

**Surviving in a Socio-Economic Crisis:  
Strategies of Low Income Urban Households in  
Dzivaresekwa: Zimbabwe  
BY**

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of Philosophy (Land and Agrarian Studies)**

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# DECLARATION

I declare that *Surviving in a Socio – Economic Crisis: Strategies of Low Income Urban Households in Dzivaresekwa: Zimbabwe* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Full name: Douglas Magunda      Date: May 2008

Signed.....



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## ACRONYMS

AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CODESRIA:	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CSO:	Central Statistics Office of Zimbabwe
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
FANTA:	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
FAO:	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FPDL:	Food Poverty Datum Line
GMB:	Grain Marketing Board
GOZ:	Government of Zimbabwe
HIV:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HFIAS:	Household Food Insecurity Access Scale
IFPRI:	International Food Policy Research Institute
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
LEDRIZ:	Labour and Economic Development Research Institute
MPSL&SW:	Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare
PASS:	Poverty Assessment Survey Study
RBZ:	Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe
RHVP:	Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme
SEAGA:	Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
TCPL:	Total Consumption Poverty Line
UA:	Urban Agriculture
UN	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
USD:	United States Dollars
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
YOY:	Year on Year Inflation
ZDHS :	Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey
ZESA:	Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority
ZINWA:	Zimbabwe National Water Authority
ZIMVAC:	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee
ZWD:	Zimbabwe Dollar

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## **ABSTRACT**

For close to a decade, Zimbabwe has experienced a protracted socio-economic crisis. Although it is affecting both rural and urban areas, major forms of formal safety nets by the Government and Non-Governmental Organisations have been confined to rural areas. On the other hand the virtual collapse of the formal food marketing system in urban areas and the high formal unemployment rates have contributed to increased vulnerability of low income urban households to food insecurity. Using qualitative research methods, the study set out to understand livelihoods of low income urban households in Dzivaresekwa. In particular strategies low income households employ to cope with the negative macro-economic environment prevailing in Zimbabwe.

The case studies illustrate that there has been a significant shift in the livelihoods of low income households as well as food supply systems. Low income households are now depending on multiple income generating strategies, which in a majority of cases are generating subsistence income to survive. Households can no longer survive on a single wage as was the case in the 1990s. Urban agriculture, remittances, cross-border trading, illegal foreign currency trading and vending were some of the strategies households are using to survive. The way one was positioned in the informal sector and the ability to exploit the linkages between the formal and informal sector had a major influence on the food security status of a household. In general activities and sources of income linked to foreign currency were positively related to household food security status. Coping strategies being employed by households include reducing expenditure, expanding income generating activities and also relying on social networks. Households were reducing expenditure to an extent that consuming basic items such as meat, bread and rice was considered by children as an indicator of better-off households.

**Key words: Low income urban households, livelihoods, food security, coping strategies**

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Zimbabwe has experienced a socio-economic crisis for close to a decade. Currently, the Zimbabwean economy is characterised by negative Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate, hyperinflation, crumbling quality and quantity of social services, critical shortages of foreign currency and basic commodities, as well as erratic supplies of fuel (MPSL&SW, 2005; ZimVAC, 2006; UNDP, 2001; Gandure and Marongwe, 2006). Theory suggests that low income households are not passive victims of the changing environment: they adopt strategies to respond to adversities such as food insecurity and vulnerability (Rakodi, 1995b; Rugalema, 2000). The question is: “What strategies are low income urban households in Zimbabwe using to cope with food insecurity?”

This chapter presents an overview of the current national and sub national situation with respect to food security. It goes on to articulate the justification and significance of the study and to discuss the purpose and objectives of the study. The research approach and research questions are equally outlined prior to setting out the structure of the thesis, research ethics and limitations of the study.

## 1.2 Background and Context

### 1.2.1 The Economy

Zimbabwe has experienced a protracted socio-economic crisis and political crisis which has resulted in the decline of key economic indicators and also the quality and quantity of social services. As shown in Table 1.1 below, all key economic indicators are showing a negative trend. Cumulatively the GDP declined by 33.5 % between 2000 and 2006. The trend continued in 2007, with the economy declining by 4.6 %. Agriculture, which is the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy, has also declined. The Agricultural GDP growth rate has been negative since 2001, agricultural exports are on the decline, and total exports are declining, at a time when the demand for imports is high, resulting in a growing trade deficit. The external debt stood at USD 4.4 billion in 2006.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Real GDP growth rate ( % year on year)	-4.9	-8.4	-5.6	-10.6	-4.2	-7.7	-2.7
Consumer price Inflation, avg (%)	57	75	135	385	381	267	1034
Agricultural GDP Growth Rate (%)	3.2	-3.9	-22.7	-1	-2.9	-9.5	-4
Agricultural Exports, (US\$, m)	857.9	832.9	646.6	516	384.2	335.9	372.7
Total Exports (US\$, m)	2 202.9	2 113.7	1 802.3	1 669.9	1 684.2	1 606.1	1 724.4
Total Imports (US\$, m)	1 907.3	1 791.2	1 820.5	1 778.2	1 989.4	1 994	1 965.7
Trade Deficit ( US\$, m)	-295.6	-322.5	18.2	108.3	305.2	387.9	231.3
Total external debt (US\$ bn)	3.8	3.6	3.9	4.5	4.8	4.3	4.4
<i>Source: CSO , RBZ</i>							

Although data on Zimbabwe foreign currency reserves is not readily available, an acute shortage of foreign currency has been one of the major blows to the economy. In May 2007, the country was estimated to have currency reserves to cover imports for twelve days (FAO and, 2007). The shortages have consequently resulted in a thriving parallel market for foreign exchange. In July 2007, the official exchange rate was USD 1: ZWD 250, whereas the parallel market rate was around USD 1: ZWD 165 000 (RBZ, 2007; Financial Gazette, 26 July 2007:1). In fact, the official market rates are highly uncompetitive - for example, in July 2007, a loaf of bread cost USD 104 and USD 0.15, using the official and parallel market rates respectively.

The shrinking of the formal economy, as reflected by the key macro-economic indicators, has swelled the number of people not formally employed. Formal unemployment is estimated to be around 80 percent (UN, 2006). This is driving more and more people into a restricted informal sector, which offers no real wealth to the majority involved, but rather provides a subsistence income. Government policies do not seem to promote non-formal sources of income. Dhemba (1999) argues that the informal sector in Zimbabwe emerged by default as a result, there is a host of regulations which do not support the informal sector. This view is supported by Rakodi (1995b), who observed that the attempts to control the informal sector have resulted in limited opportunities in the sector. In fact, in 2005, the government launched Operation Murambatsvina to “clean up” towns and cities. The operation destroyed

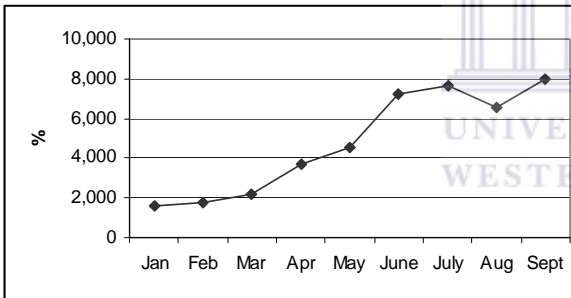


homes and livelihoods of some 700 000 people, the majority of which were poor (Tibaijuka, 2005) thus further compounding the situation.

**1.2.1.1 Inflation**

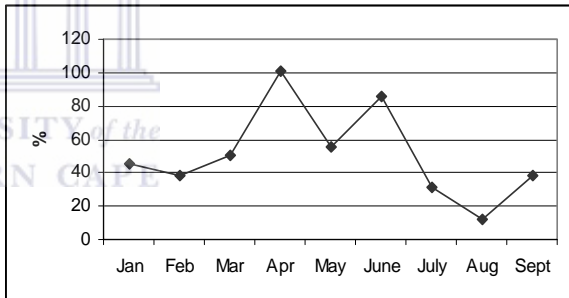
Inflation, which represents the general increase in the prices of goods and services, remains one of the major challenges facing the Zimbabwean economy. Since 2002, the country has experienced triple digit consumer price inflation year-on-year rates. This is negatively impacting on the populace of Zimbabwe, in particular low income urban households. This is because of the resultant fall in real income and purchasing power. Month-on-month inflation peaked at 100.7 percent in April 2007, and year-on-year inflation peaked at 7 982.1 percent in September 2007, which was the last inflation figure released by the Central Statistics Office of Zimbabwe (CSO) in 2007 (see Fig 1.2 and Fig 1.3). The statistics agency was not able to produce inflation rates after September 2007, due to too many data gaps as a result of shortages of commodities on the market.

**Fig 1.2 - Year on Year Inflation in 2007**



Source: CSO

**Fig 1.3 - Month on Month Inflation in 2007**



Source: CSO

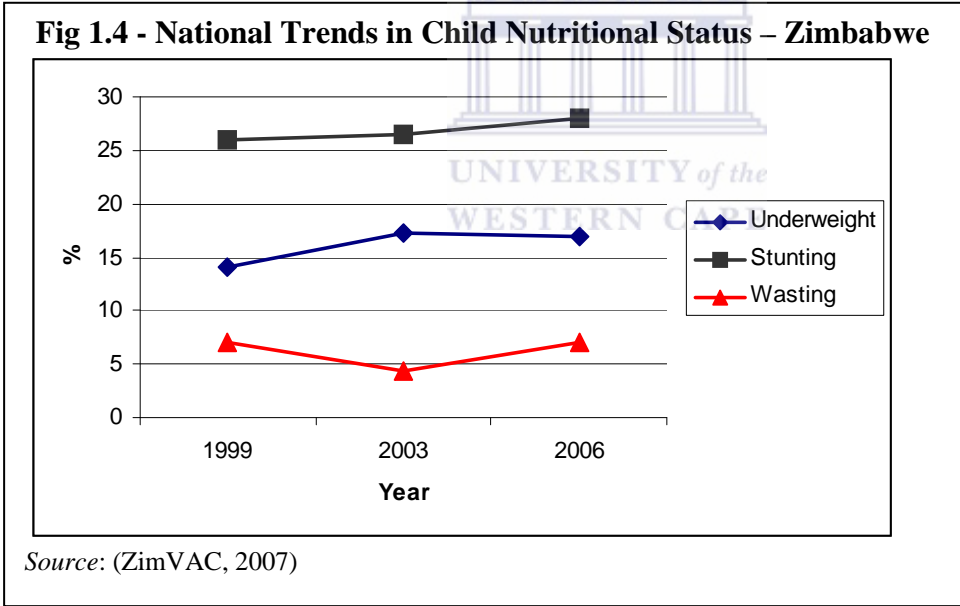
Although there is no universally accepted definition of hyperinflation, the situation attaining in Zimbabwe is considered hyperinflationary by most analysts (Gandure and Marongwe, 2006; USAID, 2007; FAO and WFP, 2007).

In an attempt to slow inflation, in June 2007 the Government of Zimbabwe implemented price controls on an array of basic commodities. The result was a dramatic decline in food availability and food access, particularly in urban areas. Prior to the price controls, most basic goods, including maize meal, were available in both formal and parallel markets, albeit at exorbitant and rapidly rising prices. However, since the implementation of the June 2007 price controls, serious shortages of basic commodities, including bread, maize meal, cooking oil, rice, beef, chicken and milk, were experienced in markets throughout the country.

