demonstrating how single women enjoy more legal autonomy than married women. There is, therefore, a need to verify this view by means of

empirical data, and to establish in what way or ways single women may enjoy more tacit emancipation than their married counterparts.

The study carried out by Gordon (1981) on the impact of male migratory labour on women in the subsistence sector focused only on migrants' wives. Through the use of empirical data, Gordon was able to establish that the majority of migrants' wives experience considerable strain in the absence of shared responsibilities with men. However, single women were excluded from the study, although they constitute a substantial proportion of the female adult population which assumes household headship as a direct or indirect result of male migratory labour. Women whose husbands are not migrant workers (and who might have been used as a comparison group) were also excluded from the study. Assessing the overall impact of migratory labour on women in the subsistence sector would, therefore, necessitate a comparative study in which the situations of migrants' wives and single women are compared with that of women whose husbands' are not migrant workers.

Overall, the literature pertaining to the constraints that Basotho women face tends to generalise its conclusions to all women without addressing the situations of each group of women separately. What is therefore needed is a comparative study in which the status of women without husbands in the household is compared with that of women whose husbands are not migrant workers, in order to assess whether there are any significant differences.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

Introduction

In the absence of sufficient empirical data in the literature pertaining to the status of migrants' wives and single women, this study will seek to test the relationship proposed between male migratory labour and the status of women left behind in the subsistence sector. However, to fully establish if male migratory labour has had an impact on the status of rural Basotho women, it is necessary to adopt a comparative analysis in which the status of migrants' wives and the status of single women are compared with that of women whose husbands are not migrant workers. Similarly, in testing the proposed relationship between male migratory labour and the experiencing of strain by women who are left behind, it is necessary to adopt a comparative analysis by which the situation of migrants' wives and single women can be compared with that of women whose husbands are not migrant workers.

The study is also descriptive in so far as it seeks to gain more insight into the demographic characteristics of households headed by migrants' wives and by single women. Due to the comparative nature of the study, the demographic characteristics of households headed by migrants' wives and by single women will be compared with those of households under the headship of resident men.

On the basis of a review of the literature, two major propositions are developed in response to the specific areas of inquiry regarding the impact of male migrant

labour on Basotho women in the subsistence sector. The first proposition states that overall, male migratory labour in Lesotho has not resulted in increased status for women who have been left behind to maintain the subsistence sector. While Basotho women have assumed more managerial responsibilities in the household and domestic economy in the absence of men, this has not resulted in any significant improvement in their status. Male-oriented institutional structures continue to centralise power in the hands of men by giving them exclusive access and control over essential means of production.

The second proposition holds that male migratory labour in Lesotho has resulted in the experiencing of strain by women who have been left behind to maintain the subsistence sector. Since the inception of the cash economy that drew a predominantly male proletariat towards the industrial centres of employment (notably the mining industries in the Republic of South Africa), Basotho women have been left alone to assume full responsibility for both household and subsistence farming concerns. Consequently, Basotho women experience a considerable amount of strain in view of the more demanding roles they must perform in the absence of men.

The key concepts identified with respect to the first proposition are "male migratory labour" and "the status of women". The key concepts identified with respect to the second proposition are "male migratory labour" and "strain".

The following discussion focuses on the way these concepts are defined and operationalised to facilitate measurement in testing the two major propositions.

THE CONCEPT AND MEANING OF "MALE MIGRATORY LABOUR" AND "THE STATUS OF WOMEN"

Male Migratory Labour

On the basis of Murray's description, male migratory labour in Lesotho (1981:26) has been defined as the movement of men between their rural home base and the industrial centres of employment, notably the mining industries of the Republic of South Africa. Male migratory labour was then indicated by the absence of male household heads from households, as a result of their migration to the employment centres. This was done by visiting households headed by women at the time of the survey, and inquiring whether the absence of men from their households was a result of migration to the employment centres to find jobs. Thus, the absence of male heads from households as a result of migration to centers of employment in search of wage-employment, has been considered an indication of male migratory labour.

The Status of Women

The concept of "the status of women" is based on the definition provided by Achola and Seidman (1976:1) in their article, "A proposed model of the status of women in Africa". They define "the status of women" as women's socially defined access to the means of production and their participation in the

production process. Following are seven indicators that were used to measure the status of Basotho women in light of this definition.

Level of decision-making

The respondent women were asked about the extent to which they are able to make decisions regarding domestic and subsistence farming concerns. Respondents who said that they assume full decision-making responsibility in these domains, independently of their husbands or any other relative, were viewed as decision-makers and therefore viewed as having increased status.

Decision-making with respect to domestic activities involved child discipline, and the allocation and use of resources such as money to meet a variety of household needs, including the property, medical, and educational needs of household members. Decision-making in subsistence farming involved deciding how to use the land, what crops to grow, when to grow them, and how. Since very few of the respondents interviewed reported owning livestock, livestock management was not regarded as a major agricultural activity.

Level of managerial responsibility

Respondents were asked whether they assume full managerial responsibility in the domestic domain and in subsistence farming. A response that indicated full assumption of managerial responsibility in both spheres of activity was considered an indicator of increased status for women. Managerial

responsibility involves ensuring the implementation of decisions regarding domestic activities and subsistence farming.

Legal status

As an important factor determining women's direct access to essential means of production, women's legal status was included as another indicator of the status of women. Due to the various marital statuses of the respondents, different measures of legal status are used. Single women were asked whether they were able to represent themselves in court independently of male representation. A response that indicated independent legal representation was viewed as an indicator of increased status.

All married women were asked what property regime governs their marriages. Those married under customary law or civil law (and in community of property with the marital power) were viewed as not having legal autonomy and therefore, as not having increased status.

Access to credit

Respondents were asked whether they had been able to gain access to credit from formal or informal credit institutions independently of their husbands or some other male relative. A response that indicated successful independent acquisition of credit was viewed as an indicator of increased status.

Title to land

All women whose households had landholdings were asked if the land allocations were registered in their names. A response indicating that landholdings were registered under the respondent's name was viewed as an indicator of increased status.

Access to agricultural machinery

The women were asked if they had direct access to agricultural machinery such as tractors, planters and ploughs to initiate agricultural production. Direct access to agricultural machinery was considered to include ownership of capital and the ability to use it. A responses that indicated direct access to agricultural machinery was viewed as an indicator of increased status.

Contractual capacity

The ability to enter contractual agreements independently of male intervention or representation was another indicator used to measure women's status. A response that indicated the ability to enter contractual agreements independently of a spouse or other male relative was viewed as an indicator of the women's increased status.

Level of financial independence

Respondents were asked to identify their chief source of income. Those who reported relying on someone else's earnings - notably those of a husband or other male relative - as their chief source of income, were viewed as financially

dependent and therefore as having weak financial status. Respondents who reported being solely responsible for their chief source of income were viewed as financially independent. However, their financial independence in this respect was contingent upon whether the income for which they were solely responsible was sufficient to provide a means of livelihood.

Strain

Drawing on Gordon's discussion of strain (in the literature) as experienced by Basotho women in the absence of husbands from the household, *strain* was conceptualised as the difficulty felt in fulfilling role obligations. As discussed in the literature, Gordon (1981) explains that the majority of Basotho women who assume household headship largely as a result of male migratory labour, experience considerable strain. They experience strain as a result of the more demanding roles they must perform in the absence of shared responsibilities with men.

To establish the presence or absence of strain, respondents were asked whether they were able to cope with the roles for which they are responsible in either or both the household and the domestic economy. A response that indicated inability to cope with responsibilities in either or both of subsistence farming and the household were viewed as indicators of strain.

MAJOR HYPOTHESES TESTED

Below are a series of hypotheses derived from the operationalisation of the key concepts, which were tested to establish the validity of the two major propositions developed.

1. What impact has male migratory labour had on the status of Basotho women who have been left behind to maintain the subsistence sector?
 - (a) The presence or absence of men from the household does not affect the level of women's decision-making ability regarding household concerns independently of their menfolk. Women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to make independent final decisions regarding household concerns than women whose husbands are present in the household.
 - (b) The presence or absence of men from the household is not related to the ability of women to make final decisions regarding agricultural concerns independently of their menfolk. Women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to make final decisions independently, regarding agricultural concerns, than women whose husbands are present in the household.
 - (c) The presence or absence of men from the household is related to the level of responsibility women assume in seeing to the implementation of household concerns. Women whose husbands are absent from the

household assume more responsibility in ensuring that day-to-day household concerns are carried out, than women whose husbands are present in the household.

(d) The presence or absence of men from the household is related to the level of responsibility women assume in seeing to the implementation of subsistence farming concerns. Women whose husbands are absent from the household assume more responsibility in ensuring that day-to-day agricultural concerns are carried out than women whose husbands are present in the household.

(e) The presence or absence of men from the household is not related to the ability of women to acquire direct access to credit independently of a spouse or other male relative. Women without husbands and women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to acquire direct access to credit independently of a male relative or spouse than women whose husbands are present in the household.

(f) The presence or absence of men from the household is not related to the ability of women to hold title to land. Women without husbands and women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to hold title to land than women whose husbands are present in the household.

(g) The presence or absence of men from the household is not related to the ability of women to represent themselves legally, independently of a spouse or male relative. Women without husbands, and women whose husbands are absent from the household, are no more able to represent themselves legally, independently of a male relative or spouse than women whose husbands are present in the household.

(h) The presence or absence of men from the household is not related to the ability of women to enter contractual agreements independently of a spouse or male relative. Neither women without husbands nor women whose husbands are absent from the household are any more able to enter contractual agreements independently of a spouse or other male relative.

(i) The presence or absence of men from the household is not related to the level of financial independence of women left behind. Women without husbands are no more financially independent than women with husbands.

(j) The presence or absence of men from the household is related to women's access to labour in carrying out subsistence farming activities. Women whose husbands are absent from the household, and women without husbands, have limited access to labour for carrying out

subsistence farming activities compared with women whose husbands are present in the household.

(k) The presence or absence of men from the household is not related to women's direct access to agricultural machinery for the purpose of subsistence farming. Women without husbands in the household are no more able to acquire direct access to agricultural machinery than women whose husbands are present in the household.

2. Has male migratory labour resulted in the experiencing of strain by women who have been left behind to maintain the subsistence sector?

(a) The presence or absence of men from the household is related to the difficulty felt in carrying out role obligations in the domestic domain. Women without husbands and women whose husbands are absent from the household are more likely to be unable to cope with domestic responsibilities than women whose husbands are present in the household.

(b) The presence or absence of men from the household is related to the difficulty felt in carrying out role obligations in the subsistence farming domain. Women without husbands and women whose husbands are absent from the household are more likely to be unable to

cope with subsistence farming responsibilities than women whose husbands are present in the household.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A cross-sectional survey was carried out in the village of Ha Theko through the use of structured and semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured questions were included to facilitate flexibility in response, and elaboration on certain aspects of the interview schedule that required detailed information and clarification.

Interviews consisted of questions designed to test the major hypotheses regarding the impact of male migratory labour on Basotho women. Included in the interviews were questions central to the purpose of the study. These included questions pertaining to the women's legal status, contractual capacity, land rights, credit rights, financial status and whether or not they experienced strain.

The interview was divided into four sections. The first section consisted of questions pertaining to the demographic profile of the households and personal particulars of the women interviewed. Since the nature of the study is comparative, necessitating a comparison of the women across the three household types, the rest of the interview was accordingly divided into three sections. Each section consisted of questions specific to a particular group of respondents. While these sections consisted of slightly different questions in

view of the different situations of the women, attempts were made to ensure uniformity of questioning in order to allow for comparison.

The original interview guide was written in English; for that reason, it could not be directly administered to the subjects under study since most do not speak English. Therefore, a Lecturer from the National University of Lesotho, who is both Sesuth- and English- speaking, was present during the interviews to translate the questions into the local language, Sesuto; and the responses into English. (See appendix for Sesuth translation of the interview guide).

FIELD STUDY

Overall, the entire survey took a period of four weeks, with the first week used for the purpose of pre-testing the interview guide. In view of time constraints in conducting the actual study, the pilot study was carried out in the same village where the actual survey was later conducted.

Also in view of time constraints, an assistant was obtained to help complete the fieldwork. The ideal candidate for this job would have been a student from the Department of Sociology at the National University of Lesotho, who would have had some experience in Sociological research. However, this was not possible, as the author's return to Lesotho for data collection coincided with the end of the university's academic year. By this time, all those students who might have been considered to assist had gone home. Financial constraints

were another factor that made it impossible to get a qualified research assistant who would have expected a high level of payment.

In view of these difficulties, the services of a young Mosotho girl were obtained, who, although she had no formal training in Sociological research, nor experience in conducting interviews, nonetheless gave invaluable moral support during the entire survey, helping to combat the loneliness of the fieldwork and to boost my morale in moments of despair when faced with hostility and rejection by the village women.

Pilot study

To test the interview guide in order to determine whether it was properly designed to answer the main research questions, it was important to select a rural village from which a good proportion of migrant workers are drawn. Ha Theko village was identified as a suitable locale, as it is situated within the foothills region of Lesotho, an ecological zone from which the great majority of Basotho migrant workers are drawn.

It is protocol for an outsider carrying out a survey for whatever purpose in any Sotho village to introduce himself or herself to the headman of the village and seek his permission to carry out such an undertaking. Failure to do so is considered an offense and the village headman reserves the right to expel such an outsider from the village.