Although the impact was felt in the whole economy, shortages were most profound in urban markets.

**1.2.2 Health**

The health status of an individual is key to one’s livelihood, given that the utility of labour depends on the health status of the individual. The state of the health sector in Zimbabwe is worrying, particularly for low income households, who depend primarily on the public health system. The health sector is under serious resource constraints; as such, it is characterised by a shortage of drugs and skilled health personnel due to the brain drain. This has resulted in the deterioration of health indicators: life expectancy declined from 51.8 years in 1995 to 37.2 in 2006, maternal mortality is at 1 100 per 100 000 live births, considered to be among the highest in the world (UN, 2006). The situation is being compounded by the high prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS, which ranged between 18.1 and 24.6 percent of the adult population in 2006 (ZDHS, 2007), although this figure is declining, it is still among the highest in the world.



The nutritional status of the population has not been spared. Dietary intake, health and care are considered determinants of the nutritional status of an individual (Maxwell et al, 2000). Wasting or Acute malnutrition, which is commonly associated with short-term food insecurity and/or illness, has increased from 4.4 percent in 2003 to 7 percent in 2006 (see Fig 1.4). Stunting malnutrition, which is highly associated with poverty, increased from 26.5 percent in 1999 to 28 percent in 2006 and under-weight remained stable at around 17 percent between

the two years. However, although increasing, the malnutrition indicators are still below the global emergency levels of 10 percent wasting, 30 percent stunting (ZimVAC, 2007).

### 1.2.3 Poverty

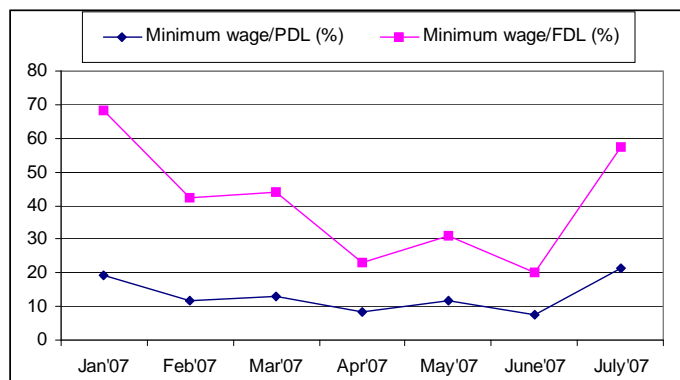
According to Bene (2004:13), the widely accepted definition of poverty states that

*Poverty encompasses different dimensions of deprivation that relate to human capabilities, including consumption and food security, health, education rights, voice, security, dignity and decent work*

Given the negative socio-economic situation prevailing in Zimbabwe, one can argue that poverty is on the increase. In Zimbabwe, the official measure of poverty is income using poverty lines. The Food Poverty Datum Line (FPDL) represents the amount required to ensure that each household member obtains 2100 kilocalories per day for the whole month and the Total Consumption Poverty Line (TCPL) is the income required to meet both basic food and non-food requirements per person per month (CSO, 2007).

Using the above measures, studies have shown that poverty is on the increase in Zimbabwe. In rural areas in 2003, a higher proportion (63 percent) of households was living below the TCPL, compared to 53 percent of urban households (MPSL&SW, 2005). Between 1995 and 2003, there was a higher percentage increase in poverty in urban areas (65 percent) than in rural areas (42 percent) (MPSL&SW, 2005). This shows that, proportionally, urban area households were increasingly becoming poorer, possibly due to the greater impact of the deteriorating macro-economic environment characterized by hyperinflation, negative real GDP growth, shrinking formal job opportunities, and shortages of basic food and non-food commodities. Poverty is now both a rural and urban problem, contrary to the traditional belief and assumption by most development practitioners that poverty is largely a rural problem (Bonnard, 2006; Maxwell, 1999).

**Fig. 1.5 - Minimum Wage as a % Poverty & Food Poverty Line**

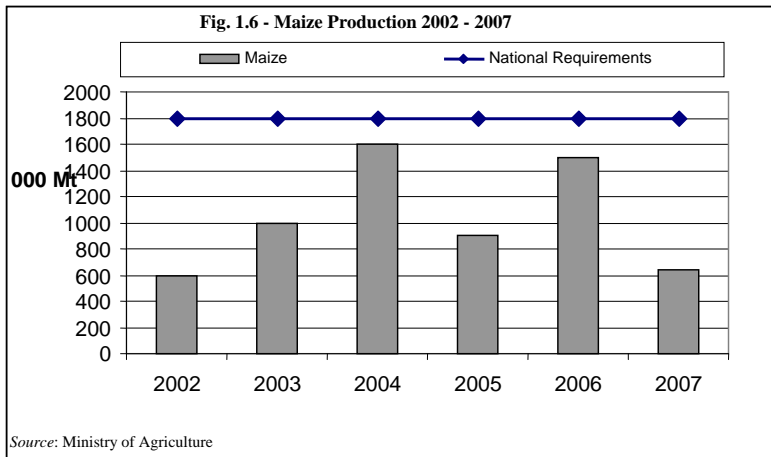


Source: LEDRIZ

A comparison of the minimum wage and poverty datum lines (food and total) can be used as an indicator of the economic well-being and food security status of households (FAO and WFP, 2007). Figure 1.5 shows that from January to July 2007, the minimum wage could only cover around 20 percent of the Poverty Datum Line, and in June 2007, a month prior to the survey, the minimum wage could only meet around 20 percent of the Food Datum Line. Over the years, the contribution of minimum wage rates has been on the decline. The FPDL and the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe's (CCZ) expenditure basket for a low income urban household continue to be well above the reach of many households, let alone the low income households. For July 2007, the FPDL stood at about ZW\$ 4 million and the CCZ food and non-food basket was about ZW\$13 million (CSO, 2007; CCZ, 2007). The minimum wage was only enough to cover 11 % of the CCZ expenditure basket.

#### 1.2.4 Food Security and Nutrition

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for 70 % of the Zimbabwean population (FAO and WFP, 2007). It has been the backbone of the economy but it is now on the decline. The share of agricultural exports to total exports has declined from 39 percent in 2000 to 21 percent in 2006. Analysts argue that this is a result of a number of factors, which include the land reform programme, the recurrent droughts and the shortages of agricultural inputs (FAO and WFP, 2007; USAID, 2007; Gandure and Marongwe, 2006).



Since 2002, Zimbabwe, which was a maize surplus producing country, has failed to produce enough cereals to feed its estimated population of 11.83 million people (CSO, 2002). During the period 2002 – 2007, production has ranged from 600 000 Mt in 2002 to 1.6 million in 2004, as shown in Fig 1.6. The country requires approximately 1.8 million Mt of maize per annum for industrial use, human and livestock consumption. To cover the gap, maize has to be imported but the capacity of government to import maize is severely constrained by foreign currency shortages. Given the price controls in place, there is no incentive for the private sector to complement government efforts to import maize. Food aid has played a significant role in filling the gap, serving as a safety net for the poor. Unfortunately this is mainly being targeted towards the rural poor, where food security is considered to be more pronounced than in urban areas. The situation shown in Figure 1.6 is reflected on the ground in the shortage of cereals on the market. Sporadic deliveries of basic food commodities are met with long queues, and not everyone makes it to the stores before stocks run out.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

From the foregoing, it is clear that, due to a combination of factors, Zimbabwe is going through a socio-economic crisis. The formal economy is shrinking; formal unemployment is high, the country is experiencing hyperinflation, shortages of basic commodities, and crumbling quality and quantity of social services. Studies have shown that poverty, and hence, food insecurity, is increasing. The question, therefore, is: “What strategies are low income urban households in Zimbabwe using to cope with the current socio-economic challenges, in terms of food security?”

## 1.4 Justification and Significance of the Study

Scholars who have studied issues of urban livelihoods in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 find the situation currently prevailing in Zimbabwe difficult to understand (Potts, 2005). Bracking and Sachikonye (2006) noted that some incomes reported by households during a study undertaken in Zimbabwe were too low to enable households to meet basic household requirements, given the fact that in urban areas households rely mainly on cash. In fact, Bracking and Sachikonye (2006, 7) observed that

*“Qualitative work would be useful to trace the micro demographics of the social reproduction crisis which is evident here only through the interpretation of income figures which seem entirely insufficient for households’ sustainability.”*

Considering that urban households depend on purchasing food and other basic requirements (Lourenco-Lindell, 1995; Drakakis-Smith, 1994), the scenario above indicates a situation where the use of income solely from formal employment can not cover the basic food requirements of households. Asked how he is surviving, one low income urban worker said *“God knows where I get the rest of the money for food, rent, school fees, clothes and other basics,”* (Zimonline, 05 March 2007). This suggests that low income urban workers are engaging in other activities to supplement income.

The negative socio-economic situation currently prevailing in Zimbabwe, coupled with the mismatch between formal incomes and the CCZ expenditure basket, offers a compelling case for studying strategies adopted by low income households. Although all households in Zimbabwe are exposed to the same risk, as was observed by Devereux (2001), susceptibility or resilience varies across households, depending on the social configuration of the household. In Zimbabwe, low income households are endowed with limited resources, as such, they are highly vulnerable to income shocks and food price inflation. It is for this reason that the study focused on low income households rather than middle and high income groups.

Theory suggests that low income urban households adopt strategies to respond to these adversities (Rakodi, 1995b; Rugalema, 2000). Information on how low income urban households cope with striking changes in the socio-economic situation is not readily available (Rakodi, 1995b). Murray (2001) argues that it is important to understand the processes in which livelihood activities and choices are embedded if one is to fully understand the strategies adopted by the low income urban households.

The study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the livelihoods of low income urban households during difficult times such as is currently prevailing in Zimbabwe. The study may also provide a basis upon which further studies can be modelled.. The study may be of use to policy makers, scholars and humanitarian organisations undertaking interventions targeted at low income urban households, ultimately benefiting low income urban households.

## **1.5 Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

The overall purpose of the study is to examine livelihood strategies employed by low income urban households to curb food insecurity. The general objective of the study is to proffer a deeper understanding of livelihoods of low income urban households, in particular how they are responding to the challenging socio-economic environment currently prevailing in Zimbabwe.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- Identify income-generating strategies being employed by low income urban households;
- Gain in-depth knowledge of household coping strategies in relation to food security.

## **1.6 Research Question**

Food security is complex and multidimensional, therefore, as observed by du Toit and Ziervogel (2004), in order to understand food security, there is a need to understand livelihood strategies on which households are dependent. The authors further argue that the social and economic context in which these livelihoods are embedded is also important if one is to fully understand the vulnerability of households to food insecurity.

Having discussed the socio-economic and political context in which households in Dzivaresekwa are embedded, the main question the research sought to answer is: “*What strategies do low income household employ to cope with food insecurity?*” In order to address the main research question, it was deemed important to take into consideration issues discussed in the context section of the thesis, which include widespread shortages of food and also the collapse of the formal sector. It was considered to be equally important to investigate social network issues, given the migration of Zimbabweans within and outside the country. The socio-economic crisis has seen an increase migration across all social strata to neighbouring countries and Europe.



## 1.7 Urban Settlements and the Study Site

### 1.7.1 Urban Settlements in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has a hierarchy of settlements in its urban areas. Urban settlements are classified into low, medium and high density areas. Low density areas are for the affluent high income members of the society, medium density areas are for the middle income groups and high density areas for the urban poor, the low income households.

Low density suburbs were created for the affluent members of society, and today they are still home to affluent members of Zimbabwean society. These suburbs are characterised by low population densities, with stand sizes ranging from 2 000 m<sup>2</sup> - 4 000 m<sup>2</sup>. Shops are available at designated shopping centres, while social facilities such as schools, clinics and sporting facilities are also sparingly available. Examples are Borrowdale, Gunhill and Highlands (Borrowdale Local Plan).

Medium density suburbs were created to cater for the coloured community and a few affluent blacks. Today, medium density areas are home to the middle income group. The suburbs are characterised by stand sizes of 400 m<sup>2</sup>– 1900 m<sup>2</sup>. Similarly to low density areas, social facilities such as community halls, schools, clinics and sporting facilities are also sparsely available. In Harare, suburbs such as Hillside, Arcadia and Cranborne fall into this category.

High density areas were established to house the urban poor, mainly consisting of low income households (Chavunduka, 1967). In the majority of cases, they were the source of cheap labour for the booming industries. The high density areas are characterised by small stand sizes which range from 150m<sup>2</sup> – 400m<sup>2</sup>. Due to the high concentration of people, social facilities are provided more densely relative to low density areas. Schools and shopping centres are generously provided, before “*Operation Murambatsvina*”, tuck shops were also abundantly available in the high density areas. In Harare, such settlements include Highfield, Mbare, Glen Norah and the area under study, Dzivaresekwa.



### **1.7.2 Dzivaresekwa High Density Suburb**

The study was undertaken in Dzivaresekwa, a suburb in Harare, which is the capital city of Zimbabwe. Dzivaresekwa is one of the high density, hence low income, suburbs, located about 17 km northwest of Harare city centre. It is one of the oldest suburbs in Harare, and was established in 1961 for the purpose of providing accommodation to African workers (Chavunduka, 1967), mainly consisting of domestic workers (Matshalaga, 1997). At the time the suburb was established, domestic workers were mainly foreigners. They were a source of cheap labour and also because local Zimbabweans preferred better paying jobs in commerce and industry. There a significant proportion of households in the old part of Dzivaresekwa are of foreign decent, particularly in the oldest section of the suburb in which the study was undertaken. According to the 2002 population census, the population of Dzivaresekwa was 88 0005, about 5% of the total population of Harare, which stood at 1 896 134 at that time (CSO, 2004b).

Residents of Dzivaresekwa stay in formal core houses generally with two room each and informal makeshift homes. Despite the fact that makeshift homes were destroyed by Operation Murambatsvina in 2005, small makeshift homes have mushroomed and are now a common sight in the suburb.

The majority of households in Dzivaresekwa have access to both reticulated water and electricity (CSO, 2004b). The houses use water-borne sewage reticulation systems, which has now led to massive overloading, due to massive population growth unmatched by the provision of additional sewer facilities, as well as the prevailing economic situation. The results of such massive overloading are now manifested in chronic sewer blockages and mounds of solid waste dumped on open spaces. Like many parts of Harare, the suburb also experiences frequent power and water cuts, resulting in households going for long periods without these services. Consequently, the use of wood for fuel and untreated water collected from unprotected wells has increased. Uncollected refuse, burst sewage pipes and flowing untreated sewage is a common sight in the suburb. As a result of the foregoing, the risk of serious health epidemics is increasing. The government has embarked on a diarrhoea and cholera alert campaign in the public media. This is all happening at a time when the quality and quantity of health services are on the decline.

In the suburb, there are both formal and informal markets. There are three shopping centres, each with large retail supermarkets. Close to these shopping centres are four grinding mills and five market stalls. Although market stalls are available, street vending of food and other non-food items, such as second-hand clothes, is very common in the suburb.

In addition to the road network, there is also a railway line which passes through the suburb. In response to the transport shortage, a makeshift railway station has been created to facilitate the ferrying of passengers to and from town during peak hours. The commuter train, which is heavily subsidized by the government, is now the major form of transport for the residents of Dzivaresekwa because it is cheaper, while commuter omnibuses and the public transporter play a supportive role.

There is one clinic which attends mainly to minor ailments; all major ailments are referred to Parirenyatwa, the main referral hospital, close to the city centre. The clinic is complemented by a number of private surgeries dotted around the suburb.

Recreational and social facilities in the suburb include city halls, churches, a football stadium, tennis courts, beer halls, night clubs and video clubs. The traditional '*nyawo*' dance is one of the most popular recreational activities in the area. The recreational facilities contribute to the social networks which exist in the area. The area is surrounded by open spaces and farms, which provide households with an opportunity to undertake urban agriculture and also serve as playgrounds for children.

There are six government primary schools and four secondary schools, of which two are run by the government and two are private schools. There are also a number of crèches in the area, two of which are run by the City of Harare and a number by private individuals.

The residents have no effective political representation, which effectively limits their ability to access government social welfare programmes. Dzivaresekwa has been represented by an opposition Member of Parliament in the house of assembly since 2000, and as a rule the opposition has no significant impact on political decision-making processes. This seriously undermines the ability of the residents to make any meaningful contributions towards their welfare or the development of their own residential area. All the councillors were suspended in 2004 and have not been reinstated since then therefore like any other suburb in Harare, the area does not have any representation at councillor level. The prevailing political impasse in

the country put a lid on all political activities, thus in between elections there is very little visible political activity, particularly in areas controlled by the opposition.

The suburb was considered for the study for three main reasons: firstly, because the suburb is predominantly a low income suburb, most of the residents are considered poor. Although from the mid-1980s, the suburb has also become home to middle income households, the majority are still low income households (Matshalanga, 1997). Secondly, as noted by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MPSL&SW, 2001), in Zimbabwe, urban poverty is manifested in, among other things, sprawling slums, small makeshift homes, poor drainage systems, uncollected garbage and uncontrolled presence of informal sector activities. All these features characterise Dzivaresekwa suburb at the time of writing. The third reason is that the suburb is one of the sentinel sites for a surveillance system to monitor the nutritional status of women and children, given the precarious health and food security situation in the suburb.

## **1.8 Outline of the Thesis**

The thesis is outlined as follows:

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Literature on livelihoods and coping strategies employed by households to deal with food insecurity in times of socio-economic crisis is reviewed. The review begins with a definition of key concepts related to livelihoods and food insecurity; this is then followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework which guided the study. Next there is a review of the literature on the importance of social, political and economic context, livelihood strategies of low income households as they relate to income-generation and coping strategies, and the role of social networks and the shocks and stresses experienced by households.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The research methodology used for the study is described and discussed. This includes the data collection and analysis processes. The chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of the study.



## **Chapters 4: Findings**

Chapter 4 presents the research findings which are presented case by case. The chapter starts by presenting food supply system cases studies followed by a summary and issues coming out of the food supply system. The chapter goes on to present household food security findings and case by case findings of household livelihood strategies. The chapter is concluded by a summary of key issues coming out of the findings.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the study, drawing conclusions based on the findings as they relate to research questions.



## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature on livelihoods and coping strategies employed by households to deal with food insecurity in times of socio-economic crisis. The review begins by definitions of key concepts related to livelihoods and food insecurity, followed by a discussion of the theoretical framework which guided the study. There is a review of literature on the importance of social, political and economic context, livelihood strategies of low income households as they relate to income generation and coping strategies, the role of social networks and the shocks and stresses experienced by households.

### 2.2 Definition of Key Terms

#### 2.2.1 Food Security

The World Food Summit of 1996 (FAO, 1999) defined *food security* as: “*when all people, at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for a healthy and active life*”. The definition highlights three dimensions to food security. These are: *availability, access and utilisation*. To understand each of the dimensions, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration. These factors are considered in the following sections and they provide a basis for the questions or guides which were used during interviews and discussions with households, traders and other key informants.

Availability of food is preliminary to both access and utilisation, therefore, for households in any locality to be considered food secure, it is important that physical quantities of food must be available for the households to access. Availability in urban areas is mainly influenced by the efficiency of the supply chain, although own production in the form of urban agriculture and donations also plays a part.

The other dimension is access, which in an urban setting is mainly determined by the resource endowment of the households. The demographics information of households helps to understand the quantity of food required by the households, as well as the capacity of households to undertake productive activities which are necessary to raise income.

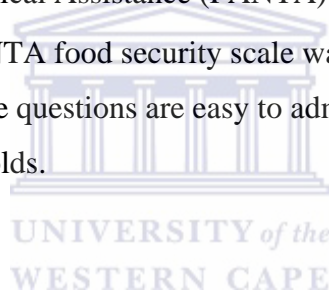
Information on the health and education status of household members is also important if one is to understand household food security. Of equal importance are the livelihood activities pursued by the household to raise income and meet food security objectives. Since households in an urban setting rely on the market for food and other non-food needs, income and expenditure information can provide a basis for understanding household food security.

Utilisation of food is also an important dimension of food security; it is typically reflected in the nutritional status of an individual. It has direct influence on the wellbeing of the individual, in addition negatively affecting labour productivity and income-generating potential. Dietary intake and diversity can be used as a proxy for food utilisation.

There are a number of methodologies used to measure food insecurity today. These include approaches that focus on calorie intake, coping strategies, dietary diversity, monetary income and the Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) food security scale (Hoddinott, 1999; ZimVAC, 2006). The FANTA food security scale was chosen because, as was observed by Hoddinott (1999), the questions are easy to administer and give a sense of the food security situation of households.

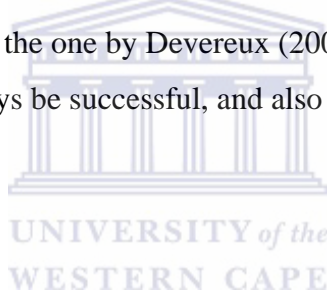
### **2.2.2 Vulnerability**

The combination of exposure to a threat with susceptibility or sensitivity to its adverse consequences is referred to as *vulnerability* (Devereux, 2001). Vulnerability can include the risk of, or susceptibility to, food insecurity and can result from either permanent or temporary conditions. The definition of vulnerability has two dimensions: these are exposure and resilience. Although households in the same locality can be exposed to the same risk, for example, food price inflation, the ability of households to deal with the risk may differ across households, depending on the level of resilience which is determined by the resources at the disposal of the household.



### 2.2.3 Coping

The concept of coping is one which has generated a lot of debate among scholars, to the extent that there are several definitions of coping strategies. Snel and Staring (2001:1) defined coping strategies as “*strategically selected acts which households or individuals resort to in response to shocks and stresses*”. Devereux (2001) defined coping strategies simply as “*responses to adverse events or shocks*”. These definitions imply that households assess the options available and then choose a particular strategy to deal with the situation confronting them. According to Rugalema (2000) households’ actions are not “strategies”, but just short-term efforts to survive, regardless of the long-term effects. Snel and Staring (2001) also argue that some strategies may not always serve their anticipated purpose, in fact, they may even have unintended negative effects. For example, reducing consumption of meals is a short-term measure which can have negative effects on the nutrition status of household members. The definition adopted for the study is the one by Devereux (2001), however, it is acknowledged that these strategies may not always be successful, and also that they may have long-term negative effects.