An appointment was made to meet with the headman of the Ha Theko village to obtain his permission to conduct interviews with some of the resident women. Permission was granted and work was started according to plan. The initial plan was to draw up a list of households from the Ha Theko village with the assistance of the village headman, and group them under three categories: (i) households under the temporary headship of women whose husbands are absent migrant workers; (ii) households under the permanent headship of women who were separated, deserted, widowed or unmarried; (iii) and households with women whose husbands were not migrant workers. From the sampling frame, a stratified sampling method was to be used by which a uniform quota of households was to be selected — representing all three categories — with approximately five households in each category.

The reality of the field setting was such that a sampling procedure different from the one originally planned had to be used. To begin with, the village headman was old and did not keep a formal record of the village household censuses although he remembered details of some. He also did not have a clear idea of where most of households he knew of were situated within the village. In the absence of a sampling frame from which to draw a sample, combined with the fact that it seemed impractical and time consuming to search through the entire village for households which the village headman might have known, a different sampling procedure was employed. We therefore decided to go straight into the village, starting from an area that seemed to be centrally located within the village (where the village schools,

trading stores and the flour mill are situated) to draw a sample by using a systematic sampling procedure. By means of this sampling procedure, every other household we came across was to be visited, beginning with one selected arbitrarily within the centre of the village. Thus the plan was to continue in this manner until we obtained a sample comprised of an equal number of household types - specifically five households in each household type. Again, a number of factors worked against this method. First of all, some of the households that should have been visited according to the planned sampling procedure, were deserted. Secondly, the unwillingness of some household members to stop the threatening barks of their watchdogs presented a threat to us, with the result that we were unable to enter their compounds and were therefore obliged to move on. However, the most significant problem we encountered lay in the seemingly disproportionate distribution of household types among the fifteen households visited. Nine of the fifteen households visited were of the migratory household type, four were female-headed (non-migratory), and two were male-headed (non-migratory).

In view of the seemingly higher proportion of migratory household types relative to the other two household types, it became evident that striving to obtain equal representation of the three household types during the actual survey might prove a gross misrepresentation of the actual distribution of the three household types within the village.

Faced with the aforementioned constraints to using the systematic stratified sampling procedure, and the seemingly disproportionate distribution of household types within the village, a different sampling procedure was adopted for the final survey.

The actual survey

By the time we conducted the final survey, a number of things had become clear. The original sampling procedure could not be relied on because of the experiences we had encountered during the pilot study. With the seemingly higher proportion of migratory households relative to the two non-migratory types of household, we abandoned the idea of striving to obtain an equal number of households in each household type. Instead, we planned to visit as many households as possible, to ensure representation of all three household types without adhering to any systematic sampling procedure.

Starting from what appeared to be the central point of the village (that is where the village schools, trading stores, flour mill, etcetra, were located), my assistant and I moved along the main footpath of the village visiting households that appeared not to be deserted and did not have watch dogs that presented a threat. We also abandoned the idea of trying to obtain an equal number of each type of household, but strove to visit as many households as possible to ensure all three household types were adequately represented. In the end, thirty-two households were visited, sixteen of which were migratory, thirteen of which were non-migratory (female headed), and three of which were non-

migratory (male-headed). Given that the number of households within the Ha Theko village was approximately sixty at the time of the survey (a fact obtained from the village headman), thirty-two households appeared to be sufficiently representative of all the households in the village. However, there was a major problem with the distribution of these households: non-migratory (male-headed) households were greatly under-represented. While the small number of male-headed households did not allow for adequate representation of male headed-households, their under-representation could have been a manifestation of the actual distribution of male-headed households within the village relative to the other two household types. Given that Ha Theko village is situated in a region from which the majority of migrants are drawn, this would not be surprising.

Description of field interview

Interviews were conducted with: (i) women who were temporarily heading their households pending the return of their migrant husbands; (ii) women whose husbands were not migrant workers; (iii) and women who were the permanent heads of their households. In the male-headed households, we were required by custom to seek permission from the male heads to interview their wives. In all instances, permission was granted.

For every visit made, my assistant and I introduced ourselves, and explained the purpose of our visit in detail. This was done to alleviate any possible apprehension or suspicion on the part of respondents regarding the purpose of

our visit. This was particularly important since the survey was being conducted only a few weeks after an attempted military coup in that country. It was our belief, therefore, that the unstable political climate might cause a great deal of tension and suspicion among village residents, particularly towards anyone who was obviously foreign to the village and who could be mistaken for a government representative.

What turned out to be the most difficult part of the undertaking was overcoming the initial hostility among most of the women towards us. They felt that our objective was to make money out of the information given. They complained bitterly about the way they had been deceived in the past by researchers like ourselves, who had claimed to interview them for purposes of improving their overall standard of living. We therefore had a very difficult time trying to convince them that we had no intention of making money out of the interviews. While most would eventually relent and participate in the interviews, some would ask us to leave. However, this happened only in the minority of cases.

Description of the Ha Theko village

The Ha Theko village, named after the Chief under whose jurisdiction the village fell at the time of the survey, is situated about forty-five kilometres from Maseru, the capital city of Lesotho. The road that links the village to the capital city is in fairly good condition, and public transport that shuttles between the centre and the village is fairly reliable.

However, the village is not fully developed in terms of its infrastructure. The roads within the village are in poor condition, and the most commonly used shelters are mud huts thatched with straw that do not provide sufficient insulation, particularly in winter. There is also a lack of essential social services such as an extensive village water-supply system, electricity, medical and banking services, and good educational facilities. The few trading stores that exist within the village are owned by small business traders and only stock basic commodities.

Most inhabitants of Ha Theko rely mainly on collected firewood and dried cow dung for fuel. A good proportion of the villagers who are not engaged in formal sector employment are unable to afford the installation of electricity, and the purchase of proper cooking facilities such as stoves. Consequently, they rely on firewood and dried cow dung to provide fuel for cooking, which is normally done outside their huts or, when it is cold, indoors where there is no adequate ventilation. Those who manage to obtain a steady income which is nonetheless usually below the minimum wage level, use kerosene cooking facilities.

Ha Theko village could be described as rural in so far as some of its residents are tied to the land in order to sustain a means of livelihood. Eighteen of the thirty-two households visited had landholdings. However, population growth over the past decade has put considerable pressure on the land. As a result, there is insufficient land available for allocation to new arrivals who for the

most part are migrants from the mountainous regions, settling in the foothills to gain easier access to employment opportunities. Most respondents who reported not having landholdings were relatively new in the area and explained that by the time they settled in Ha Theko village, there was not enough land available for allocation. Most households with landholdings were those of long-standing residents of the village who were able to get land allocations before the village population grew. In support of this assertion, fourteen of the households visited during data collection had no landholdings in comparison to eighteen that had land.

While there seemed to be a growing number of landless households, a system of sharecropping by which the landless provide their labour to those with land, thereby getting a share of the produce, has ensured a continuing trend of subsistence farming on which the majority depend for survival. Lesotho's impoverished economy that has led to a high level of unemployment, has left most of the inhabitants of Ha Theko, largely women, with no option but to find means and ways of survival within the confines of the village.

Livestock management does not constitute a major part of agricultural activities undertaken in Ha Theko village. This has been attributed to the decline in available grazing land due to the pressures of population growth. Pastoralism is practised as major agricultural activity in the mountain regions of the country where there is plenty of grazing land for cattle and small livestock. The headman of Ha Theko pointed out that only a few villagers own cattle, which

are mainly used for transporting the harvest from the fields to the village and to draw ploughs in the cultivation of fields. Only one respondent in the migratory type of household reported that her household had cattle. The rearing and selling of chickens was a commonly mentioned activity by which most of the respondents generate part of their household income.

While Ha Theko portrays the characteristics of a rural village, it would be erroneous to claim that it is completely untouched by the influence of a cash economy and urbanisation. A shortage of land, and of money for the purchase of agricultural upgrades to boost productivity, has necessitated the migration of most of Ha Theko's adult male inhabitants in search of short-term or long-term wage-employment in urban centres. Migrants take up such employment either as a means of supplementing the subsistence economy or as their sole means of livelihood. Ha Theko women pointed out that the South-African mining industry was the main area of employment for the majority of male migrant workers from Ha Theko village.

The existence of schools, trading stores, and churches in the Ha Theko village provided further evidence of western influence and urbanisation. As well, the operation of a cash economy alongside traditional subsistence farming is testimony to the influence of urbanisation. All respondents reported that they either purchased all their foodstuffs from local stores or supplemented subsistence farming with purchased goods.

CHAPTER 4

THE PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

As previously mentioned in the chapter entitled "Methodology", the entire sample was made up of thirty-two respondents. Of those thirty-two, sixteen were wives of migrant workers who assumed temporary household headship pending the return of their husbands; three were women whose husbands were not migrant workers and therefore resident household heads; and thirteen were single women who assumed permanent household headship. Of the thirteen single women categorised as permanent household heads, seven were widows, three were separated, one had been deserted and two were unmarried.

For the purpose of data presentation, all respondents were grouped under three different household types: (i) all wives of migrant workers were grouped under the female-headed (migratory) household type; (ii) all single women were grouped under the non-migratory (female-headed) household type, while all respondents whose husbands were not migrant workers were grouped under non-migratory (male headed) households.

On the whole, each of the three household types portrayed different demographic characteristics that set it apart from the others. On average, the wives of migrant workers were found to be the youngest of the three groups of women, with an average age of 27 years, while the women in the non-migratory (male-headed) households were the oldest with an average age of 57

years. The women in the non-migratory (female headed) households averaged 46 years.

The three household types also varied with respect to size. On average, migratory households had the highest number of household members with a mean number of five persons per household; while the male-headed (non-migratory) households had the least number of household members with a mean number of three persons per household. Children (including the offspring and relatives of the respondents) ranged in age from six to twenty, and constituted the majority of household members in both the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) households.

With respect to the offspring of the respondents, none were reported resident in the non-migratory (male-headed) households. However, they were reported present in the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) households, with migratory households having a higher average number of resident offspring per household.

On average, male adults (twenty-one to forty-nine years of age), all of whom were adult children of the respondents, constituted a very small proportion of resident members in both the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) types of households. On the other hand, none were reported present in the non-migratory (male-headed) households. Each of the three non-migratory (male-headed) households had one adult male resident (fifty years and over),

who were notably husbands of the respondents and retired migrants; while no adult males were resident in the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) household types.

Table 1 (p. 115) summarises the aforementioned demographic features of the three household types, in addition to other features not discussed.

Table 1			
Demographic features of migratory, non-migratory, female-headed and non-migratory male-headed household types.			
	Migratory	Non-Migratory	
Average Age of Respondents	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	27	46	57
MERIDIAN	31	47	60
RANGE	18-50	25-57	45 - 65
Average # of Persons Including Respondent	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	5	4	3
MERIDIAN	4	5	3
RANGE	2-12	1-8	3-5
Average # of Children 6-20 Years* ⁷	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	2.37	2	0.66
RANGE	0-7	0 - 5	0-1

7

Resident children include sons and daughters, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren of the respondents.

Average # of Offspring Under 6 Years of Age	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	1	0.076	-
Average # of Offspring 6-20 Years	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	2	1.38	-
Average # of Male Children 6-20 Years	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	0.93	0.23	0.33
RANGE	0-2	0-1	0-1
Average # of Female Children 6-20 Years	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	1.43	1.23	0.33
RANGE	0-3	0-3	0-1
Average # of Male Adults 21-49 Years	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	0.19	0.31	-
RANGE	0-2	0-1	-
Average # of Female Adults 21-49 Years	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	Male-headed (3)
MEAN	1	1	0.66
MERIDIEN	1	1	0
RANGE	0-2	0-2	0-2
Average # of Male Adults 50 + Years	Female-headed (16)	Female-headed (13)	(Male-headed) (3)

The variation in the demographic characteristics of the three household types appears to be closely tied to the stage each has reached in its developmental cycle. For instance, the variation in the mean age of the respondents per household type and the average number of resident offspring under twenty-one years of age per household type, suggests that the households are at different stages in their developmental cycle (see table 1). The fact that, on average, women in migratory households are relatively young and have the highest proportion of resident offspring under twenty years of age suggests that the migratory households are still at the early stages of their developmental cycle. This is also indicated by the absence of husbands in the migratory households and the presence of husbands in the male headed (non-migratory) households who were all reported to be retired migrants. The fact that husbands are absent from migratory households in order to take up wage-employment suggests that they are still in their prime years and relatively young. On the other hand, the presence of husbands in the non-migratory (male-headed) households who were reported to be retired migrant workers, suggests that they are no longer in their prime years. Thus migratory households appear to represent the early stages in the developmental cycle of the rural Sotho Household, while the non-migratory (male-headed) households appear to represent its later stages.

While not all households will fall under the permanent headship of women (such as those headed by single women) at some point in their developmental cycle, those that do appear to be at a more advanced stage than migratory

households. Most of the single women in the study were former wives of migrant workers, as in the case of the widowed, deserted and separated women; and therefore, were relatively older than the migrants' wives (see Table 1) and had fewer resident offspring under twenty-one years of age, most of whom were reported married.

Some of the demographic characteristics of the three household types presented in Table 1 reflect a slight variation in the structure and size of the traditional Sotho household, which, according to Philips (1953:1), was larger in comparison and was based on the joint polygynous unit. This variation is evidenced by the prevalence of monogamous unions as illustrated by the absence of two or more wives in the migratory and non-migratory (male-headed) households, and the relatively small number of resident household members. However, the most significant change in the structure of the Sotho household appears to be the high proportion of households under the headship of women resulting from male migratory labour as compared to those under the headship of resident men. The considerably low proportion of able-bodied male adults per household between the ages of 21 and 49 years, as presented in Table 1, testifies to the impact of male migratory labour on the composition of the Sotho household.