### 2.2.4 Household

As was observed by Maxwell et al (2000), the definition of *household* can be difficult. It is acknowledged that households are defined differently in different societies; the concept of a household can apply to co-residence, a task-oriented unit, or a site of shared activities (Beall and Kanji, 1999). In Zimbabwe, studies have generally used the definition which describes a household as a group of people who stay and eat from the same pot (ZimVAC, 2003; CSO, 2002). The definition which is used by other studies in Zimbabwe was also adopted for the study, however, in order to capture migration issues, household members were further categorised into ‘usual member present’, ‘usual member absent’ and ‘visitors’. A usual member present was taken to be a resident household member, while a usual member absent was taken to mean non-resident members of the household. The other concept closely linked to that of a household is a ‘household head’. Levin et al (1999) defined a household head as a person who ensures that every member of the household is provided for in terms of food and care. Williams (2003) defined a head of household as a member under whose authority the activities of the household including expenditures are carried out and who is accepted as such

by all members. The definition of household head adopted for the study was that by Levin, However it is acknowledged that in many urban settings such a person may not exist in a household. For the study, the issue of household head was not interrogated further than the view of the respondent, on whom they considered to be the head of household based on Levin's definition.

### **2.2.5 Chronically Ill Person**

A person was defined to be chronically ill if he or she was too sick to work or perform normal livelihood activities for at least 3 months of the past 12 months. Chronic illness has implications for the availability of labour and can further lead to increased costs of medical treatment, thus increasing household vulnerability to, among other things, food insecurity (Bishop-Sambrook, 2004; Shackleton, 2006). For these reasons, the issues of chronic illness in the household were investigated.

### **2.2.6 Orphans**

For the purposes of the study, an *orphan* was considered to be a child below the age of 18 who had lost a single or both parents (CSO, 2004b). A single orphan is considered to be a child with one parent alive, while a double orphan is one who has lost both parents. Orphan hood is an indicator of the vulnerability of an individual. Furthermore, it is one of the household vulnerability indicators identified in Zimbabwe (ZimVAC, 2003). A household with an orphan was most likely found to be vulnerable to food insecurity, as compared to households without orphans.

### **2.2.7 Social Capital**

Hossain (2005, 3) defined *social capital* as:

*“rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity and trust embedded in social relations, social structures, and society's institutional arrangements, which enable its members to achieve their individual and community objectives...”*

Social capital is also exposed to stress and shocks. When a country goes through an economic crisis, there are a number of factors which can affect the utility of social capital. Du Toit and Ziervogel (2004) noted that high dependency ratios, gender dynamics, which are mainly exploitative, violence and crime, as well as patron/client exploitation, are all factors which cause stress on social capital.



### **2.2.8 Urban Agriculture**

In the definition of food security above, it was highlighted that households can access food through purchases or own production. The study will consider as *urban agriculture* any activity consisting of the production of crops and/or livestock on land which is administratively and legally zoned for urban use (Mbiba, 1995).

### **2.2.9 Formality and Informality**

De Herdt and Mariovoet (2007) conceptualised *informality* around entitlements, thus the author viewed informality as a condition affecting peoples' entitlement to good and services. For the study, the formal sector was considered to be establishments registered with the Registrar of Companies, including the public sector (CSO, 2004), and formal employment was considered to be employment in which a person is remunerated regularly, and whose employment is protected by legislation (Maxwell et al, 2000).

### **2.2.10 Low Income Households**

Urban settlements in Zimbabwe are classified into low, medium and high density areas: low density areas are for the affluent members of the society, medium density for the middle income groups, and high density for the urban poor, the low income households. For the purposes of the study, all households in high density areas were considered to be *low income* earning - less than ZWD 11 million, which was the food poverty line for July 2007 (CSO, 2007).

### **2.2.10 Exchange Rate**

During the study period Zimbabwe had multiple exchange rates, for the purposes of the study two exchange rates will be used. These are the official exchange rate of USD 1: ZWD 250 and a parallel rate which was around USD 1: ZWD 165 000 (RBZ, 2007; Financial Gazette, 26 July 2007:1).

### 2.3 Conceptual Framework: The Livelihood Security Approach

Chambers and Conway (cited in Maxwell et al, 2000) defined a livelihood as comprising the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. The sustainable livelihoods framework and the simplified livelihood security approach at household level framework shown in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 provide a basis for understanding strategies households adopt to achieve security of livelihoods.

The sustainable livelihoods framework proposed by (Carney, 1999) shown in Fig 2.1 considers the assets poor households can draw on for their own livelihood, how they interact with existing policies, institutions and processes in shaping livelihoods strategies and the outcomes. The framework acknowledges that households exist in an environment in which they are exposed to shocks and stresses such as seasonal droughts, economic shocks e.g. inflation and long term trends of change i.e. reduction in agricultural productivity due to the decline in soil fertility. Households draw on natural, physical, human, financial and social capital to earn a living. Human capital includes skills, education and ability to work, which is determined by, among other things, the health status of the individual.

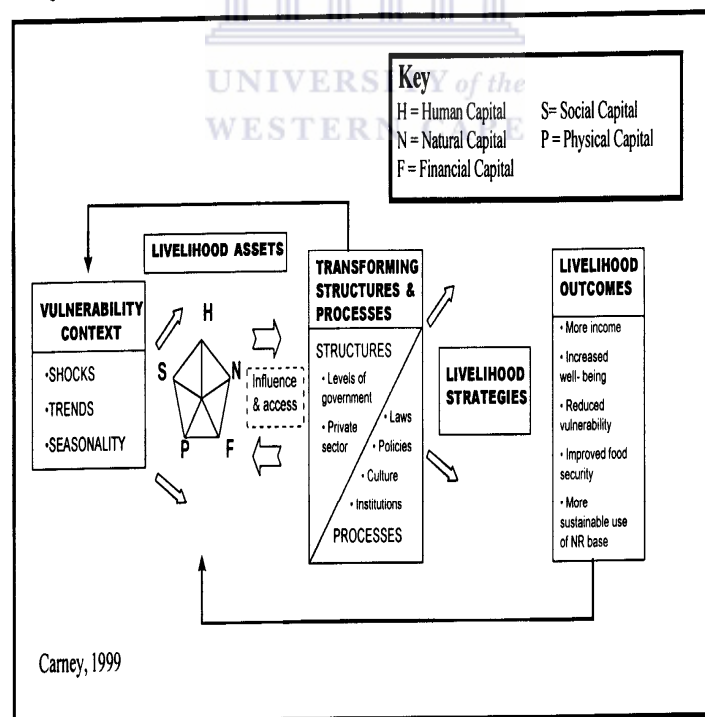
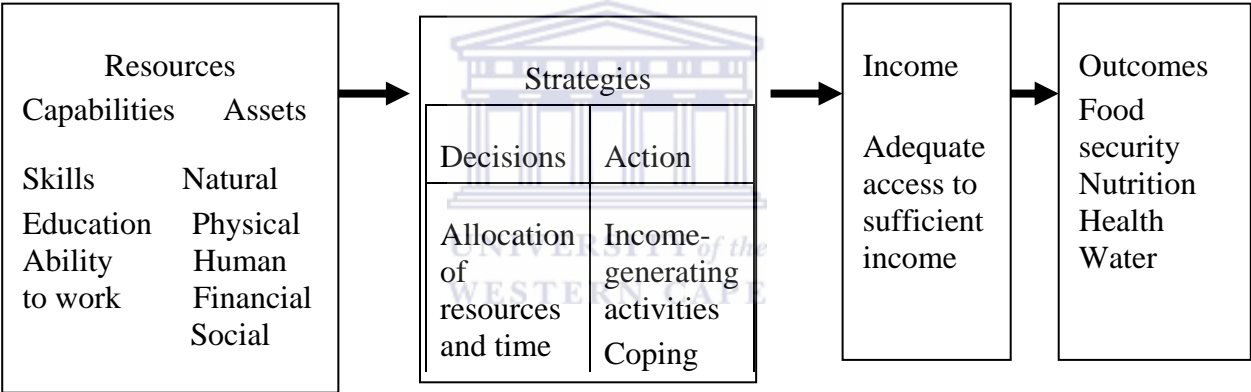


Fig 2.1: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The framework acknowledges that households do not exist in isolation. Poor people’s livelihoods are influenced negatively or positively by a host of external factors. In urban areas, for example policies by the authorities to promote or stifle urban agriculture have a direct bearing on the livelihood security of low income households. In Zimbabwe practising urban agriculture in open spaces is generally banned, however authorities normally turn a blind eye when it suits them. Government socio-economic policies have implications on the lives of low income households. As was observed by de Satge (2002) decisions on whether services are privatised, the cost of these services and the general policy framework in place will affect the livelihoods of low income households. In Zimbabwe at the time of study, the overall policy framework was fluid and most of the policies had negative effects although the intention was noble. The policy to control prices, although it was pro poor it resulted in a dramatic shortage of basic commodities on the formal market creating serious access problems for the majority of low income households.



**Figure 2.2: Livelihood security at household level (Adapted from Maxwell et al, 2000)**

The livelihood security at household level framework presented in figure 2.2 is drawn from the sustainable livelihood framework. At household level, decision makers have to decide how to use the limited resources generate income to meet household needs.

According to the framework, livelihood strategies a household can undertake include income-generating activities and coping strategies which are used by households when the normal income-generating activities can not raise enough income to sustain the household (Maxwell et al, 2000). The strategies adopted are determined by the resources at the disposal of the household such as skills and the five capital assets as outlined in the sustainable livelihoods framework.

de Satge (2002, 2) however observed that

“Because people view the world in different ways and theorise relations between things differently, frameworks are constantly contested , adapted and refined”.

Critics of the sustainable livelihoods framework including Murray (2001) and du Toit (2005) argue that the vulnerability context in the framework is limited, power dynamics and conflict of interest are not sufficiently acknowledged, and issues on what constitutes livelihoods sustainability are not adequately addressed. Murray (2001) further noted that elements of vulnerability such as hyper inflation and unemployment which are much more important in urban settings are not sufficiently allowed for. As such the usefulness of the framework in urban settings is still to be established. This point is supported by Satterthwaite D. and Tacoli C. (20002) who argue that the reliance of urban livelihoods on non-natural resource based livelihood strategies casts doubt on the usefulness of the framework in urban settings.

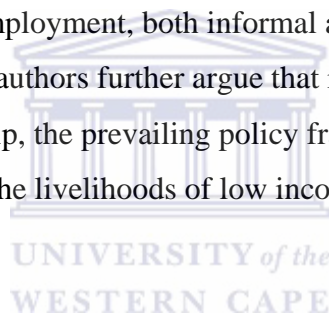
Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the framework highlighted by a number of authors, the frameworks were considered appropriate for the study. It was noted that the sustainable livelihoods framework used in collaboration with the livelihood security at household framework can help to answer the main research question which is “*What strategies are low income urban households in Zimbabwe using to cope with food insecurity?*” That is, given the resources available to the households in Dzivaresekwa, what strategies in terms of decisions, income-generating activities and coping strategies are they undertaking? What is the outcome of these activities? Are households food secure or food insecure? Maxwell et al (2000) noted that it is important to consider contextual factors, mainly the ones which increase or decrease vulnerability, since they have a bearing on outcomes. The outcomes are influenced by processes such as governance, culture and institutions. This view is supported by Harts-Broekhuis (1997), who argues that the ability of a household to react to a deteriorating economic situation is influenced by a number of factors, one of which is the social, economic and political context in which they are embedded. The following section reviews some of the literature on the issues outlined as being key to livelihoods, hence food security.

## 2.4 The Importance of Social, Economic and Political Context

The sustainable livelihoods framework acknowledges that poor people do not exist in isolation as such it is important to consider the social, economic and political context they are embedded in.

The issues discussed in the background section of this chapter indicate the gravity of the economic crisis in Zimbabwe. Since 1999, the country's key macro-economic indicators have been on the decline. This has had a significant negative impact on low income urban households, whose livelihoods are primarily defined by the wider social, economic and political context in which they are embedded.

Livelihoods of low income households in urban areas are primarily shaped by households' access to opportunities such as employment, both informal and formal (Rakodi, 1995b; Ruel et al, 1999; Schmink, 1984). The authors further argue that issues related to human capacity, access to land and home ownership, the prevailing policy framework and availability of social infrastructure have an impact on the livelihoods of low income households and consequently their food security.



Given that urban households mainly depend on cash for food and non-food items, the availability of opportunities for formal and informal employment is a key determinant of their livelihood and food security status (Ruel et al, 1999). The availability of formal employment plays a more pivotal role in the livelihoods of urban households, due to the fact that it is generally secure and provides regular income, as compared to informal employment, where regular income is not guaranteed. However, Ruel et al (1999) acknowledged that the biggest challenge facing urban households is that, for the majority of urban workers, the wages are low therefore even if the wages are regular they can not meet household basic needs.

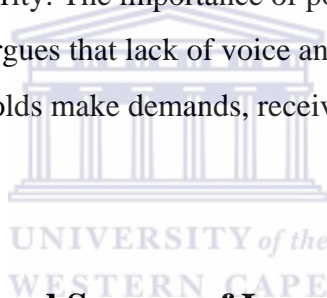
Randinelli and Kasarda (cited in Ruel et al, 1999) confirmed that in sub-Saharan Africa, only 10% of those employed are engaged in sectors which pay regular wages, leaving around 90% of the households reliant on irregular forms of income.

In addition, legal restrictions have a bearing on the extent to which urban households rely on informal employment. According to Rakodi (1995b), in most developing countries there are

strict regulations which restrict the opportunities which exist in the informal sector. For this reason, some of the informal activities are not disclosed during surveys. As indicated by Caplotvitz (1981), due to strict regulations, some of the economic activities may be outright illegal, making it difficult for them to be tapped during surveys and by households.

Ruel et al (1999) argue that in developing countries, the prices households pay for food commodities are mainly influenced by the nature of the markets. In areas where large supermarkets exist, prices of food commodities are normally lower. One of the reasons for this is that large supermarkets are able to take advantage of economies of scale compared to small outlets. Informal food markets, such as street food vendors, tend to sell low quality food at low prices, which makes them a preferred source of food by low income households.

Du Toit and Ziervogel(2004) highlight the importance of power dynamics in shaping a society's livelihood and food security. The importance of political representation can not be overemphasised - Mitlin (2003) argues that lack of voice and power within political systems has an impact on whether households make demands, receive responses or entitlements from the authorities.



## **2.5 Livelihood Activities and Sources of Income**

As highlighted in the livelihood security at household level framework, households undertake strategies to raise income to ensure food and nutrition security. In an urban setting, households primarily depend on purchases for food (Ruel et al, 1999). This equally applies to urban households in Zimbabwe (Drakakis-Smith, 1994). A study in Accra by Maxwell et al (2000) found that households purchase 90% of the food they consume and food expenditures make up between 60 to 80 % of the total income of households in the lowest expenditure quintile. In Zimbabwe, Mutonodzo (2006) found that those households in the lowest expenditure quartile spent 70% of their total income on food. Given the foregoing, the livelihood activities of low income urban households are geared towards raising income which enables them to purchase food. To generate income, urban households engage in various activities which may be either labour based or non-labour based.

Labour-based activities include those that are centred on selling labour directly or selling products of their labour (Drakakis-Smith, 1994). The ability of a household to expand labour-based activities depends on a number of factors, including skills and the health status of the individuals in the household. Such activities cover the direct sale of produce from urban agriculture, employment (formal & informal), running small businesses and engaging in petty trading, crocheting, hair plaiting, knitting and sewing, and cross-border trading (Drimie and Gandure, 2005; Harts-Broekhuis, 1997; Hossain, 2005). In Zimbabwe, Mutangadura and Makaudze (2000) and Rakodi (1995b) found that food and clothes vending, sewing and selling knitted products were the main activities in which low income urban households were engaged. Mutangadura and Makaudze (2000) noted that petty trading can be a major source of income, particularly during periods of economic challenges, when low income households have to engage in multiple activities to generate income to cushion themselves against impending challenges.

Studies by Maxwell (1999) in Ghana (Accra) and Uganda (Kampala) showed that urban agriculture is a source of direct income for low income households. By directly selling agricultural produce from urban agriculture, such as vegetables and cereals, households are able to raise income. Income may furthermore be earned through the provision of labour in urban agricultural activities. However, access to own land was cited as the main limiting factor. In examining urban agriculture in Zimbabwe, Mbiba (1995) noted that low income households exploit the commons as they practise most of the urban agriculture in open spaces.

In Accra, another major source of direct income from labour for low income urban households is wage income from both formal and/or informal employment (Levin et al, 1999; Maxwell et al, 2000). However, the authors noted that low income households are normally engaged in unskilled low paying jobs. Hossain (2005) found out that low income households in Dhaka City, Bangladesh, were mostly employed in low paying jobs such as rickshaw pulling, street vending and construction work. In Zimbabwe in the 1990s, the majority of low income urban households were employed as unskilled labour in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industries, followed by the manufacturing sector, then the distribution, restaurants and hotels sectors (CSO,2004). The construction, private and domestics sectors also provided employment for a significant number of low income urban households.



In the informal sector, people may be owners of the business or they may be employed to assist in the running of a principal's small business. Several factors have been cited as limiting the opportunities for informal employment. Limitations include the lack of financial resources to start income generating activities and the high cost of borrowing money. According to Joshi and Gandotra (2005), the majority of interviewed households (70%) in India were unable to start their own projects, despite having the interest to raise income because employment opportunities were limited or educational qualifications were insufficient. The author further noted that family barriers and social constraints were also cited as some of the reasons. Women are unable to take up work because they have to look after children and perform housework.

Non-labour sources of income for low income urban households include receiving gifts and remittances, renting out rooms and receiving pensions, to name but a few. Rakodi (1995) discovered that taking in lodgers was also one of the non labour strategies used by low income households in Gweru, Zimbabwe to raise income.

It is important to note that the above opportunities for raising income are limited to households with adequate labour supply, as well as skills and contacts. However, livelihoods of urban households are not only defined by the ability to earn income, but also by a number of issues, including access to land, social relationships and networks (Rakodi, 1995b; Mitlin, 2003).

## **2.6 Social Networks and Formal Safety Nets**

As alluded to above, social networks are important sources of livelihood for low income urban households. Social networks can be a source of income and food. In fact, they were identified as one of the key aspects of livelihood frameworks. Social networks play a vital role in people's lives; they are important support systems which offer a social identity (Rakodi, 1995b). Social networks are however, also exposed to shocks and stresses as was argued by du Toit and Ziervogel (2004).

Churches, burial societies, friends, relatives and rural –urban linkages were identified as some essential social networks for low income households (ZimVAC, 2004; Mutangadura and Makaudze, 2000; Ruel et al, 1999). Hossain (2005) noted that in Bangladesh there was a



direct relationship between the length of stay at a particular place and the level of social networks a household has in a particular location.

Urban–rural links play a crucial role in the livelihoods of low income urban households (Hossain, 2005), particularly in light of the fact that in Africa most people in urban areas have origins in rural areas. Thompson, cited in Mutangadura and Makaudze (2000), argues that strong traditional family ties have been the best insurance against starvation in Zimbabwe. Urban households get food from the rural areas, and in times of illness urban family members are received back home. This view is supported by Rakodi (1995b), who argues that rural food production is one of the significant strategies available to low income households in various parts of Africa.

Friends and relatives are equally a source of support for low income households. According to McKenzie (2003), inter-household transfers are widely used by low income urban households as a form of insurance. These transfers can be in the form of food, money loans and remittances.

In countries where formal safety nets exist, they are a source of support for households. Maxwell et al (2000) observed that safety nets may disappear during economic crises. In Uganda, for example, he observed that during the 1970s crisis which was precipitated by the declaration of economic war against the Asian community safety net programmes which were in place virtually came to an end. These formal safety nets were in the form of consumer subsidies and money transfers. In Zimbabwe, there are various forms of social protection mechanisms in place to cushion households against shocks, however, as observed by Mutangadura and Makaudze (2000), these mechanisms are grossly under-funded. Some of the programmes such as free food distribution are not directly benefiting urban households, and the authors observed that the child supplementary feeding scheme has not been very successful in urban areas.

## **2.7 Sources of Food**

Sources of food for low income urban households can be categorised into four broad groups: market, own production, formal food assistance, gifts and remittances (Ruel et al, 1999).

Undoubtedly, the market is the major source of food. The food markets can be divided into formal and informal systems. Drakakis-Smith (1994) observed that in cities such as Harare, most of the food was being retailed through supermarkets, partly because of new technologies such as refrigeration which can prolong the shelf-life of perishable foods. Nonetheless, informal markets increasingly become major sources of food for low income urban households during periods of economic crisis, due to the fact that households purchase smaller quantities and low quality food items.

Gifts and remittances are additionally sources of food for low income urban households. In Jayne and Lawrence (1993), a study on maize milling and marketing in Zimbabwe found out that some low income households were getting maize from rural areas and producing locally ground meal. The author noted that grinding mills mushroomed in low income suburbs to serve this market.

Own production in the form of urban agriculture is also one of the sources of food for urban households (Atkinson, 1995; Rakodi, 1995b). Urban households grow crops such as cereals, tubers, legumes and leafy vegetables in open spaces and at residential plots. In Zimbabwe, according to Mbiba (1995), low income urban households undertake urban agriculture mainly for domestic consumption.

Other sources of food for low income urban households include formal food assistance from the government, NGOs and faith-based organisations. In Zimbabwe, a study by Mutangadura and Makaudze (2000) documented the main forms of social protection as the Social Development Fund, free food distribution, the grain loan scheme and the Child Supplementary Feeding Programme, which were mainly implemented by the government, with the support of NGOs.