While the structure and size of the Sotho household has undergone some changes, the constitution of individual households suggests that the introduction of the cash economy has done little to transform the average

household in Ha Theko village into the nuclear type. For instance, none of the households visited could be described as nuclear in form, where nuclear is defined as consisting of parents and their offspring. This is shown by the absence of the male parent in the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) households on the one hand, and by the absence of resident offspring where both spouses are resident household members.

The fact that 59% of all the households visited had at least one relative resident, either affine or consanguine, is further endorsement of the view that Ha Theko households have not made the transition to the nuclear family. For instance, the average number of resident relatives per household in the migratory households is 0.75, while corresponding figures for the non-migratory (female-headed) and non-migratory (male-headed) households are 1 and 1.66 respectively. Such resident relatives included grandchildren, sisters, mothers, nieces, nephews and the in-laws of the respondents. While the resident relatives do not appear to constitute a large proportion of total household membership, their presence nevertheless suggests that there has not been a complete breakdown in the extended family.

Male migratory labour has not only temporarily pulled able-bodied male adults out of the household to take up wage-employment, but has also been a source of considerable strain between couples, undermining the stability of the family (Bardill and Cobbe, 1985:102). This is supported by the fact that four out of the thirteen women in the non-migratory (female-headed) households, were

formerly married to migrant workers. While all four respondents reported that the prolonged absence of their husbands from the household had largely accounted for the break-up of their marriages, only one was prepared to elaborate on the dissolution of her marriage. This respondent said that her husband had abandoned her and her children during his working career as a migrant worker, and had not sent remittances or made occasional visits. When he finally made an appearance, he had taken another wife with whom he had settled and raised a family. She has since been left alone to assume the role of household head with the responsibility of raising three children as sole parent.

The very high proportion of widows among the respondents classified as permanent household heads is testimony to the observation made by Bardill and Cobbe (1985:104) that the highest proportion of female-headed households in Lesotho is headed by widows. Of the thirteen women who assume permanent household headship in the sample, seven are widows.

Following is a presentation and discussion of findings pertaining to the two major areas of inquiry on the impact of male migratory labour on Basotho women left behind to maintain the subsistence sector. The discussion is presented in two parts. The first part is a presentation and analysis of findings pertaining to the status of respondents using the seven indicators of "status" mentioned in the chapter on Methodology. The second part presents findings

pertaining to strain, using the one indicator of strain mentioned earlier in the chapter on Methodology.

As previously mentioned, assessing the impact of male migratory labour on Basotho necessitated a comparative analysis by which the situation of women whose husbands were resident household members would be compared with that of women without husbands in the household. To this end, a series of tables is presented in which the respondents whose husbands were resident household members (as a control group) are compared with respondents in the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) households. Much of the data presented in these tables is analysed with a view to testing the hypotheses developed regarding the impact of male migratory labour on Basotho women in the subsistence sector.

FINDINGS PERTAINING TO THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE HA THEKO VILLAGE

One of the objectives of the study was to establish whether women assume full managerial responsibility in the domestic and the subsistence farming domains in the absence of their migrant husbands. The literature proposes that in the absence of their husbands, Basotho women are vested with sole responsibility for all domestic and subsistence farming activities. On the basis of this proposition, the assumption is that women whose husbands are absent from the household are likely to assume more responsibilities in ensuring that daily subsistence farming and domestic activities are carried out than women whose

husbands are present in the household. The data presented in Tables 2 and 3 are discussed with a view to testing the validity of this hypothesis. It is important to note at this stage that questions pertaining to the women's decision-making and managerial status were not administered to women classified as permanent heads of households, on the assumption that as de jure household heads, they assume full decision-making powers and administrative control over their households and domestic economy. However, including this group of respondents in this area of inquiry would have helped to assess the overall impact of male migratory labour on the decision-making and managerial status of women in the subsistence sector. Omitting this group of respondents from this particular area of inquiry was indeed an oversight.

Table 2 presents data pertaining to the managerial status of migrants' wives and of women whose husbands are resident household members with respect to domestic activities.

Table 2		
Women's managerial status in the domestic domain by household type.		
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %
MANAGER	15(94%)	3(100%)
PARTIAL MANAGER	1(6%)	- -
NOT A MANAGER	- -	- -
TOTAL	16(100%)	3(100%)

Table 2 shows that all the women whose spouses are not migrant workers, and the majority of migrants' wives, assume full managerial responsibility in the domestic domain. The fact that the respondents in both household types assume full managerial responsibility in the domestic sphere appears to refute the notion that there is a relationship between the presence or absence of men from the household and the level of managerial responsibility women assume in the household. Therefore, the findings presented in Table 2 appear to disprove the hypothesis that women whose husbands are absent from the household assume more managerial responsibility in the domestic domain than women whose husbands are present in the household. On the contrary, there appears to be a greater likelihood that women will assume full managerial responsibility with respect to domestic activities regardless of the presence or absence of men from the household.

Table 3 presents statistical data pertaining to the managerial status of migrants' wives, and of women whose husbands are resident household members with respect to subsistence farming activities.

Table 3

Women's managerial status in subsistence farming activities by household type. *		
	Migratory (female-headed)	Non migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %
MANAGER	9(100%)	3(100%)
PARTIAL MANAGER	-	-
NOT A MANAGER	-	-
TOTAL	9(100%)	3(100%)

(Only those respondents who engaged in subsistence farming at the time of the survey are included in this analysis.)

According to the data presented in Table 3, all the women in the migratory (female-headed) households and in the non-migratory (male-headed) households assumed full managerial responsibility for subsistence farming. This contradicts the hypothesis that women whose husbands are absent from the household are likely to assume more managerial responsibilities in food production than women whose husbands are present in the household. Therefore, the presence or absence of men from the household appears to have little effect on the amount of responsibilities women assume in the subsistence farming domain. On the basis of these findings, there appears to be a strong tendency for women to assume full responsibility for managing their domestic unit and their subsistence farming pursuits, regardless of the presence of men or their absence from the household.

Another objective of this study was to establish whether migrants' wives assume full decision-making power over domestic and subsistence farming activities in the absence of their husbands. The literature argues that the legal norms of the Basotho confine women to the status of jural minors under the tutelage of their husbands, thereby constraining their freedom of action in making independent decisions regarding domestic and subsistence farming concerns. It concludes that despite their prolonged absence from Basotho households, migrant husbands continue to be recognised as heads of those households, reserving the right to make final decisions on all household affairs. The hypothesis is that women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to make independent decisions regarding both domestic and

subsistence farming concerns, than women whose husbands are present in the household. The discussion below is based on the data presented in Tables 4 and 5, and is intended to test the validity of this hypothesis.

Table 4 presents data pertaining to the decision-making status of migrant's wives and women whose husbands are resident household members within the domestic domain.

Table 4

Women's level of decision-making in the domestic domain by household type.		
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %
DECISION-MAKER	9(56%)	-
PARTIAL DECISION-MAKER	2(13%)	
NOT A DECISION-MAKER	5(31%)	3(100%)
TOTAL	16(100%)	3(100%)

On the basis of the findings presented in Table 4, the majority of migrants' wives appear to exercise full decision-making powers with respect to domestic activities, while only a few consult their husbands before reaching any major decisions. On the other hand, all respondents whose husbands are resident household members appear not to possess any autonomy in this respect; their spouses reserve the right and privilege of the final say on important household concerns. All respondents in the latter category reported that all important

deliberations they make concerning household activities are subject to the overriding decisions of their spouses, who are resident household heads.

Table 5 presents data pertaining to the decision-making status of migrants' wives and of women whose husbands are resident household members, with respect to subsistence farming activities.

Table 5

Women's decision making status in the subsistence farming domain by household type.		
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %
DECISION-MAKER	4(55%)	-
PARTIAL DECISION-MAKER	1(11)	-
NOT A DECISION-MAKER	4(44%)	3(100%)
TOTAL	9(100%)	3(100%)

(Only those respondents who engaged in subsistence farming at the time of the survey are included in this analysis).^a

The findings in Table 5 reveal a discrepancy in power between migrants' wives and women whose husbands are resident household members, somewhat similar to that shown in Table 4. While none of the women whose husbands are resident household members are able to make final decisions regarding subsistence farming activities, a significantly higher percentage of migrants'

^a Percentages in Table 5 do not all equal 100 due to rounding off.

wives (44%) enjoy full decision-making power in this respect. Even though migrants' wives appear to exercise more decision-making power with regard to domestic and subsistence farming activities relative to women whose husbands are present in the household, they do seem to enjoy less decision-making power in subsistence farming. This is shown by the discrepancy, albeit small, between the percentage of migrants' wives (56%) who assume full decision-making power with respect to domestic activities (Table 4) and the percentage of migrants' wives (44%) who assume full decision-making power in subsistence farming (Table 5).

The tendency for migrants' wives to exercise less control in the agricultural sphere than in the domestic domain could be a legacy emanating from the fact that traditionally, the administration of land among the Basotho was a male preserve (Hammond Tooke, 1974:160). While women have had to assume managerial responsibilities in the domestic and subsistence farming domains in the absence of their husbands, it appears that men are still inclined to maintain their traditional role as ultimate decision-makers and administrators of their estates. To substantiate this view, reference is made to the responses of some of the wives of migrant workers who said they had limited or no decision-making power with respect to land management. Respondent #1, the wife of a migrant worker, reported how her husband reprimanded her for hiring the services of agricultural team workers to prepare for the growing season without seeking his consent, even though he knew she had made the right decision. Respondent # 2, also a wife of a migrant worker, pointed out that making any

final decisions regarding which crops to grow, would be considered a serious offense and a direct challenge to her husband's authority as head of household. When asked why, she said that the making of final decisions concerning land management had always been her husband's prerogative.

An interesting observation may be made regarding the respondents' decision-making and managerial status. While a significant proportion of women in the migratory (female-headed) and non-migratory (male-headed) households appears to have limited or no decision-making powers in the domestic and subsistence farming domains, the data reveal the opposite trend regarding their status as managers in both areas of activity.

However, the data pertaining to the respondents' decision-making status do, in fact, obscure the amount of decision-making power they exercise as managers of their domestic unit and domestic economy. What became evident from the interviews conducted with respondents (including those who have been classified as non-decision makers), was that their managerial responsibilities did, in fact, involve a great deal of decision-making in the planning and adopting of a series of household survival strategies. In support of this view, details provided by some of the respondents (particularly those with resident husbands), on what their managerial responsibilities involved, may be cited. One elderly woman in the non-migratory (male-headed) household, pointed out that while her husband maintained his position as head of the household, reserving the right to make final decisions, the bulk of household

and agricultural responsibilities rested with her. She said that she almost always initiated plans and strategies aimed at meeting the day-to-day needs of the household and its members. At the beginning of every growing season, she took the initiative of seeing to it that some income was generated to meet the cost of farming inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, and the hiring of a tractor to cultivate the land. Whenever money ran short, she devised means and ways of raising it, either by taking up part-time domestic work such as house-cleaning for a neighbour, or making fat cakes and brewing beer to sell to local villagers. This was a story shared by the two other women in the non-migratory (male-headed) households.

For those respondents without landholdings, survival strategies involved engaging in some form of sharecropping, whereby they would provide their much-needed assistance to a neighbour with landholdings but insufficient labour, and in turn would get a share of the produce. Initiating these survival strategies no doubt involves a great deal of decision-making and the use of discretionary powers which most of these women claimed to exercise. While they ultimately must seek their husbands' consent before implementing any major plans, most decision-making rests with these women. However, the decision-making power they exercise in this respect is curtailed when they are required by custom to seek the consent or approval of their husbands before major survival strategies are implemented. In support of this assertion, the commonly mentioned reason for failure to make final decisions regarding both household and subsistence farming was "I am required by law to seek my

husband's consent before implementing any major domestic or farming activities" (translated from the native language). This was the response of almost all the respondents who reported not having decision-making power in the domestic and subsistence farming domains.

In addition to examining the decision-making and managerial status of Basotho women in the subsistence sector, the study was designed to examine their ability to gain direct access to valuable resources as a measure of their status. The literature proposes that male migratory labour has not resulted in women's ability to gain direct access to essential resources. This proposition is based on the argument that the existence of male-oriented institutional structures gives men exclusive power and control over the means of production. Since it is men who have control over the means of production, it is primarily through their relations with men that women gain access to these resources. The following analyses are intended to test this proposition, by examining the respondents' access rights to a number of resources as a measure of their status. Women who assumed permanent household headship are included in this section.

An important factor in the ability to gain direct access to the means of production is the women's legal status. As mentioned earlier, in the Chapter on Methodology, more than one indicator was used to measure the respondents' legal status on the basis of their different marital statuses. All married women, notably women in the migratory (female-headed) and non-migratory (male-

headed) households, were asked whether their marriages were effected through customary law. Single women, notably those responding in the non-migratory (female-headed) households, were asked if they could represent themselves in court independently of male representation. The hypothesis relating to this area of inquiry suggests that women without husbands and women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to represent themselves legally than women whose husbands are present in the household. This hypothesis is grounded in the view that all Basotho women, regardless of marital status have minority status (Maope, 1984) are prohibited from independent self-representation in legal matters. They automatically fall under the legal guardianship of a male representative: either a father, a husband, an eldest son (if married), a father-in-law or a brother-in-law, where there is no son (Maope, 1984).

Two of the three women whose husbands were resident members of households said that they were married under customary law. The third respondent in this category pointed out that there had been no ceremonial rituals performed to formalise her union with her partner. However, their relationship was tantamount to a marriage as they had been cohabiting for more than ten years.