## **2.8 Shocks and Stresses**

Livelihoods are exposed to shocks and stresses which affect livelihoods and sources of income and food. The shocks may result in households being vulnerable to food insecurity. Normally shocks are transient and can be viewed as a rapid departure from the norm (Amis, 1995). In Zimbabwe, the major shocks which low income urban households were exposed to during studies in 2000 and 2001 included price increases, unemployment, crackdowns on

illegal activities by authorities, illness, and deaths (FEWSnet, 2001; Mutangadura and Makaudze, 2000).

Since urban households mainly depend on the market for food and the proportion of household income spent on food is usually very high - 60–80 % (Ruel et al, 1999), it is not surprising that price increases are one of the major shocks which low income urban households experience. Considering that most of the food consumed by low income urban households is purchased, access to income is paramount to household livelihood and food security. The danger of losing employment therefore is also one of the risks to which urban households are exposed. For those households drawing their livelihoods from the informal sector, the crackdown by authorities was cited as a major shock (Mutangadura and Makaudze, 2000; FEWSnet, 2001).

The reality of urban life is that low income urban households are exposed at some point in time to the shocks discussed in this section, including exposure to droughts for those households which practise urban agriculture.

## **2.9 Coping Strategies**

As articulated by Garret (2005), household livelihood activities and strategies are not static, they constantly change as opportunities and challenges emerge. As such, when households are exposed to shocks, as discussed in section 2.6, they develop mechanisms to deal with the challenges. The livelihood security at household level framework considers coping to be an integral component of strategies at the disposal of households.

The strategies which households can adopt to deal with food insecurity include enhancing income, reducing expenditure, reducing the quantities of food consumed or consuming other food items and changing the household composition (Rakodi, 1995a; Ruel et al, 1999; Maxwell et al, 2000; DFID, 2007; du Toit and Ziervogel, 2004).

Given the reliance of urban households on the market for food items, income enhancing strategies are the most common coping strategy for low income urban households. The authors cited above pointed out that income enhancing strategies at the disposal of urban households include increasing the number of household members engaged in income-generating activities, starting businesses, disposal of assets and renting out rooms.

Studies (FEWSnet, 2001; Hossain, 2005; Rakodi, 1995b; Maxwell et al , 2000; Joshi and Gandotra, 2005) showed that households in Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Mali, Ghana and Uganda reduced expenditure on non-essential items as a way of coping with the harsh economic environment and food insecurity. The authors noted that households in the countries mentioned resorted to the purchase of cheaper and poor quality foods and changing to cheaper modes of transport, such as walking or cycling to work. Some of the expenditure reduction strategies include withdrawing children from school and reducing social life activities, such as visiting rural homes. Mitlin (2003) also observed that for urban households if income is inadequate this inevitably translates to inadequate consumption of food. As a way of reducing expenditure, households resort to purchasing cheaper second-hand clothes instead of new clothes. Some households fail to pay for expenditures on essential services such as electricity and water, accumulate debts while some move to cheaper accommodation. Low income households purchase small quantities, mainly from informal markets as a strategy for reducing and managing expenditure. Hossain (2005) observed that, although commodities from main retail shops are comparatively cheaper, in Bangladesh low income households resorted to buying from informal markets because they could not afford to buy large quantities.

Households in urban areas also employ the strategy of changing household composition. This includes splitting households, i.e. getting women and children to stay in rural areas, sending children and terminally ill relatives to the rural areas, family planning and increasing household size so as to increase the number of wage earners (Rakodi, 1995a; Rakodi, 1995b; FEWSnet, 2001).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that livelihoods of low income urban households are complex. Household livelihood activities and strategies are not static, they constantly change as opportunities and challenges emerge. Low income households are not passive victims of economic challenges, they use various strategies to tackle the challenges. From the foregoing the question is ‘What *strategies are being employed by low income households in Dzivaresekwa?*’

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology that was used for the study, which is divided into five stages, which are:

- exploratory survey
- household survey
- household in-depth interviews
- observations and informal discussions
- In-depth interviews with retailers, both formal and informal, including cross border traders.

The data analysis process is also discussed and the chapter ends with an analysis of the limitations of the study.

### 3.2 Data Collection

The study primarily employed qualitative methods, the methods were considered to be appropriate for the complex social process attaining in Zimbabwe. The qualitative approach was taken because as was observed by Bracking and Sachikonye (2006, 7) incomes reported by households during a study undertaken in Zimbabwe in 2005 were completely insufficient to sustain a household. The authors noted that qualitative work will be useful to shed light on the glaring discrepancies. Authors such as (Neuman, 2000; (Adato et al, 2003 and Mate, 2005)) argues that qualitative research methods are sensitive to social context, they tend to be rich in detail and as such they are capable of exposing complex social processes. As such qualitative analysis provides meaning and context which is not normally available when one is looking at quantitative data alone. The researcher was aware that qualitative methods are not representative or scientific and as such it will be difficult to make generalisations. The other consideration was that of time and resources, given the resources available it was not possible to undertake a quantitative representative study.



For in depth interviews case study approach was taken for the study. As articulated by Robert Yin, cited in Hayhoe (2007), the strength of the case study approach is in its ability to link evidence from interviews and observations. The researcher significantly employed the observation method in the study, to help complement information which was collected during interviews. Tellis (1997) further argues that the methodology is suitable for holistic and in-depth investigations which were considered necessary for the study. This approach allowed the researcher to focus on a few households and undertake multiple visits to the same households to observe and have semi structured discussions on the food security situation of the households.

To classify households according to their degree of food security/insecurity, a basis for selecting households for in-depth interviews the FANTA Household Food Insecurity Scale (FANTA HFIAS) was used. There are a number of methodologies used to measure food insecurity today; these include approaches that focus on calorie intake, on coping strategies, on dietary diversity, monetary income and the FANTA food security scale (Hoddinott, 1999; ZimVAC, 2006). The FANTA food security scale was chosen because as was observed by Hoddinott (1999) the questions are easy to administer and give a sense of the food security situation of households. Given the time and resource constraints, the FANTA HFIAS scale was considered appropriate for the study. The other methods such as the calorie intake and the money income are relatively complex and difficult to administer.

The methods employed to collect data include semi structured interviews at household level, in depth interviews with selected households, in depth interviews with players in the food supply chain, observation and informal discussions with residents of the suburb.

A total of twelve visits were undertaken to the study area during the period May – December 2007 to undertake exploratory survey, conduct interviews with households, to interview food supply chain stakeholders and to observe livelihood activities of the households in the area in general. The study was undertaken with the support of a research assistant who assisted in taking notes during interviews. The notes were compiled immediately after interviews to ensure that details were not omitted.

### 3.2.1 Exploratory Survey

The exploratory phase of the study was undertaken for three main reasons, firstly to identify the specific site for the study, to contextualise the FANTA questions which were used to get a sense of the food security status of the household and thirdly to collect background information about the study area.

Open ended discussions were held with residents, clinic staff, officers from the city health department and agricultural extension officers. In addition, discussions were held with staff from the Food and Nutrition Council, the organisation which coordinates nutrition surveillance and vulnerability assessment in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately data on malnutrition could not be obtained from the clinic. To get this data the researcher was required to go through time consuming bureaucratic processes which proved difficult given the time and resources available.

The study area was chosen following the exploratory survey; one street was selected following indications from staff at Rujeko Clinic, the city nutritional department and press reports that there were malnourished children in the area. Rujeko Clinic is offering supplementary feeding to malnourished children in the area.

To contextualise the FANTA questions, the set of questions were pre-tested in the study area so as to address the limitations outlined by Hoddinott (1999) and Kennedy (2002). The authors observed that the FANTA questions depend highly on the context and language. Mtimuni and Geresomo (2006) observed that households in districts of Mangochi and Mwanza in Malawi associate “food” with the staple diet “nsima”, made from maize flour, leaving out other food items such as tubers, rice and cassava.

The exploratory survey enabled the researcher to drop two questions from the FANTA set of nine questions these were “*In the past 30 days , were you ever worried that you may not have enough food in your household*” and also the question “ *In the past 30 days was there any household member who ate food that he/she would not have liked because of lack of resources*”. It was noted during the exploratory survey that all the households responded affirmative to these questions due the shortage of basic commodities which prevailed during the study period.



A qualitative component was added to the final set of questions administered (see Annex 1) to try and decipher the meaning of the responses which the households were providing. The exploratory survey gave the researcher an understanding of how to probe, the need to emphasize the period the questions were referring to that is “the past 30 days”, the need to emphasize the reason for not eating and the importance of constantly referring to the household.

### **3.2.2 Household Interviews**

To provide a basis for selecting case study cases, the FANTA scale was used to get a sense of the food security situation of the interviewed households. A household survey was used to collect information from twenty households in one street. At each location, an attempt was made to interview all resident households in order to capture the diversity of households, i.e. lodgers and landlords. The semi-structured questionnaire (Annex 1), which had a consent form, attached collected information on household demographics, livelihoods activities, health and education status, consumption patterns, income and expenditure and most importantly, household behaviour over thirty days prior to the survey regarding food security. The questions were designed to solicit information regarding food access and utilisation.

During these interviews, respondents were asked to highlight income-generating activities undertaken by households in the area. It was a way of exploring sensitive or illegal income-generating activities, such as prostitution, foreign currency trading and illicit beer brewing, whose proceeds contribute to household food security. Interviewed households were further asked to highlight characteristics of households in the community which they considered to be better off, particularly as regards their income generating activities.

Although all the households interviewed were informed of the purpose of the survey, two households were not considered for analysis firstly because they were very negative about the whole process and secondly their responses were inconsistent. They frequently wanted to know why the researcher was asking them “stupid” questions considering that he is a Zimbabwean living in same economy and supposedly experiencing the same hardships. Also information provided by the respondents was contradicted by children who sat in during the interviews. In these households, unsolicited interjections from the children contradicted the responses by the respondents on consumption patterns and payment of school fees. It was the



researcher's opinion that in these cases children did not have an incentive to lie; therefore the households were excluded from further analysis.

### **3.2.3 In-depth Interviews with Households**

Information collected from the eighteen households enabled the researcher to categorise households using the FANTA scale. In-depth interviews were conducted with household heads and members of five households, which were chosen as follows: two households were classified as having severe food insecure access, two households were classified as having moderate food secure access. The fifth household was classified as food secure. Follow-up interviews were structured around semi structured questions. This approach is supported by Potts and Mutambirwa (1998), who found it useful and informative in examining complex social issues. Two visits were undertaken to the selected households for in-depth interviews were conducted with firstly the household head, and then any other household member. This was done to get an understanding of the livelihood activities, coping strategies and context of the households

### **3.2.4 In-depth Interviews with Traders**

Semi-structured discussions were held with formal and informal traders, including cross-border traders, to establish the supply chain of food commodities. The purpose of these discussions was to establish issues around the availability of food in the study area, sources of the food and changes in purchasing patterns of households. These interviews were conducted at the trader's premises in order to allow for observations.

### **3.2.5 Observation and Informal Discussions**

In order to understand and identify social processes shaping the livelihoods of people resident in Dzivaresekwa, the researcher also used the observation method. This entailed visiting the study area during weekdays and weekends to observe activities undertaken by households to earn a living. During these visits, the researcher visited shopping centres and recreation facilities, such as soccer stadiums, bottle stores and clinics to interact with residents of the suburb. The researcher took the opportunity to listen and participate in discussions with residents of the area which helped in understanding livelihood activities of the people of Dzivaresekwa.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

SPSS ver. 15 was used to classify households according to their degree of food security/insecurity. They were classified into four categories, namely: food secure, mildly food insecure, moderately food insecure and severely food insecure access, based on the FANTA Household Food Insecurity Scale (FANTA HFIAS). Although a lot of packages could have been used for the classification, SPSS was chosen primarily for the ease with which the process could be automated. A Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Nvivo was also used. The package automated many of the processes, for instance, classifying and sorting, thus facilitating the process of transforming qualitative data into findings according to themes emerging from literature.

### **3.4 Ethics**

Studies on livelihoods activities and coping strategies present ethical challenges, given what people can do to earn a living. Some of the activities households undertake to earn a living can be outright illegal (Caplovitz, 1981). In consideration of this, the research was guided by the principle of informed consent and anonymity. The purpose of the survey was explained and respondents were informed that participation in the study was voluntary. The respondents were informed that this was an academic exercise and the data was going to be kept confidential. Children (below the age of 18) were only interviewed in cases where they were willing and prior consent was granted by the parents or guardians. In all cases where children were interviewed, this was done in the presence of a parent or guardian. To protect the identities of respondents, the specific street and names of respondents were not disclosed in the thesis.

### **3.5 Limitations of the Study**

The study had some limitations; firstly most of the research on food security and livelihoods tend to concentrate in rural areas, as such there are not tried and tested tools which could have been used to investigate the issues under consideration in an urban setting. The sustainable livelihoods framework used for the study is considered by some authors not to be appropriate for studying livelihoods in an urban setting. However it was the researcher's view that it was the best lens through which issues under consideration could be investigated.

Secondly the harsh economic conditions and the various controls in the economy which made activities like selling basic commodities like sugar illegal may have lead to some households not disclosing income sources they considered illegal. The situation was further compounded by data collection method used, that of household interviews. This may have led to some households withholding information on activities they considered illegal

Thirdly because of time and resource constraints the methodology used to determine household food security was the FANTA Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS). The HFIAS is a measure of food security which qualitatively measure availability, access and utilisation. The households for in depth interview were then selected based on the FANTA HFIAS classification scale. Given the hyperinflationary environment which prevailed, the widespread shortages of basic commodities on the formal market it is likely that most households in Zimbabwe let alone low income households were to some degree food insecure using the HFIAS system. The study would have benefited from collecting actual quantities of food consumed by household in order to measure household food security status based on kilocalorie requirements of household members,

Fourthly the sample size and the qualitative nature of the study findings should be taken to be illustrative rather than generalised for all low income urban households in Dzivaresekwa, let alone in Zimbabwe as a whole. Most of the households interviewed are of foreign origin; therefore some of the coping strategies such as rural urban linkages were not applicable.

Fifthly at the time of the study research space in Zimbabwe was limited. A bureaucratic process had to be followed to collect secondary data such malnutrition rates from the clinic and statistics from government safety net programmes. Unfortunately due to time constraints this could not be done.

However despite these limitations, it is believed that the study provide an insight in to the strategies low income households are engaging to cope with the prevailing harsh economic conditions. The fact that most households interviewed were of foreign origin does not have a significant influence if any on the overall findings. All of them were now citizens of Zimbabwe. They have been staying in Zimbabwe long enough to be well integrated into the formal and informal systems of the country.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, starting with the food supply system. The food security status of households based on the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) is then presented, followed by case by case findings from households with whom in depth interviews were held. The chapter is concluded by a summary of key issues emerging from the cases studies, both from households' level and traders.

### 4.2 Food Supply System - Case Studies

To fully understand the sources of food being consumed by households, the study went on to investigate the food supply system. Discussions were held with those who were identified to be sources of food during household interviews. These included street vendors, cross-border traders, retail shops and home industries. Given below is a summary of the discussions:

#### 4.2.1 Street Vendor

The street vendor who was interviewed is a Zimbabwean of Malawian origin who started selling basic commodities from home and on the street from 2005. Before then, he was employed as a construction worker, but had left his job because he could no longer sustain the high costs of transport to and from work every day.

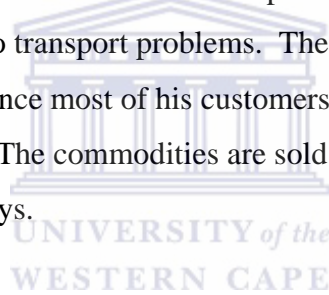
*"I sell anything"*, was his response when asked about what commodities he sells. Some of the main commodities he sells include maize meal, milk, bread, margarine, cooking oil, sugar, cigarettes, Mazoe orange crush, salt, buns, drinks, vaseline, Colgate, fish, chicken, beef, pork, sweets, macaroni, fruits and vegetables.

All the commodities are sourced locally, through a network which involves shop assistants, even shop managers, workers from the industries which produce these commodities, drivers of transport companies which deliver the products and even other vendors. *"We are well connected"*, he said, claiming that they are the first to know when a retail outlet is going to receive a product. The moment a truck leaves the warehouse, he or some other vendors will be informed and they will be the first to queue for the commodity upon delivery. He said he also buys commodities for re-sale from shop assistants and workers from the industries which

produce these commodities. Generally, these shops and industries have allocations for their workers for personal use. He further noted that at times they bribe in order to get these commodities. This includes bribing security guards, shop assistants, and even shop managers.

Because of the challenges in getting supplies, it was difficult for him to remember the quantities sold on average per week. He said the quantities depend on the time of the month, however, in a good week per month, which is normally month-end, he sells about 30 loaves of bread, 10kgs of sugar, 40 kgs of maize meal and about 5 kgs of chicken pieces.

Demand for his products is mainly from customers “*who live from hand to mouth*”, such as people who sell airtime, wash cars or repair bicycles. Demand is also ensured by swapping commodities with other vendors in different parts of Harare depending on demand and supply factors. He noted that commodities like maize meal sell very fast, therefore it is difficult to have large stocks at any one time. It is also difficult to purchase the commodity in large quantities at any given time due to transport problems. The commodities are sold in small quantities, called “*ZviTsaona*”, since most of his customers can not afford to buy in bulk as they “*live from hand to mouth*”. The commodities are sold for cash only but occasionally neighbours get credit for a few days.



He sources fruits and vegetables from Mbare Musika the largest market in Zimbabwe late in the day when there are bargains, as farmers from the rural areas will be forced to sell at low prices in order to dispose of the produce before returning to the rural areas.

He cited the crack-down on illegal activities by the police as one of the major challenges he faces; he only displays small quantities which he is prepared to lose when approached by the police. The street vendor moved from the formal system to derive his livelihood from the informal system. He is still interacting with the formal system and he is getting some commodities from the formal market for resale on the informal market. He has a strong network, which is the backbone of his informal business: because of the network, he is able to access basic commodities from the formal market and then sell them on the informal market at a premium.

#### 4.2.2 Cross-Border Traders

The cross-border trader interviewed is female and stays in Dzivaresekwa. She started travelling to neighbouring countries in 2004, when she was working as a secondary school teacher, and at the end of 2004 she resigned. She started by going during holidays to sell wares and then returning with food and basic commodities for own consumption and a few surplus for sale. The reason why she started was that her income as a school teacher was not enough to meet her basic needs, and she could not afford to send her children to boarding school, which was her main wish. Similarly to the street vendor discussed above, the cross-border trader migrated from the formal to the informal system.

From the time she resigned from teaching, cross-border trading has been her main source of livelihood. She alternates between South Africa and Mozambique to buy basic commodities for resale in Zimbabwe. Although she is no longer with the government, she is still getting letters or pay slips from the government to use to cross the border to South Africa.

Zimbabwean civil servants are required to produce these instead of visas when visiting South Africa.

The main commodities she brings are soap, cooking oil, rice and sugar. On average, per trip she brings in 12 litres of cooking oil, 25 kgs of rice, 30kgs of soap and 15 kgs of sugar. She uses public transport in the form of buses. The cost of transport is the major expense she incurs per trip. When they get to the border, passengers in the bus contribute ten South African rands each to the bus crew, which is used to bribe customs officials so as to avoid paying duty and speed up the customs and immigration process. In addition to commodities she brings from neighbouring countries, she buys and sells commodities which are sourced locally, such as sugar, Mazoe orange crush, bread and margarine from established retail shops, through connections with other vendors and shop assistants.

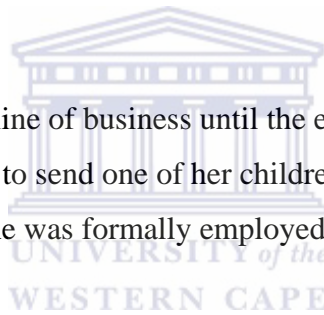
She sells most of her commodities in bulk to street and market vendors at places such as Mbare Musika, which is the main market in Harare. She also sells to people in Dzivaresekwa in small quantities, called '*ZviTsaona*', as mentioned above: e.g. cooking oil in 50ml, sugar in packs of five teaspoons, rice sold in small cups and soap bars broken into small pieces. The food items are meant for only one meal. Some of the commodities are brought per order by better off people, including retail supermarkets in low density areas. To avoid losing her

commodities to the police when they raid her house, she keeps some of her stocks at her friends or relatives' houses in the same suburb or even in other suburbs.

All the commodities are sold for cash in Zimbabwean dollars or South African rands. Credit is extended to a few customers "*here and there*". She does not accept cheques or any other bank-based forms of payment because she does not want anything to do with the formal banking system..

Due to the non-availability of foreign currency on the formal market, she buys foreign currency on the parallel market at exorbitant rates. She revealed that in South Africa, at Park Station, the Zimbabwe dollar is accepted by many traders, therefore "*one will not get stranded at the station with the Zimbabwe dollar*". She keeps track of the performance of the parallel market, therefore she knows when to keep foreign currency or convert to Zimbabwe dollars.

She said she will continue in this line of business until the economic situation in Zimbabwe improves. She has since managed to send one of her children to boarding school. She feels she is better off now than when she was formally employed.



#### **4.2.3 Retail Supermarket**

Information was sought from one of the retail supermarkets in the suburb to establish the source of the commodities they sell and also to profile their major clients. Given below is a summary:

##### **Sources of Commodities**

The shop is getting commodities from both formal and informal sources. Formal sources of commodities include the shop receives maize meal, mealie rice and rice from the Grain Marketing Board, bread from Lobels bakery and soft drinks from Delta beverages. The shopkeeper indicated that they also buy food items from wholesalers in Harare, including Mohammed Mussa, Makro and Jagers. He stated that supplies from these formal sources are erratic. Cooking oil is being sourced from cotton ginneries in Norton (40 kms from Harare) and Sanyati (200kms).



To ensure that they keep operating the shop, they source commodities such as flour, maize grain, milk, vegetables, fresh and dried fish from the informal market. The shop is buying maize grain, beef, milk and vegetables from farms and the rural areas. Moreover, the shop has linkages with informal traders who bring in commodities such as fresh fish, Matemba (dried fish) and maize grain. Matemba is brought in from Kariba (350 km away) and fresh fish from Lake Chivero (30kms) by informal traders. Although fresh fish is available in abundance in the suburb from street vendors, the shop owner said they cater for those who are hygiene-conscious, and do not buy food from the street.