Thirteen of the sixteen respondents in the migratory (female-headed) households reported having been married under customary law. The others in

this category reported having eloped, chobela⁹, and had not yet gone through most of the ritual formalities necessary to validate their union. All seven widows in the non-migratory (female-headed) households also reported having been married under customary law.

For all the respondents who reported having been married under customary law, there is no doubt as to the property regime governing their marriages and the implications this has for their legal status. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of the literature, women married under customary law remain subject to the legal guardianship of their husbands and thus have neither judicial capacity nor legal autonomy (Seeiso, 1986).

With respect to the women in the non-migratory (female-headed) households, the majority (58%) said they were able to represent themselves in a court of law independently of a male relative. The rest, (42%), said that they would need male representation to appear in court. Interestingly enough, all women in the latter category were widowed and said that since their husbands' deaths, they had been subject to the legal guardianship of their brothers-in-law.

The fact that all the widows in the non-migratory (female-headed) households reported having remained under the legal guardianship of their in-laws, endorses

⁹ Gay (1982) points out that today marriages in Lesotho often begin with elopement. This happens when a young man does not have bridewealth readily available, but cannot wait to settle down with his girlfriend. Partnerships established thus are increasingly getting recognised as marital unions subject to the provisions of customary law.

the notion put forward by Seeiso (1986) that marriage under customary law is between families and the individuals concerned. This stems from an old Sotho custom whereby the death of a spouse did not spell the termination of a marriage since the brothers of the deceased would often take his place to propagate the family (Hammond-Tooke, 1974). While the levirate custom, as it is known, is on the decline nowadays with the influence of Christianity, it appears that a widow is still bound by custom to acknowledge the significant role played by her late husband's brothers as legal guardians.

On the basis of the findings pertaining to the legal status of the respondents, single women appear to enjoy a greater degree of legal autonomy than married women. The fact that only widows in the non-migratory (female-headed) households reported having legal autonomy, would appear to support this view and to further endorse the observation by Moitse (1989) that most legal constraints that women face flow from the institution of marriage.

These findings, therefore, do not fully support the notion that the presence or absence of men from the household is not related to the ability of women to represent themselves legally, independently of male representation. Instead, they show that the absence of men from the household enhances a woman's legal status only if she is not married or does not have any marital ties with the family of her former husband. Even though husbands are absent from the migratory households, the institution of marriage ensures that migrants' wives remain subject to their spouses' legal guardianship. Thus, marriage appears to

be a more crucial factor in determining a woman's legal autonomy than the presence or absence of men from the household.

The contractual capacity of the respondents across all three household types was also examined as a measure of their status. Examining the contractual capacity of the respondents was considered important in so far as it helped to determine if they were able to enter contractual agreements with a view to gaining direct access to credit from credit institutions. The theory suggests that the legal norms of Sotho society which confine all women to the minority status, subject them to the legal guardianship of a male relative or spouse. Like all jural minors, women do not have contractual capacity, but can only enter legally binding contracts through the expressed consent of a male relative or spouse.

The following analysis is based on data pertaining to the respondents' contractual capacity as a measure of their status. This analysis is intended to test the hypothesis that women without husbands in the household are no more able to enter legally binding contracts independently of male representation, than women with husbands present in the household.

The data pertaining to the contractual capacity of the respondents are presented in Table 6. On the basis of the findings presented in Table 6, single women appear to enjoy more autonomy than married women. While none of the women in the migratory (female-headed) and non-migratory (male-headed)

households claimed the ability to enter contractual agreements independently of their spouses, a significant, albeit small percentage, of single women in the non-migratory (female-headed) households said they were able to do so.

Table 6

Women's ability to enter into contractual agreements independently of a spouse or other male representative, by household type.			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %	f %
ABLE TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS	-	5(38%)	- -
NOT ABLE TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS	10 (63%)	2 (15%)	3 (100%)
DON'T KNOW	6 (38%)	6 (46%)	- -
TOTAL	16 (100%)	13 (100%)	3 (100%)

•"

The findings regarding the respondents' contractual capacity appear to be closely correlated with those pertaining to their legal status. As argued in the literature, one's judicial capacity determines one's contractual capacity. The fact that single women appear to enjoy more legal autonomy than married women - as shown in the previous analysis - would explain why there is a similar discrepancy in autonomy regarding their contractual capacity.

¹⁰ Percentages in table 6 do not all equal 100 due to rounding off.

The findings pertaining to the respondents' contractual capacity have not fully supported the hypothesis that women without husbands in the household are no more able to enter into contractual agreements independently of male representation than women with husbands present in the household. As in the previous analysis regarding the respondents' legal status, these findings show that the absence of men from the household only enhances a woman's contractual capacity if she is not married or does not have any marital ties with the family of a former husband. Once again, it appears that it is the institution of marriage that impinges more upon the autonomy of women than the mere absence of men from the household. This is evidenced by the fact that migrants' wives do not have contractual capacity despite their husbands' prolonged absence from the household.

All respondents who fall under the "don't-know" category in Table 6, explained that they had never had to enter into legally binding contracts, and for that reason were not in a position to say whether or not they would be able to independently enter into contractual agreements. Of the six women in the non-migratory (female-headed) households who fall under this category, four are widowed. It is therefore not surprising that they would not have been able to tell whether or not they could enter into legally binding contracts independently of male representation, since this is a role that would normally be assumed by a male relative.

The respondents' access rights to land title were examined as an additional measure of their status. The hypothesis relating to this area of investigation suggests that women without husbands and women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to hold title to land than women whose husbands are present in the household. This hypothesis is grounded in the argument that women under customary law cannot hold title to land because they are perpetual minors from birth to death. Thus, only majors, notably adult men, can hold title to land. The following discussion, therefore, is intended to test the aforementioned hypothesis on the basis of the findings regarding this area of inquiry.

According to the findings pertaining to women's access rights to land, none of the women whose households had landholdings claimed to have landholdings registered in their names. Instead, their access to land was restricted to rights of use. As with all the married women, the single women with landholdings reported that their rights over land were restricted to rights of use which they acquired through either a former spouse or other male relative. All widowed women with landholdings reported having acquired access to land through maintaining use rights over their deceased husbands' landholdings. One woman who reported having been deserted by her husband said that she had been protected by the law to retain use rights over her spouse's landholdings so that she would continue to provide for her family's subsistence.

Two of the three respondents who were separated, said that they had lost use rights over land when they separated from their spouses, in whose names the

landholdings were registered. The third respondent in this sub-category reported having acquired access to land from her biological father upon returning to her natal home after her marriage had dissolved. These cases endorse the view of Parpart and Staudt (1989:25) that in most African patrilineal societies, women do not possess independent, autonomous rights to land, but rather their access to land is mediated through men. Proof of the fragile position of women with respect to land access is evidenced by the situations of the three separated women who lost use rights over their husbands' landholdings when their marriages dissolved. That all the women across the three household types reported not holding title to land but merely possessing usufructuary rights over land supports the notion that the presence or absence of men in the household is not related to the ability of women to hold title to land.

The following discussion is intended to examine the respondents' access rights to credit as a measure of their status. The hypothesis relating to this area of investigation states that women without husbands in the household are no more able to get access to credit independently of male representation than women with husbands present in the household. The following discussion is based on data pertaining to the respondents' access rights to credit with a view to testing the aforementioned hypothesis.

To establish the respondents' access rights to credit, all were asked if they had ever attempted and succeeded in acquiring credit from credit institutions

independently of male intervention. The majority of respondents across all three household types said they had not attempted to obtain credit from a credit institution. The few who did (indicated by an asterisk in Table 7), including one who was the wife of a migrant worker and one who was a widow, said that they had obtained credit through an informal village credit association that did not require male intervention. Table 7 presents these findings.

Table 7

Women's attempts at acquiring credit from a credit institution by household type.			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Female-headed)
	f %	f %	f %
ATTEMPTED & RECEIVED CREDIT	* 1 (6%)	- -	- *1 (8)
UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT	1 (6%)	- -	- -
NO ATTEMPT	14 (88%)	3 (100%)	12 (92%)
TOTAL:	16 (100%)	3 (100%)	13 (100%)

(Respondents who obtained credit from an informal village credit association)*

The two respondents who reported having acquired credit through an informal village credit association pointed out that as members of the association, they paid an annual membership fee of R100.00 (the equivalent of \$46.00 Cdn.). As members of the association, they could benefit from the provision of seeds, fertilizer, and the services of a tractor to cultivate their fields. However, the widow expressed how difficult it was for her to raise sufficient funds in order to pay the annual fee to the cooperative since she only relied on part-time

domestic employment as her main source of income; and this, to begin with, barely met the day-to-day needs of her household.

Only one respondent in a migratory (female-headed) household had attempted but failed to obtain credit because she did not have collateral. For the majority of respondents who reported not having attempted to acquire credit from a credit institution, lack of collateral was the commonly cited reason. Table 8 presents the findings regarding reasons for the women's failure to obtain credit and for not attempting to obtain credit from credit institutions.

Table 8

Women's reasons for not attempting to obtain credit from credit institutions.			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %	f %
LACK OF COLLATERAL	9 (60%)	1 (33%)	6 (60%)
LACK OF CLEAR INFORMATION	-	1 (33%)	2 (20%)
NOT NECESSARY	5 (33%)	- -	- -
NEVER THOUGHT OF IT	1 (7%)	1 (33%)	2 (20%)
TOTAL:	15 (100%)	3 (100%)	10 (100%)

(Missing data = 2 (for female-headed households))

(Data also excludes the two respondents who attempted and received credit).

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The data presented in Table 8 indicate that lack of collateral was the most commonly given reason for the failure of respondents to obtain credit. A

¹¹ Percentages in table 8 do not all add up to 100 due to rounding of f.

relatively small percentage of migrants' wives (33%) reported that they did not find it necessary to get credit because of sufficient savings accrued from migrants' remittances. All nine women in the migratory (female-headed) households who explained that lack of collateral was their main reason for not attempting to get credit, pointed out that the migrants' remittances on which they depended were often insufficient to meet all farming expenses, but only enough to meet day-to-day household needs. However, they pointed out that they did manage to save enough money from their meagre remittances to meet most farming expenses, which are usually incurred once a year at the beginning of every growing season. While they had considered getting financial assistance from credit institutions to augment the meagre remittances, lack of collateral and sufficient savings that could be pledged as security when applying for credit was an important restraining factor.

Those who said lack of collateral was the major reason for not receiving credit, explained that their lack of adequate bank savings or other personal assets which might have been pledged as security when applying for credit, served as a restraining factor. The three respondents who said that they lacked clear information regarding the requirements and conditions for obtaining a loan explained they had no idea whom to contact and how to go about the entire process of applying for a loan.

A private interview conducted with Mr. Kotelo, a representative of the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank (LADB)¹² in June of 1991, revealed that the Bank's policy is not to advance credit loans directly to women. That is, the acquisition of credit by women in general (and this also applies to single women) can only be facilitated through a male representative. If married, the applicant is required to be accompanied by her husband, who is to personally authorise the application and provide his consent to the loan advancement. In the case of a woman whose husband is a migrant worker and is therefore not able to make a personal appearance, a letter in which he authorises the advancement of the loan is sufficient to facilitate the proceedings. On the other hand, single women would normally be represented by either a chief of the village in which they reside, or a male relative. The justification given for the Bank's policy, as explained by Mr. Kotelo, is that the LADB does not enter into contractual agreements with women, since lawsuits for failure to repay loans can only be pressed against men, who have judicial capacity.

What becomes evident from the policies of the LADB regarding loan advancement to women, is that lack of collateral is not the only major constraint that women face in obtaining credit from formal credit institutions. Their status as jural minors appears to play an equally significant, if not a more central role, in obstructing women's attempts to acquire credit from formal

¹² The Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank is a formal credit institution established in 1976 to support the needs of individual farmers and farmer co-operatives through the extension of agricultural credit at the District and village levels.

credit institutions. With respect to the subjects under study, however, lack of collateral seemed to be the major reason for failure to obtain credit since existing village credit associations, from which women could have benefitted, do not require male intervention.

On the basis of the reasons given by the majority of respondents for not attempting to obtain credit from credit institutions and on the basis of the policies of the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank regarding loan advancement to women, single women and married women face similar constraints in obtaining credit. Their minority status renders them unable to get independent access to credit from formal credit institutions, and their lack of collateral prevents them from benefitting from informal credit associations that do not require male intervention.

Faced with these numerous barriers to obtaining credit from credit institutions, a number of respondents said that they use alternative means of obtaining credit. For instance, they obtain loans or monetary support from relatives, friends or neighbours within the village. The study shows that the majority of respondents in the two non-migratory types of household use these informal means of obtaining credit, in sharp contrast to the majority of respondents in the migratory households, who do not.

Table 9 presents these findings. Only those respondents who received financial assistance from relatives and neighbours are included in Table 9.

Table 9

Women's alternative means of obtaining credit or financial support.			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-migratory (Female-headed)	Non-migratory (Male-headed)
	f	f	f
RELATIVES	2	8	2*
NEIGHBOURS	1	1	1
TOTAL:	3	9	3

(* Financial support received from migrants' remittances.)

According To table 9, nine of the thirteen respondents (69%) in the non-migratory (female-headed) households, and all three respondents (100%) in the non-migratory (male-headed) households said that they supplemented their main household income with loans or financial assistance obtained from relatives and neighbours. Two of the three respondents in the non-migratory (male-headed) households said they occasionally obtain financial support from their sons, who work in the South-African mines. In contrast, very few women in the migratory type of household, (19%), exploit these informal means of obtaining loans.

Level of financial independence was another indicator used to measure the status of respondents. The theory relating to this area of investigation argues that cultural attitudes grounded in a male-dominated society such as that of the Sotho, in which men expect women to play a subservient role by confining themselves to domestic duties, have kept women out of formal sector employment. It is suggested that this has not only served to weaken women's financial independence, but has resulted in their heightened financial

dependence on their menfolk, who usually get easier access to job opportunities in the formal sector. The following analysis is intended to examine respondents' financial situations with a view to testing the validity of this theory.

To determine respondents' levels of financial independence, they were asked to identify their chief source of income. The main sources of income cited by respondents have been categorized under four headings: migrants' earnings, petty commerce, domestic service, and financial assistance. Petty commerce includes a wide range of small income-generating activities such as the selling of brewed beer, handicrafts, bags of grain, and reared chickens. Domestic service involves housekeeping and babysitting for the more prosperous families, usually those who reside in the same village. Financial assistance refers to monetary support received from a male relative who is either engaged in wage-employment in the South-African mining industries, or who is locally employed in nearby urban centres.

The data pertaining to respondents' sources of income show that the majority of migrants' wives depend on migrants' remittances as their chief source of income. 75% of the women in the migratory (female-headed) type of household said they receive migrants' remittances on a regular basis, as opposed to 25% who reported not receiving regular remittances. On the other hand, the majority of women in the non-migratory households who, in fact, were chief breadwinners in their households, said that they depended on petty

commerce, while a smaller percentage said they depended on domestic service as their chief source of income. The one respondent who relied on financial assistance as her main source of income, obtained it from a brother who is a migrant worker. Table 10 presents these findings.

Table 10

Women's chief sources of income by household type.			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Male-headed)	Non-Migratory (Female-headed)
	f %	f %	f %
MIGRANTS' REMITTANCES	15 (94%)	-	-
PETTY COMMERCE	1 (6%)	3 (100%)	7 (54%)
DOMESTIC SERVICE			
DOMESTIC SERVICE	- -	5 (39%)	- -
RECEIVES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	- -	- -	1 (8%)
TOTAL:	16(100%)	3 (100%)	13 (100%)

The fact that the majority of migrants' wives depend on migrants' remittances as their chief source of income points to their high level of financial dependence on their husbands. While the majority of respondents in the non-migratory households said they were the chief breadwinners in their households, the petty commerce on which they depended barely met all household needs, let alone farming needs.

While the majority of the migrants' wives seemed to be financially dependent on their husbands' remittances, they appeared to be financially better off than women in the non-migratory households. This is evidenced by the relatively small percentage of migrants' wives who seek financial assistance as opposed to the majority of respondents in the non-migratory households who seek financial support from relatives or friends to augment their household income (Table 9).

Discussions held with women whose husbands were not migrant workers revealed that they were the chief breadwinners in their households. These women reported that their spouses, who were retired migrants, suffered from a number of physical disabilities from the prolonged exposure to harsh working conditions in the South-African mines throughout their working careers as migrant workers. Consequently, none of these men were able to work, leaving the responsibility of financial providers to their wives. For instance, one of the respondents in this category said that because her husband suffers from tuberculosis, he has not been strong enough to provide for the family by engaging in any form of work. She has therefore had to assume full responsibility as financial provider for the household. She said that she did this by brewing and selling beer to the local villagers, making brooms to sell on the streets, and doing occasional housekeeping for a neighbour. However, she complained that none of these activities generated sufficient income. The two other respondents in this category also said their husbands had not been able to work because their physical conditions had deteriorated over the years as a

result of prolonged exposure to unhealthful and dangerous working conditions in the South-African mines. One man had incurred a hearing disability and the other a physical handicap as a result of a major explosion in a South-African mine. For these reasons, their wives had had to assume full responsibility as providers in their households.

What becomes evident from the financial status of the respondents is the existence of inequalities based on the unequal access to substantial cash earnings. Migratory households appear to be more financially comfortable because they rely on more substantial cash earnings than households which do not depend on migrants' earnings as their main source of income. The fact that migratory households appear to be more financially comfortable than the non-migratory households attests to the view held by Bardille and Cobbe (1985) that households which do not have access to migrants' earnings in the rural sector face the worst form of economic deprivation.

Despite the fact that the migratory households appear to be more financially comfortable than non-migratory households, none of the women in any of the three types of household appears to be financially autonomous. This is indicated on the one hand by the great reliance on migrants' remittances by migrants' wives, and on the other hand by the high reliance on informal sector occupations such as petty commerce and domestic service by women in the non-migratory households, which do not generate sufficient income to allow for high monetary savings.

While respondents in the non-migratory households appear to be more financially independent as chief breadwinners than women in the migratory (female-headed) households, the former have no viable sources of income on which to rely that would enhance their financial standing. Consequently, they are forced to fall back on financial support received from relatives or neighbours to augment the meagre financial resources they generate. These findings would therefore seem to support the hypothesis that women without husbands in the household are no more financially independent than women whose husbands are present in the household.

Given the disadvantaged economic status of the women, it is not surprising that most of them did not attempt to acquire credit through informal credit institutions such as the informal village credit associations, which do not require male intervention, as mentioned above. As do formal credit institutions, informal credit associations require some form of security or membership fee before advancing loans or financial support (UNICEF, 1986). Benefitting from such an association would, therefore, entail the possession of adequate monetary savings, which most of the respondents reported not having. Faced with these constraints in acquiring direct access to credit from formal credit institutions, most women are obliged to borrow money from family members, friends or neighbours; this does not involve interest charges or require collateral. However, such loans are hardly sufficient to help initiate long-term agricultural and off-farm investments.

Respondents were also asked if they owned farming equipment and whether they engaged in mechanised farming operations involving tractors, planters and cattle-drawn ploughs. The hypothesis relating to this area of investigation is that women without husbands in the household are no more able to own and employ mechanised farming operations than women whose husbands are present in the household. This theory is based on the argument that long-standing development initiatives in Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, have shown bias in directing essential economic resources to men (Charlton, 1884; Boserup, 1974; Parpart, 1990). Consequently, men rather than women, are alleged to have been the chief recipients of modern agricultural training, and it is men who control modern farming equipment while women assume labour-intensive operations. In Lesotho, where the majority of able-bodied men are absent from the agricultural sector, older men or migrants (when they are at home on leave) operate the modern farming equipment (Gay, 1982). Furthermore, due to a cultural belief that women should be kept away from cattle due to their ritual impurity at menstruation, it is men rather than women, who use cattle for field ploughing. This suggests that the only agricultural tasks performed by women are those done without mechanical or animal assistance. On the basis of the available data pertaining to the respondents' access to modern farming equipment, the following analysis is intended to test this hypothesis.

The women's responses pertaining to this area of inquiry have been grouped under a number of categories presented in Table 11. Findings show that none

of the women who engage in subsistence farming actually own or operate mechanised farming equipment to cultivate their fields.

Table 11

Women's access to farming equipment by household type			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Female-headed)	Non Migratory (Male headed)
	f %	f %	f %
HIRES A TRACTOR	2 (22%)	1 (17%)	3 (100%)
HIRES BOTH TRACTOR & OXEN	4 (44%)	2 (33%)	-
RESIDENT MALE RELATIVES USE OXEN & PLOUGH OWNED BY HUSBAND	1 (11%)	- -	- -
COOPERATIVE PROVIDES TRACTOR	1 (11%)	1 (17%)	-
GETS TRACTOR THROUGH SHARECROPPING	1 (11%)	- -	-
NON-RESIDENT MALE RELATIVE PROVIDES AND OPERATES HIS OWN OXEN & PLOUGH	2 (33%)	- -	-
TOTAL:	9 (100%)	6 (100%)	3 (100%)

(Only those respondents who engaged in subsistence farming are included in the above table.)
s.1.3

According to the data presented in Table 11, none of the respondents in any of the three types of household appear to own either of the two main kinds of farming capital, notably tractors or ox-drawn ploughs. Access to such farming equipment is acquired either through hiring the services of men with tractors, oxen and ploughs; through sharecropping or cooperatives; or through husbands

^{1,3}Percentages in Table 11 do not all equal 100 due to rounding off.

who own farming equipment. In all cases, it was men who undertook all mechanised farming operations and used ox-drawn ploughs to cultivate the women's fields. Respondents who said they obtained access to tractors through sharecropping explained that in the cultivation of their fields, male neighbours supply and use their own tractors in return for sharing the produce. The two respondents who benefitted from cooperative membership said that all ploughing operations provided by the cooperatives were also managed and carried out by men. The available data regarding the respondents' access to agricultural capital appear to support the hypothesis that women without husbands in the household are no more likely to have direct access to agricultural capital than women whose husbands are present in the household.

FINDINGS PERTAINING TO STRAIN

The second objective of this study was to establish whether Basotho women in the subsistence sector experience any significant difficulty in maintaining the subsistence sector as a result of male migratory labour. The theory relating to this area of investigation suggests that the departure of men from the subsistence sector to take up wage-employment in the South-African mines has increased the workload of women left behind. In the absence of men, women have had to assume sole responsibility for the agricultural sector in addition to their household responsibilities. It is suggested that in view of the more demanding roles which women have had to perform in the absence of shared responsibilities with men, women experience a considerable amount of strain. The hypothesis relating to this area of investigation is that women without

husbands in the household are more likely to be unable to cope with domestic and subsistence farming activities than women whose husbands are present in the household. To test this hypothesis, respondents who undertook full responsibility for both domestic and subsistence farming activities were asked whether they felt they were able to cope with these responsibilities.

Contrary to what was expected, the majority of women without husbands in the household reported that they were able to cope with domestic responsibilities, as opposed to the women whose husbands were resident household members, all of whom said they were unable to cope. Table 12 presents these findings.

Table 12

Ability of women respondents to cope with domestic activities by household type.			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-Migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %	f %
ABLE TO COPE	6 (67%)	4 (80%)	- -
NOT ABLE TO COPE	3 (33%)	1 (20%)	3 (100%)
TOTAL:	9 (100%)	5 (100%)	3 (100%)

Missing data¹⁴

(Only those women who assumed both household and subsistence farming responsibilities are included in this analysis.)

¹⁴ One respondent in the non-migratory (female headed) household did not respond satisfactorily to the question relating to the ability to cope with domestic responsibilities. For this reason, she has been excluded from the analysis.

According to the findings presented in Table 12, the majority of women in the migratory (female-headed) and non-migratory (female-headed) households said that they were able to cope with domestic responsibilities. Most of these women attributed their ability to cope to the assistance they obtained from children who were resident household members. Among such children were the women's own offspring, and those of relatives. The respondents said that while most of these children attended school in the local village, school hours are usually short, leaving time for the children to assist with domestic chores. For this reason, the women did not feel overburdened with responsibilities. In support of this assertion, five of the six respondents in the migratory type of household said that they assign to the children (both boys and girls), a number of domestic chores to be performed daily, before and after school. This has helped to reduce the amount of housework the women do during the part of the day when their children are at school. The sixth respondent in this category attributed her ability to cope with domestic activities not only to assistance from resident children, but also to the assistance provided by a resident adult female relative.

While the majority of respondents in the non-migratory (female-headed) households said they were able to cope with domestic chores, five of them mentioned that they lacked adequate financial resources to meet many of their children's needs (i.e., educational, medical, and clothing). However, these women have not been categorised as "unable to cope", because of the adequate assistance they receive in carrying out domestic activities.

Of the three respondents in the migratory households who reported not being able to cope with domestic activities, two explained that their children were too young (under the age of six) to provide assistance. The third respondent in the same category explained that because her children go to school, they are not able to provide enough assistance. As a result, she has had to assume full responsibility for all domestic activities.

Contrary to what was expected, all the women in the non-migratory (male headed) households said they were unable to cope with domestic responsibilities despite the presence of their spouses in the household. They all attributed this to lack of sufficient assistance with domestic responsibilities, and to age-related illnesses such as recurring backaches and fatigue.

Table 13 presents the findings pertaining to the ability of the respondents to cope with subsistence farming activities. Contrary to what was expected, migrants' wives and single women appear to be more likely to cope with subsistence farming responsibilities than women whose husbands are present in the household.

Table 13

Ability of women to cope with subsistence farming chores by household type			
	Migratory (Female-headed)	Non-migratory (Female-headed)	Non-migratory (Male-headed)
	f %	f %	f %
ABLE TO COPE	5 (56%)	3 (60%)	-
NOT ABLE TO COPE	4 (44%)	2 (40%)	3 (100%)
TOTAL:	9 (100%)	5 (100%)	3 (100%)

Missing data¹⁵
(Only those respondents who assumed both household and subsistence farming responsibilities are included in Table 13)

¹⁵ One re

According to Table 13, a slight majority of migrants' wives and single women said they were able to cope with subsistence farming activities despite the absence of husbands from their households. The majority of them attributed this to the assistance received from children who were resident household members. The women explained that their children provide assistance when they are not at school. The rest of the respondents attributed their ability to cope to the help received from non-resident male relatives or through sharecropping arrangements.

With respect to respondents in non-migratory (male-headed) households, the presence of spouses, all of whom were retired migrant workers, had done little to alleviate the women's burden of work in subsistence farming activities. This was because the men, with whom the literature expected the women to share farming tasks, were all reported ill and physically unable to assume such physically demanding activities. Suffering from ill-health and physical disabilities after years of exposure to the harsh working conditions in the South-African mines, the men were unable to provide effective help with subsistence farming activities. In expressing their sense of frustration and despair about the unbearable workload they faced, these women repeatedly remarked, "I feel helpless, even though my husband is present, I feel as though I am alone." (Translated from native language) This would be followed with a sigh. Overall, the findings regarding strain appear to refute the hypothesis that women without husbands in the household are less likely to cope with domestic and

subsistence farming responsibilities than women whose husbands are present in the household.

DISCUSSION OF OVERALL RESULTS

On the basis of the available data, a number of observations may be made regarding the impact of male migrant labour on the status of women left behind to maintain the domestic unit and the domestic economy. Most of the findings in this study support the proposition that male migratory labour has not resulted in the increased status of women left behind. While findings regarding the decision-making and managerial status of women without husbands in the household suggest an increase in women's status in these areas, there is considerable evidence that this is not necessarily the case. Far from being emancipated, these women still face structural constraints grounded in the patriarchal ideologies of Basotho society, keeping them subordinate to men and denying them complete autonomy. The most oppressive institution that has ensured the subordination of women and their consequent lack of autonomy is the legal system that confines all women to minors' status. As minors, they are unable to gain direct access to essential economic resources that would enhance their autonomy and reduced their dependence on men. Following is a brief review of the findings regarding the status of respondents.

Findings regarding the decision-making status of migrants' wives appear to refute the hypothesis that women whose husbands are absent from the household are no more able to make independent decisions regarding household

and subsistence farming concerns, than women whose husbands are resident household heads. Instead, the majority of migrants' wives said they made final decisions independently of their husbands in contrast to all those women whose husbands were resident household members, who reported not enjoying similar autonomy.

Findings regarding managerial status of the respondents seem only partially to support the theory that women without husbands in the household assume more responsibilities in ensuring that domestic and farming activities are implemented, than women whose husbands are resident household members. Contrary to what was expected, the findings show that the majority of migrants' wives and all the women whose husbands were resident household members, assumed full managerial status. On the basis of these findings, the respondents' levels of managerial responsibilities appear to be unrelated to men's presence in or absence from the household. While resident husbands in the non-migratory households were expected to assume managerial roles, this appeared not to be the case. One major factor seems to account for this unexpected outcome: the poor health and deteriorated physical condition of resident spouses that renders them physically unfit to endure the demands of managerial responsibilities. Had these resident husbands been younger and therefore strong enough to assume full managerial responsibilities, the results regarding their wives' managerial status might have been different.

It is important to note that as managers of their domestic unit and domestic economy, the majority of the respondents in both types of household exercised a great deal of discretionary and decision-making power in the adoption of household survival strategies. Although all the women in the non-migratory (male-headed) households, and a few in the migratory households, have been classified as non-decision makers, all of these women reported that they initiate and carry out significant innovative survival strategies as managers of their households; this involves a great deal of decision-making. Thus, while the women ultimately had the cultural obligation of seeking their husbands' consent before implementing such strategies, most deliberating and decision-making and deliberations rests with the women.

The findings regarding the respondents' ability to gain direct access to essential economic resources, suggest that migratory labour has done little to enhance the economic status of women left behind. This study shows that the increasing incidence of households under the temporary and permanent headship of women has not resulted in a commensurate change in their economic status. Far from gaining economic autonomy in the absence of men, women continue to be dependent on their menfolk in order to gain access to essential means of production. Their minority status under the legal norms of Sotho society, renders women incapable of gaining any degree of economic autonomy, since it is only through their relationships with men that they are able to gain access to essential economic resources. As minors, none of the

women respondents hold title to land. For all migrants' wives whose households had landholdings, land was registered under their husbands' names.

For single women whose households had landholdings, access to land was restricted to rights of use. And in all cases, rights of use over land were acquired through either a deceased spouse, a biological father, or a spouse who had deserted his wife.

Further evidence of the disadvantaged economic situation of the women respondents points to the fact that formal credit institutions refuse to extend loans directly to women; women must obtain male consent or representation. Any contractual arrangements made with a view to extending loans to prospective women applicants can only be facilitated through men who have contractual capacity because of their majority status. Women wishing to obtain credit from formal credit institutions can only do so through male representation, notably a male relative or spouse.

Despite the existence of informal village credit associations that do not require the intervention of male representation, the majority of women across all three types of household reported not needing to exploit these alternatives. Lack of collateral resulting from insufficient financial savings or lack of control over immovable property such as land, has made it difficult for most women to benefit from such alternatives.

The findings regarding respondents' financial status indicate that none of the women are financially autonomous. Migrants' wives were highly dependent on migrants' remittances as their chief source of income, while the women in the two non-migratory types of household did not rely on viable sources of income. Although the majority of migrants' wives appeared to be the most financially comfortable of the three groups of women, they are nevertheless greatly dependent on their husbands' cash earnings. This is illustrated by the fact that the majority reported not engaging in subsidiary income-generating activities to augment migrants' earnings. Thus, most women did not have independent access to cash resources over which they might have exercised control and which they might have devoted to their own developmental pursuits. The women's high degree of dependence on migrants' earnings points to their lack of financial autonomy.

Although the women in the non-migratory (female-headed) and non-migratory (male-headed) types of household were the chief breadwinners, they had no viable sources of income on which to rely that might have enhanced their financial standing. Faced with meagre financial resources derived from their main sources of income, the majority are forced to seek financial assistance from relatives and neighbours to make ends meet.

At this point, it is worth noting that this study revealed what appeared to be inconsistent and contradictory findings regarding the contractual and judicial capacity of women who assume permanent headship of households. As

discussed earlier in the presentation of the data, 38.46% of the respondents in non-migratory (female-headed) households said they have contractual capacity, while 58% (Table 6) reported that they are able to represent themselves legally independently of male representation. A private interview conducted with an official representative of the Lesotho Agricultural Development Bank (a major credit institution in the country), claimed that this was in fact not the case. He said that the Bank was unable to extend credit directly to women, regardless of marital status, because of their minority status under the law. As minors, subject to the legal guardianship of a spouse if married, or to that of another male relative if not married, women have no judicial, and therefore no contractual capacity. Thus, any contractual arrangements made with the Bank with a view to obtaining credit can only be facilitated through the male guardian who has judicial and contractual capacity because of his majority status.

The seemingly contradictory findings pertaining to the contractual/judicial capacity of single women (this excludes widows) could be an affirmation of the view held by Moitse (1989:24) that while customary law renders all women perpetual jural minors with no judicial or contractual capacity, "for single women, divorcees and deserted women, there exists a tentative acceptance of a form of tacit emancipation" (p. 24). While single women appear in general not to be accepted as emancipated at the statutory level, there are informal means and leeways by which they can act in their proper capacity as heads of their households.

On the basis of the findings regarding the legal status of the respondent women across the three types of household, single women (unmarried, deserted or separated women) who are not legally bound to marital obligations, would appear to enjoy a greater degree of legal autonomy than married women. However, their independence in this regard seems to be somewhat informal or tacit, but not fully accepted nor endorsed by law, as evidenced by the fact that title to their land remains in the hands of a male relative, and they are unable to gain access to credit independently of male representation. Established cultural norms and institutions have ensured the subordination of women regardless of marital status, as evidenced by their inability to hold title to land, or gain access to credit independently of a spouse or male relative.

This study's findings appear to support the hypothesis that women without husbands in the household are no more able to own and use mechanised farming equipment than women whose husbands are present in the household. All the respondents who engaged in subsistence farming said that mechanised farming operations used in the cultivation of their fields were undertaken only by men. Where tractors were hired to cultivate the fields, they were driven by men. Where oxen and ploughs were hired, it was men who employed them, while women undertook the labour-intensive farming activities. Furthermore, in all three types of household, none of the respondents who engaged in subsistence farming said they had personal ownership of such capital.

Overall, the findings of this study appear to support the proposition that male migratory labour has not resulted in the increased status of women left behind. While the majority of migrants' wives appear to exercise a great deal of autonomy as decision-makers in the absence of their husbands, their power in this respect appears to be limited within the confines of the household. Similarly, acting as managers of their households did not seem to enhance the status of women beyond the household for the majority of migrants' wives and all of those women whose husbands were resident household members. Beyond the household, these women face structural constraints which deny them autonomy and maintain their dependence on men. Cultural and legal institutional structures that are male-oriented ensure the continued dependence of women on their menfolk in order to obtain viable means of livelihood. This is shown by the incapability of women in all three types of household to hold personal title to land and to obtain credit from formally recognised credit institutions independently of their husbands or male relatives due to their socially defined status as minors.

The high degree of reliance on migrants' remittances by migrants' wives attests to the lack of any fundamental change in their status or in the power structure of the household. The status of these women as decision-makers appears to arise out of dire necessity in view of the prolonged absence of their husbands, rather than indicating any fundamental change in the power structure of the household. Unable to be present much of the time, migrant husbands are forced to delegate decision-making responsibilities to their wives who are left

behind to maintain the domestic unit and the domestic economy. Despite their role as food producers and managers of their domestic economy, the respondents said they did not have direct access to modern farming equipment. All mechanised farming operations and their means of implementation were undertaken by men and belonged to men.

Findings pertaining to strain do not support the hypothesis that women without husbands in the household are less likely to cope with domestic and subsistence farming responsibilities than women whose husbands are present in the household. On the contrary, women without husbands in the household appear to be more likely to cope with domestic and subsistence farming responsibilities than women with husbands present in the household. On the basis of the women's responses, the unexpected outcome of the findings regarding strain appear to be influenced to a large extent by some of the demographic characteristics of the households. In the following discussion, reference is made only to the demographic features of the three types of household (cf. Table 1) that appear pertinent in explaining the unexpected findings.

As discussed in the previous analysis, the presence of children in the household appears to have had a significant impact on the ability of the respondents to cope with domestic responsibilities. Children aged 6 to 20 are almost always called upon by women to assist with domestic responsibilities. Table 1 shows that respondents did not have equal access to this type of labour, as

demonstrated by the varying mean number of resident children aged 6-20 years per household type. While the average number of children aged 6-20 years per non-migratory (male-headed) household was 0.66, the corresponding figures for the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) households were much higher (i.e., 2.37 and 2, respectively). The figure for non-migratory (male-headed) households shows that children are less available as a source of labour to assist the women in this category.

The number of household members, among whom children constitute a large proportion, also appears to have had a significant impact on the ability of the respondents to cope, particularly with respect to domestic activities. The figures regarding the average number of resident members per type of household (cf. Table 1) indicate varying sizes of households, and therefore, varying potential sources of labour to which the women have access. As shown in Table 1, the non-migratory (male-headed) households have a mean number of 3 persons per household, while the corresponding figures for the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) households are 5 and 4, respectively. The fact that the non-migratory (male-headed) households had the lowest average number of resident members of the three household types could explain why the women in this category were unable to cope with domestic responsibilities. In fact, two of the three non-migratory (male-headed) households had only one grandchild resident besides the spouses. Resident in the third type of household were the respondents' male spouse and his elderly parents, who could hardly contribute much assistance.

Equally significant, but perhaps not so obvious a possibility for explaining the unexpected outcome of the findings pertaining to the respondents' ability to cope with domestic responsibilities, is the varying ages of the respondents in all three household types. Differences in the mean age of the women per household type could have significant implications for their physical ability to cope with varying amounts of work. All the women in the non-migratory (male-headed) households - who were by far the oldest of the three groups of women - pointed out that part of the reason why they were unable to cope with their workload was because they could no longer endure physically strenuous tasks. This, they explained, was due to age-related illness such as constant fatigue and backaches. For the few women who were unable to cope with domestic responsibilities in the migratory and non-migratory (female-headed) households, old age was never cited as a contributing factor. Rather, lack of adequate assistance was the only reason given for failure to cope.

The findings pertaining to the ability of women to cope with subsistence farming responsibilities also suggest that for the majority of migrants' wives and single women, the presence of children and relatives in the household has helped to ease the burden of such responsibilities. However, it is important to note that while the majority of migrants' wives and single women are able to cope with both domestic and subsistence farming responsibilities, the findings show that they are less likely to cope with subsistence farming activities. This could be explained by the responses of some of the women, who said that subsistence farming activities put heavier demands on household members than

domestic activities. While one would be inclined to suggest that the absence of men from these households could account for the fact that there is a higher proportion of women who are unable to cope with subsistence farming activities than with domestic activities, there is no supporting data to confirm this theory. This is because all the women in the non-migratory (male-headed) households who were expected to cope with subsistence farming responsibilities said that their husbands' presence had done little to alleviate the burden of subsistence farming. The explanation given for the failure of their spouses to provide effective assistance was that the men suffered from ill-health and physical disabilities caused by years of exposure to the harsh working conditions in the South-African mines. Had this category of respondents included women with younger and able-bodied husbands, the findings regarding the ability of these women to cope with subsistence farming responsibilities might have been different.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

One purpose of this study was to examine the impact of male migratory labour on the status of Basotho women left behind to assume responsibility for the subsistence sector. The other objective of this study was to examine whether these women experience any significant difficulties in maintaining both the domestic and subsistence farming domains in the absence of shared responsibilities with men.

To assess the impact of the male migrant labour system on Basotho women in the subsistence sector, it was necessary to compare the situation of migrants' wives with that of single women and with that of women whose husbands are present in the household. For this purpose, subjects studied were drawn from among migrants' wives, single women and women whose husbands were not migrant workers.

Examining the women's status required establishing the extent to which they participate in the development of the subsistence sector and the extent to which they have access to essential resources that would enhance their autonomy and facilitate their full participation in the development process. Indicators used to measure the extent of their participation in the development of the subsistence sector include the level of decision-making and managerial responsibilities women enjoy in the domestic and subsistence farming domains. Means used to assess women's ability to gain access to essential resources included examining their access rights to credit, land title, access to agricultural machinery and level of financial independence. As important determinants of the women's ability to gain access to credit and land title, their legal status and contractual capacity were also examined.

Overall, this study shows that the absence of men from the subsistence sector has not resulted in any significant increase in the status of women left behind. While the majority of the migrants' wives enjoy full decision-making power at the household level (unlike women whose husbands are not migrant workers),

they do not enjoy similar autonomy in their society at large. As do those women whose husbands are present in the household, migrants' wives and single women face the same structural constraints that ensure their subordination and deny them economic autonomy in keeping with the patriarchal ideology of Basotho society.

Most of the constraints which women face in gaining autonomy appear to be rooted in the legal norms of the Basotho that confine women to the minority status. Their minority status, as defined under the legal norms of the Basotho, appears to prohibit their ability to gain independent access to valuable economic resources. As minors, all the women said that they did not hold title to land. Their access rights to land (for those with landholdings) were restricted to rights of use, which rights they acquired only through men, who as majors, are entitled to have land registered in their names. As minors, women cannot enter into contractual agreements in order to obtain credit for agricultural pursuits from formally established credit institutions. Any attempt by women to obtain such credit can only be facilitated through adult men who have majority status and therefore, contractual capacity.

The responses of a good proportion of single women regarding their legal status and contractual capacity indicate that they enjoy greater autonomy than married women. However, their autonomy in this respect appears to be more tacit than formally endorsed by law. This is evidenced by the fact that formal credit institutions will not extend credit directly to women regardless of marital

status, and that single women, like married women, cannot hold title to land because of their minority status.

The disadvantaged status of women who participated in the study is also evidenced by their lack of financial autonomy. This is shown on the one hand by the heightened dependence on migrants' remittances by migrants' wives, and on the other hand by the reliance on informal sector occupations by single women and women whose husbands are not migrant workers. Such informal sector occupations include petty commerce and domestic service which, which by and large are characterised by low pay and low capital investment. Faced with prohibitions against migrating to the South-African centres of employment, coupled with domestic responsibilities to which the women are culturally bound, Basotho women do not have access to formal-sector employment. Consequently, they remain confined to the subsistence sector to take up low-paying occupations that accommodate and closely resemble their own domestic responsibilities.

Given their disadvantaged financial situation, it is not surprising that the majority of women did not attempt to get credit from informal credit institutions. While informal village cooperatives do not require male intervention before advancing credit to women, they do however, require that beneficiaries possess some form of collateral or adequate monetary savings before being eligible for membership. Lacking collateral, the majority of

respondents reported not having exploited this alternative means of obtaining credit.

The marginalisation of the women is also evidenced by their exclusion from the control of mechanised farming equipment. This study shows that none of the respondent women who engaged in subsistence farming employed mechanised farming operations. While women are primarily responsible for food production, all mechanised farming operations are carried out by men. The fact that none of these women had direct access to agricultural machinery despite their primary responsibility for food production, supports the view held by the Women in Development School that long-standing approaches to development have emphasized the role of men (Boserup, 1974; Charlton, 1984; Parpart, 1990; Bandarage, 1982). Even though Basotho women constitute most of the workforce in the food-producing sector, it appears that men are still the recognised farmers, and as such, remain the chief recipients of modern farming technology and training.

The findings of this study regarding the status of Basotho women in the subsistence sector appear to support the view held by the Women in Development School that patriarchal ideologies embedded in the socio-cultural institutions worldwide have ensured the subordination of women. By centralising power and control over the means of production exclusively in the hands of men, male-oriented institutional structures deny women the

opportunity to enhance their own economic status and to effectively participate in any developmental initiatives of their economies.

This study shows that the presence or absence of men from households does not have much impact on the ability of women to cope with domestic and subsistence farming responsibilities. Rather, it appears that other demographic features of households, such as resident children and adult persons in the household, as well as the ages of the respondents, determine, to a significant degree, the ability of women to cope with their responsibilities. Nevertheless, this study also shows that the majority of migrants' wives and single women who cope with domestic responsibilities are less likely to cope with subsistence farming responsibilities. While one may be inclined to attribute this discrepancy to the absence of men who, in theory, would provide effective assistance with subsistence farming if present, the data do not suggest that this is the case. This is because resident spouses in the non-migratory (male-headed) households whose presence was expected to reduce the burden of responsibilities on their wives, were reported physically incapable of providing effective assistance. In view of the reasons given to explain the failure of resident spouses in the non-migratory households to provide effective assistance in their households, one is inclined to maintain that had the study encompassed a group of women with younger and able-bodied men resident in their households, findings regarding the women's ability to cope might have been different. As it is, all the husbands who were reported present in the non-migratory (male-headed) households were retired migrant workers whose

physical strength had declined due to years of exposure to the harsh working conditions in South-African mines.

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APPENDIX

-- 1 --

Interview Questionnaire

My name is Sindile Moitse. I am currently carrying out a study designed to assess the impact of male migratory labour on rural Basotho women. This involves finding out whether or not the absence of men from the subsistence sector has facilitated women's direct access to essential resources for the development of the rural economy. The study is also intended to determine whether women experience significant difficulties in maintaining the subsistence sector in the absence of shared responsibilities with men. Enclosed within this interview questionnaire are questions pertaining to these major areas of inquiry, to which you are kindly requested to respond. You are not required to give your name nor signature on the interview questionnaire, so that you can feel comfortable about answering all the questions anonymously. It is hoped that your responses will provide valuable information which will contribute to a better understanding of the situation of rural Basotho women with a view to devising alternative strategies to improve their overall status and the development of the country at large.

SECTION ONE

I. Individual Household Demographics:

- (a) Age of respondent
- (b) Marital status of respondent
- (c) Household census:

Relation of each household resident to the respondent, and their sex, age and occupation

II. Assessment of the extent to which the household is dependent on the subsistence sector for the following basic requirements: food and fuel.

- (a) Do you have any access to land?
- (b) If not, why?
- (c) If so, in whose name is it registered?
- (d) To what extent do you rely on subsistence farming to get the following agricultural products for subsistence: grains, vegetables, etc., (Check where appropriate)

None Little Substantial Sufficient

Grain

Cattle

Vegetables

Other (state)

- (e) To what extent to you make use of the following to provide fuel for cooking or heating. (Check where appropriate)

None Little Substantial Sufficient

Wood (lithlaka)

Dung (lisu)

Kerosene

Other (state)

SECTION II

- I. Questions in this Section are to be answered only by women whose husbands are migrant workers.
- (a) Were you married under customary law?
- (b) If not, were you married under civil law?
- (c) If married under civil law, what property régime governs your marriage?
- (d) In the absence of your husband, do you assume full managerial responsibility for the domestic unit and the domestic economy?
- (e) If not, who does?
- (f) Do you make final decisions independently of your husband regarding the allocation and use of resources such as money, to meet a variety of household needs such as property, medical and educational needs of household members?

- (g) Can you rely on the assistance of close kin (not resident in the household) in maintaining your household and domestic economy?
- (h) If so, to what extent?
- (i) What is your family's chief source of income?
- (j) Is it sufficient to cover basic necessities like subsistence, clothing, medical needs of your family and your children's educational needs?
- (k) If not, do you have any other source of income to augment it?
- (l) Do you take up any form of employment? State.
- (m) Would you need your husband's authorization to take up employment?
- (n) If so, why?

II. The following questions are to be answered by respondents who engage in subsistence farming.

- (a) What sort of capital do you use for subsistence farming?
- (b) Is it sufficient to meet all subsistence farming requirements?
- (c) If not, have you tried to gain access to credit with which to supplement the available capital for subsistence farming? And, if so, were you successful?
- (d) If you use mechanised farming equipment, who undertakes all mechanised farming operations?
- (e) Are you able to enter into a contractual agreement (for instance in order to obtain credit from a formal credit institution) independently of your husband's authorization?

- (f) Have you ever tried to acquire access to property (notably, land) independently of your husband?
- (g) If not, why?
- (h) If so, did you encounter any difficulties?
- (i) Who assumes full managerial responsibility for subsistence farming?
- (j) Who makes final decisions regarding subsistence farming concerns, i.e., what crops to grow, when to grow them and how?
- (k) Can you rely on the assistance of resident household members in the maintenance of your household and domestic economy?
- (l) If so, to what extent?

SECTION III

- I. Questions in this Section are to be answered only by single women.

Unmarried Women

- (a) Are you the head of your household?
- (b) If not, who is?
- (c) What is your source of income?
- (d) Is it sufficient to maintain your household and provide for the needs of its members?
- (e) If not, do you have any other source of income to supplement it?
- (f) Are you able to enter into a legally binding contractual agreement independent of male representation?
- (g) If not, who would provide such representation?

(h) Can you rely on the assistance of close kin (who are not resident in the household) in carrying out household duties?

(i) If so, to what extent?

II. The next questions are to be answered by respondents who have access to landholdings for subsistence farming.

(a) What sort of capital do you use for subsistence farming?

(b) Is it sufficient to meet all subsistence farming requirements?

(c) If not, have you tried to gain access to credit from a formal credit institution in order to supplement the available capital for subsistence farming?

(d) If so, were you successful?

(e) If not, can you explain why?

(f) If you use mechanised farming equipment, who undertakes all mechanized farming operations?

(g) Can you rely on the assistance of close kin (not resident in your household) in carrying out subsistence farming duties?

(h) If so, to what extent?

(i) Do you encounter any difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities, given the presence or absence of such assistance? Explain.

III. The following questions should be answered only by widows:

Widows

(a) Are you the head of your household?

(b) If not, who is?

(c) Who is the breadwinner in the household?

- (d) (If respondent is the breadwinner:) Do you encounter any difficulties as the breadwinner? If so, explain.
- (e) What is your source of income?
- (f) Is it sufficient to maintain the household and provide for the needs of all household members?
- (g) If not, do you have any other source of income to supplement it?
- (h) What property régime governs your marriage?
- (i) When your husband died, did you assume legal guardianship of your children (if any)?
- (j) If not, who did?
- (k) If married in community of property, do you refer to your late husband's male relatives for legal representation?

IV. The following questions are to be answered only by respondents with landholdings for subsistence farming:

- (a) How did you get access to land?
- (b) What sort of capital do you use for subsistence farming?
- (c) Is it sufficient to meet all subsistence farming requirements?
- (d) Have you tried to gain access to credit in order to supplement the available capital for subsistence farming?
- (e) If so, were you successful?
- (f) If not, would you explain why?
- (g) If you use mechanised farming equipment, who undertakes all mechanised farming operations?

(h) Are you able to enter into legally binding contractual agreements independently of male representation?

(i) If not, who would normally provide such representation?

(j) Can you rely on the assistance of close kin (not resident in the household) in carrying out household responsibilities and subsistence farming?

(k) If so, to what extent?

(l) Can you rely on the assistance of resident household members in carrying out subsistence farming duties?

(m) If so, to what extent?

(n) Do you encounter any difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities, given the presence or absence of such assistance? Explain.

V. The following questions should be answered only by separated and deserted women:

Separated and Deserted Women

(a) Are you the head of your household?

(b) If not, who is?

(c) Who is the breadwinner in your household?

(d) (If respondent is the breadwinner:) Do you encounter any difficulties as the breadwinner? If so, explain.

(e) What is your chief source of income?

(f) Is it sufficient to provide for the needs of all household members?

(g) If not, do you have any other source of income to supplement it?

(h) What property regime governed your former marriage?

(i) If separated:

(1) Were you able to gain custody of your children, if any?

(2) Were there any legal provisions made to ensure constant support for you and the children by your former husband?

(j) Who assumes legal guardianship of your children?

(k) Are you able to represent yourself legally, independently of male representation?

(l) If not, who would normally provide such representation?

VI. The following questions are to be answered only by respondents who have access to land for subsistence farming:

Land Access for Subsistence Farming

(a) (If your former husband had landholdings), did you retain rights of use over the land?

(b) If not, how did you gain access to your present landholdings?

(c) What sort of capital do you use for subsistence farming?

(d) Is it sufficient to meet all subsistence farming requirements?

(e) Have you tried to gain access to credit with a view to supplementing the available capital for subsistence farming?

(f) If so, were you successful?

(g) If not, would you explain why?

(h) (If you use mechanised farming equipment) who undertakes all mechanised farming operations?

(i) Can you rely on the assistance of close kin (non-resident household members) in carrying out household and subsistence farming duties?

- (j) If so, to what extent?
- (k) Can you rely on the assistance of resident household members in carrying out household and subsistence farming duties?
- (l) If so, to what extent?
- (m) Do you encounter any difficulties in carrying out these responsibilities given the presence or absence of such assistance?

SECTION IV

Questions in this section are to be answered only by married women whose husbands are resident household members.

- (a) What is your household's main source of income?
- (b) Who is breadwinner in the household?
- (c) Is the income brought in by the breadwinner sufficient to provide for the needs of your family?
- (d) If not, do you have any other source of income to supplement it?
- (e) Were you married under customary law?
- (f) If not, were you married under civil law?
- (g) (If married under civil law) what property regime governs your marriage?
- (h) Who assumes managerial responsibility for domestic activities?
- (i) Who makes final decisions with respect to domestic activities?
- (j) Do you get assisted by resident household members with domestic responsibilities?
- (k) If so, to what extent?

The following five questions are to be answered by respondents who have access to land for subsistence farming.

- (a) What sort of capital do you use for subsistence farming?
- (b) (If you use mechanised equipment) who undertakes all mechanised farming operations?
- (c) Do you have sufficient capital to initiate farming pursuits?
- (d) If not, have you made any attempt to acquire credit with a view to supplementing the available capital for subsistence farming?
- (e) If so, did you encounter any difficulties? explain.
- (f) Are you able to acquire credit from a credit institution independently of your husband's authorisation?
- (g) Who assumes managerial responsibility for subsistence farming activities?
- (h) Who makes final decisions regarding subsistence farming concerns?
- (i) Does your husband provide sufficient assistance with respect to subsistence farming responsibilities?

THIS SECTION MUST BE CHECKED & CORRECTED BY SOMEONE WHO CAN
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The Translated Version of Interview Questionnaire

Lipotso mabapi le lipatlisiso

(Interpreter's Translation of the Interview Questionnaire in the Basotho Language)

Lebitso la ka ke Sindile Moitse. Ke ntse ke etsa lipatlisiso mabapi le boemo ba bo 'me metseng, Lesotho, kante ho teropo. Hona ke ho fumana hore na bo 'me ba na le menyetla le matla a lekaneng a ho ntsetsa moruo oa naha pele, joalo ka ho nka karolo litabeng tsa temo. Lipatlisiso tsena hape ke ho fumana hore na bo 'me ba thulana le mathata mabapi le mesebetsi ea ka tlung le ea temo ha banna ba bona ba e le sieo malapeng ba ile merafong. Mabapi le lipatlisiso tsena, ke kopa ho u botsa lipotso tse seng kae, 'me ke tsepa hore likarabelo tsa hao li ka thusa sechaba sa Lesotho ho rarolla mathata mabapi le ntsetso pele ea moruo oa naha.

Karolo ea pele

(a) lilemo tsa hao likae?

(b) U nyetsoe kapa che? (hlalosa).

(c) U phela le batho ba bakae ka lapeng ha joale? (hlalosa)

Kamano le moarabi lilemo monna/mosali mosebetsi

(d) i. Na u enale masemo?

ii. (Haeba u se na masemo) hlalosa hore na ke hobaneng?

iv. (Haeba u na le masemo, a ngolisitsoe ka lebitso la mang?)

v. Bontsa hore na temong ea masimo a hao u ee u fumane lijo tse kae;
mabele, poone, le meroho joalo.

Letho Hanyane Ho lekana Haholo

poone/mabele

meroho

(lijo tse ling)
Hlalosa

vi. Bontsa hore na sebakeng sa ho pheha le ho besa u sebelisa libeso tsa
latelang ha kae

Letho Hanyane Ho lekana Haholo

patsi

lisu

paraffini

lithlaka

(libeso tse
ling) hlalosa

Karolo ea bobeli

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me ba nyetsoeng ke banna ba sebetsang merafong.

(a) Na u ile oa nyalloa ka moetlo oa sesotho? hlalosa.

(b) (Haeba u sa nyalloa ka moetlo oa sesotho) Na u ile oa nyalloa kerekeng kapa ha 'Maseterata.

(c) Ha monna oa hao a le sieo, na ke uena ea filoeng boikarebello mabapi le tsamaiso ea lelapa le temo?

(d) Haeba ha se uena ea filoeng boikarebello, ke mang?

(e) Ha eba ke uena, na u ee u etse liqeto ntle ke monna oa hao mabapi le,

i. tsebeliso ea chelete bakeng sa lithloko ka lapeng joalo ka thepa ea ka tlung, ho isa bana sekolong esita le ngakeng?

ii. temo-- —joalo ka ho lema lijalo tsa mefuta o feng, neng le joang.

(f) Boholo ba nako u phelisoa ke chelete e tsoang kae?

(g) Na e lekane ho phethahatsa lithloko tsa mantlha joalo ka lijo, liaparo, ho isa bana ngakeng, esita le sekolong?

- (h) Haeba ha e lekane, u ee u etse joang ho tlatseletsa?
- (i) Na ho na le mosebetsi oo u etsang ho tlatseletsa chelete ka lapeng? hlalosa.
- (j) Na u hloka tumello ea monna oa hao bakeng sa ho fumana mosebetsi?
- (k) Haeba ho joalo, hlalosa na hobaneng?
- (l) Na batho boo u lulang le bona ka lapeng ba ea u thusa mabapi le mosebetsi oa katlung?
- (m) (Haeba u fumana thuso ka lapeng) na ke thuso e lekaneng?
- (n) Na batho boo u amanang le bona (feela ba sa lule le uena ka lapeng) ba ea u thusa mabapi le mosebetsi oa ka tlung?
- (o) (Haeba ho joalo) ba u thusa haholo kapa hanyane?

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me ba nang le masimo a ho lema.

- (p) Thepa eo u e sebelisang bakeng sa temo ke efeng? (terekere, mohoma, joalo joalo).
- (q) Na li lekane ho phethahatsa lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?
- (r) (Haeba ha li lekane) na u kile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane bankeng ho tlatseletsa lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?
- (s) (Haeba ho joalo) na u ile oa atleha?
- (t) Na hoa lumelleha hore u ka tekena litumello tsa mokitlane ntle le tumello ea monna oa hao?
- (u) Haeba u sebelisa mechini temong ea masimo a hao, ke mang ea sebelisang mechini eo?
- (v) Na u kile oa leka ho batla masimo ntle le monna oa hao?

- (w) (Haeba ho joalo) na u ile oa thulana le mathata?
- (x) (Haeba u saka oa leka ho batla masimo) hlalosa na hobaneng?
- (y) Na u fumana thuso mabapi le mosebetsi oa temo?
- (z) (Haeba ho joalo) na u fumana thuso e lekaneng?

Karolo ea boraro

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me ba sa nyaloang, bo 'me ba ileng ba nyaloa feela ba arohana le banna ba bona le bahlolohali.

Bo 'me ba sa nyaloang

- (a) Na ke uena hlooho ea lelapa?
- (b) (Haeba ha se uena hloho ea lelapa) ke mang hlooho?
- (c) Chelete eo u iphelisang ka eona u e fumana joang?
- (d) Na e lekane lithloko tsa lelapa?
- (e) (Haeba ho se joalo) na ho nale mokhoa oo u famanang chelete ka ona ho tlatseletsa?
- (f) Na ho oa lumelleha hore o ka tekena litumellano tse tlamang ka molao ntle le motho oa monna?
- (g) Haeba ha ho joalo, ke mang ea ka tekenang lebitsong la hao?
- (h) Na u fumana thuso mabapi le mosebetsi oa ka tlung? hlalosa.
- (i) Haeba u fumana thuso mabapi le mosebetsi oa ka tlung, na e u lekane? (Ka mantsoe a mang, na mosebetsi oa ka tlung o oa u imela?)

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me ba nang le masimo.

(f) Thepa eo u e sebelisang bakeng sa temo ke efe? (terekere, mohoma, joalo joalo)

(g) Na e lekane ho phethahatsa lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?

(h) (Haeba ha e lekane) na u kile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane bankeng bakeng sa ho tlatsela lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?

(i) (Haeba u kile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane) na u ile oa atleha?

(j) Ha u sa ka oa atleha, bolela lebaka?

(k) Na ho oa lumelleha hore u ka tekena litumellano tsa mokitlane ntle le motho oa monna?

(l) Haeba ha ho joalo, ke mang ea ka tekenang lebitsong la hao?

(m) Na u fumana thuso mabapi le mosebetsi oa temo?

(n) (Haeba u fumana thuso) na e u lekane?

(o) Na mosebetsi oa temo ea lapeng u oa u imela? hlalosa.

Bahlolohali

(a) Na ke uena hlooho ea lelapa?

(b) (Haeba ha se uena hlooho ea lelapa) ke mang hlooho ka lapeng?

(c) Chelete eo u phelisang nako le nako u e fumana joang?

(d) Na e lekane lithloko tsa lelapa?

(e) (Haeba ha e ea lekane) na ho nale mokhoa oo u famanang chelete ka 'ona ho tlatsela?

(f) Na u ile oa nyaloa ka moetlo oa sesotho?

(g) Kamorao ho lefu la monna oa hao, na u ile oa fua matla le boikarabelo baneng ba hao (haeba ba le teng).

(h) (Haeba ha ho joalo) ke mang ea ileng a nka boikarabelo boo?

(i) Na ba habo monna oa hao ba ile ba fua boikarabelo ka molao holima hao kamorao hore monna oa hao a hlokahale?

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me ba nang le masimo a ho lema

(j) U ile oa fumana masimo joang?

(k) Thepa eo u e sebelisang bakeng sa temo ke efe?

(l) Na thepa ea hao ea temo e lekane ho phethahatsa lithloko tsa mantlha tsa temo?

(m) (Haeba e sa lekane) na u kile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane ho tlatsetsa thepa ea hao ea temo?

(n) Haeba u kile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane ho tlatsetsa thepa ea hao ea temo, na u ile oa atleha?

(o) Haeba u sa ka oa atleha, fana ka mabaka.

(p) Haeba u sebelisa mechini bakeng sa temo ea masimo a hao, ke mang eo a sebelisang mechini eo?

(q) Na u fumana thuso mabapi le mosebetsi oa temo?

(r) Haeba u fumana thuso, na ke thuso e lekaneng? (ka mantsoe a mang, na mosebetsi oa hao oa temo u oa u imela).

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me ba ileng ba arohana le banna ba bona.

- (a) Na ke uena hlooho ka lapeng?
- (b) (Haeba ha se uena hlooho ka lapeng) ke mang hlooho?
- (c) Chelete e u phelisang nako le nako u e fumana joang?
- (d) Na e lekane lithloko tsa lelapa?
- (e) (Haeba ha e lekane) na ho na le mokhoa o mong oo u fumanang chelete ka eona ho tlatseletsa?
- (f) Na u ile oa nyaloa ka moetlo oa sesotho? hlalosa.
- (g) (Haeba ha u ka ba oa nyaloa ka moetlo oa sesotho) na u ile oa nyalloa kerekeng kapa ha 'Maseterata?
- (h) Ke mang ea ileng a nka boikarebelo le matla baneng ba hao hore u arohane le monna oa hao?
- (i) Kamorao hore u arohane le monna oa hao, na u ile oa fuoa matla a ho ikemela ka molao ntle le motho oa monna?
- (j) (Haeba ho ho joalo) ke mang ea nang le matla a ho u emela?
- (k) Na u fumana thuso e lekaneng mabapi le mosebetsi oa ka tlung?
- (l) (Haeba u fumana thuso mabapi le mosebetsi oa ka tlung) na e u lekane?

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me ba e naleng masimo bakeng sa ho lema.

- (m) (Haeba monna eo u hlalaneng le ena a ne a e nale masimo) na u ile a u siela ona kamorao hore le arohane?
- (n) (Haeba a sa ka a u siela ona) masimo oo u a sebelisang hona joale u oa fumane joang?

(o) Thepa eo u e sebelisang bakeng sa temo ke efe? (terekere, mohoma joalo joalo).

(p) Na e lekane ho phethahatsa lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?

(q) (Haeba ha ho joalo) na u kile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane bankeng bakeng sa ho tlatseletsa lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?

(r) (Haeba ho joalo) na u ile oa atleha? hlalosa.

(s) Na u fumana thuso mabapi le mosebetsi oa ho lema lijo masimong?

(t) Na mosebetsi oa ho lema o oa u imela?

(u) (Haeba u fumana thuso mabapi le temo) na ke thuso e lekaneng?

Karolo ea bone

Lipotso tse latelang li arajoa ke bo 'me bao hanna ba bona ba sa sebetseng merafong.

(a) Chelete e le phelisang boholo ba nako lapeng e tsoa kae?

(b) Na chelete eo e lekane lithloko tsa lelapa?

(c) (Haeba ho se joalo) na ho nale mokhoa o mong oo le fumanang chelete ka ona ho tlatseletsa?

(d) Na u ile oa nyaloa ka moetlo oa sesotho?

(e) (Haeba ha u ka ba oa nyaloa ka moetlo oa sesotho) na u ile oa nyalloa kerekeng kapa ha 'Maseterata?

(f) Na ho oa lumelleha hore o ka tekena litumellano tse tlamang ka molao ntle le monna oa hao?

(g) Ke mang ea nkang boikarabello inabapi le tsamaiso ea ka tlung?

(h) Ke mang ea etsang liqeto mabapi le tsamaiso ea ka lapeng?

(i) Na u fumana thuso e lekaneng mabapi le mosebetsi oa ka tlung?

Lipotso tse latelang li arojoa ke bo 'me bao malapa a bona a nang le masimo bakeng sa temo.

(j) Thepa eo u e sebelisang bakeng sa temo ke efeng?

(k) Na e lekane ho phethahatsa lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?

(l) (Haeba ho se joalo) Na u kile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane bakeng sa ho tlatseletsa lithloko tsa hao tsa temo?

(m) Haeba u ile oa leka ho fumana mokitlane, na u ile oa atleha?

(n) Ha u sa ka oa atleha, hlalosa hore na ke hobaneng?

(o) Na ho oa lumelleha hore u ka tekena litumellano tsa mokitlane ntle le monna oa hao?

(p) (Haeba u sebelisa mechini bakeng sa temo) ke mang ea sebelisang mechini eo?

(p) Ke mang ea nkang boikarebelo mabapi le mosebetsi oa temo ka lapeng?

(q) Ke mang ea etsang liqeto mabapi le mosebetsi oa temo?

(r) Na boteng ba monna oa hao lapeng bo thusa ho lelefatsa boima ba mosebetsi oa temo?