### **Clients**

To cater for the needs of mainly low income residents, the shop also sells commodities in small quantities, but not as small as those sold by street vendors. For cooking oil, the smallest unit is 750ml; for maize meal, it is 2kgs; milk, 300 mls; rice, 500 grams; and Matemba, 50 grams. Demand was reported to be very high for basic commodities, although they do not keep any stocks. They sell 6–10 dozen loaves of bread a day, depending on delivery. They can sell as many as 100 heads of cabbages per day and around 75 litres of milk. Due to shortages they used to limit bread sales to one loaf per customer, but they have since stopped rationing because there is always disorder when there is bread at the shop. The idea is to get rid of the commodity as soon as possible.

Most of the basic commodities which are in short supply and are strictly controlled by the government, such as bread and maize, are mainly bought by “*Makorokoza*” street vendors, who buy for immediate resale outside the shop at a premium which is at times 3–4 times the stipulated price of the commodity.

The shopkeeper highlighted that, given the high number of street vendors in the suburb, it is very rare to not find a commodity at any one time. Indeed, they are competing for market share with street vendors, who have the advantage of being readily accessible to the residents, since they are almost everywhere.



#### 4.2.4 Home Industries

The home milling industry near Dzivaresekwa mainly sells maize meal, wheat flour and mealie rice to low income residents of the suburb. The company used to pack the product and sell through supermarkets and other formal shops in the suburb. Since 2005, the company started selling these commodities directly to consumers, although they still pack for the better-off households in the community. This decision was made to cut down on delivery and packaging costs, as some buyers bring their own containers.

#### Sources of Grain

Maize and wheat trade in Zimbabwe is regulated by law; farmers are allowed to sell these commodities only to the Grain Marketing Board. Millers then buy grain for milling and resale to the public from GMB. An individual is allowed to transport a maximum of 150 kgs per trip. Despite all these regulations, the miller interviewed is getting all his grain from the informal market. The miller receives maize and wheat from commercial farms and rural areas. Although commercial farms are considered formal by law, they are only allowed to sell grain to the Grain Marketing Board. For this reason, the transaction between commercial farmers and the miller was considered informal. The miller exchanges basic commodities such as soap and cooking oil for grain in the rural areas. He even uses second hand clothes to pay for grain. At the time of interview, the miller was getting most of his grain from Guruve (200km away), Rusape (140km) and Mhondoro(80km).

#### Clients

The miller is selling most of the maize meal produced to residents of Dzivaresekwa, who bring their own containers. Maize meal is sold mainly in quantities of 5, 10 and 20 kgs. Maize meal is also sold in 50 kg bags to “*special customers*”. These include people who give them information on where to get grain, transporters, those who service or repair their grinding mills, relatives and friends. Wheat flour is sold in 2, 5 and 10 kg packs, mealie rice in 1 and 2 kg packs. When supplies are available, the miller noted that it is possible to sell about 3 Mt of maize, 1 Mt of wheat flour and about 100 kgs of mealie rice per month. When supply is limited, they reduce the quantities sold per customer so as to keep most of their customers happy.

## Problems

Given the restrictions in the trading and movement of grain in Zimbabwe, the miller has devised strategies to “beat” the system. These include: moving the commodities at odd hours, being friendly to police officers manning roadblocks, bribing them with items such as fruits in season, chickens, and even cash if necessary. The chickens and fruits in season are bought specifically for this purpose. The idea is to avoid giving officers maize grain but in the worst-case scenario, they give away a bag of 50 kgs to buy their way through. The business is severely affected by the frequent power outages the country is facing and the shortage of grain. They have resorted to grinding at any time when electricity is available, which may be at odd hours.

### Food Supply System – Summary & Issues

From the foregoing case studies on the food supply chain in Dzivaresekwa, it can be argued



Figure 4.1 – Street Shop

that the interface between direct consumers and the supply chain is now mainly through informal traders. This is a significant realignment of the food supply system; in 1994, Drakakis Smith observed that the majority of the food in Harare was marketed through the formal retail system. As illustrated by the cross-border trader interviewed, cross-border traders are bringing in a significant amount of food, which is predominantly traded through the informal system. The informal market is trading commodities sourced from the formal system and then resold to the consumers at a

premium. Interviews with the retail supermarket reveal that the linkage between the formal and informal sector is bidirectional. Informal traders are supplying the retail outlets with commodities such as fresh and dried fish. It is ironical that, as much as the hygiene-conscious households avoid buying perishables from informal vendors, it is the very same vendors who supply the shops they patronise.

Although there were reports of widespread shortages, observations by the researcher and interviews with stakeholders in the supply chain showed that the issue was not so much availability. Indications from the cross-border trader interviewed is that a substantial amount of food and basic commodities are coming into the country, however, these are not being captured by the formal system. The restructuring of the food system implies that, when looking at availability, it is now imperative to equally consider the informal system. It is clear that because of the restructuring of the food supply system, only a few of the intended

beneficiaries are benefiting from the policy measures being implemented by the government, which include price controls.

### 4.3 Food Security

The Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) was used to get a sense of the food security status of the households 30 days prior to the survey. A set of seven questions were asked and the responses were classified into three categories: rarely (once or twice within the 30 day period), sometimes (three to ten times) and often (more than ten times). Table 5.1 gives a summary of positive responses to the questions out of the eighteen households from which this information was analysed.

**Table 4.1: Responses to questions related to food security (n = 18)**

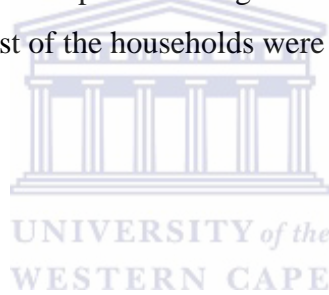
Number	Question	Affirmative Responses	%
1	Were you or any member of your household not able to eat the kinds of foods you <b>preferred</b> because of lack of resources?	16	89
2	Did you or any household member eat a <b>limited</b> variety of foods due to lack of resources?	15	83
3	Did you or any household member eat a <b>smaller meal</b> than you felt you needed because there was not enough food?	10	56
4	Did you or any other household member eat <b>fewer meals</b> in a day because there was not enough food?	7	39
5	Was there ever <b>no food at all</b> in your household because there were no resources to get any more?	3	17
6	Did you or any member of your household go to <b>sleep hungry</b> at night because there was not enough food?	3	17
7	Did you or any member of your household go a <b>whole day without eating</b> anything because there was not enough food?	1	6

From Table 4.1, it is clear that almost all the households were not able to eat the kinds of food they preferred due to a lack of resources, notably, they mentioned beef, chicken, pork, eggs and fish.

**Table 4.2: HHs Food security status using FANTA classification**

Category	Number of HHs
Food Secure	1
Mildly Food Insecure	4
Moderately Food Insecure	6

The households were classified by food security status using the FANTA HFIAS classification system. As shown in Table 4.2, only one household was found to have been food secure. Four households were found to be mildly food insecure, 6 moderately food insecure and 7 severely food insecure. The HFIAS measures the three dimensions of food insecurity, namely, availability (anxiety and uncertainty about food supply), access (insufficient quantity) and utilisation (insufficient quality). Given the hyperinflationary environment which prevailed, the widespread shortages of basic commodities on the formal market it is not surprising that most of the households were found to be food insecure using the HFIAS classification system.



## **4.4 Livelihood Strategies: Households Case Studies**

In-depth interviews were conducted with five household heads and other household members which were selected on the following basis: two households from those classified as having severe food insecure access, two households from the moderately food insecure category and one household which was classified as food secure.

### **4.3.1 Case Study 1: Mrs F's Household – Food Secure**

#### **Household Profile**

The household is made up of seven members; Mrs F, who is a widow, is the head of household. She stays with her four children, her mother and a domestic worker. All in all, Mrs F bore eight children, two of whom are deceased, while the other two are outside the country, one is in South Africa and the other one is in England. One of the children she is staying with is chronically ill. The house Mrs F stays in was extended from a 2-roomed core house to 7 rooms, with two outer rooms which are occupied by one of her sons, who is married. The son does not pay rent but contributes to the upkeep of Mrs F's household.

#### **Livelihood Activities**

The household's main livelihood activity is urban agriculture. They grow crops such as maize and vegetables in open spaces around the suburb. This has been their practice since they started staying in Dzivaresekwa in the 1970's. In 2007, Mrs F harvested 150 kgs of maize from the urban plot.

#### **Social Networks**

The main source of income for the household is remittances from the child in England. The household income for July 2007 was ZWD 32 million (USD 200) from England, which was about 2.5 times more than CCZ basket, which stood at around ZWD 13 million (USD 81). She received the money in Zimbabwean dollars from someone who was instructed by her daughter. She did not know the exchange rate used for the transaction. She is not yet receiving any support from the daughter who relocated to South Africa at the beginning of 2007. This daughter is the one who paid for the extension of the house from a two-roomed core house to a seven-roomed house. According to Mrs D, the head of one household in the area, Mrs F is

reaping the fruits of educating her children, and she identified this household as better off. In general, only children easily mentioned Mrs F's household as being better off, and the parents or other older people who were present during the interviews corroborated this view.

### **Household Expenditure**

The household priority expenditure items are electricity, rent, water and food. They spent ZWD 700 000 on rent, ZWD 270 000 on food and ZWD 142 000 on electricity and water. Grocery items bought from nearby home industries were soap, salt and cooking oil. Mrs F reported that she could have spent more on food items such as meat and fish, but these commodities were not readily available on the formal market.

### **Sources of Food and Consumption**

The normal consumption pattern for the household is to have two meals, breakfast and supper. In the afternoon they have a snack "something to keep them going" - this can be bread and a drink or tea. The day prior to the first interviews, household members had consumed two meals. They had breakfast in the morning white tea with bread, while in the afternoon they had bread and Mazoe orange juice. The evening prior to the survey, the household had sadza with vegetables. The household was consuming maize and vegetables from urban agriculture. They occasionally consume meat and fish when these are available from retail shops. The ready source for these commodities is from the street, where handling conditions are hygienically unacceptable for Mrs F.

### **Household Food Security Status**

The household was classified as food secure using the FANTA HFIAS classification system. It is interesting to note that the household would also have been classified as food secure if one had considered income against the cost of the CCZ basket for July 2007. Mrs F responded in the negative to all the questions on the household's behaviour in the last thirty days as relates to food insecurity. However, she reported that preferred foods had not been consumed and also that there had been consumption of limited foods, not due to a lack of resources, but due to unavailability of these commodities on the formal market. The food security status of this household is mainly influenced by support from kinship through remittances. The reliance on foreign currency through remittances allowed the household to access food from both the formal and informal market and made the household food secure.

### 4.3.2 Case Study 2: Mr N's Household – Moderately Food Insecure

#### Household Profile

The household is made up of ten household members: five female and five male. The head of the household, Mr N, and his wife originally came from Zambia. Mr N is the only family member who came therefore he has no relatives in Zimbabwe. His wife came with some of her sisters therefore she does have relatives in Zimbabwe. Other household members are their daughter Ms S, and their son T, who are in their late twenties. They also stay with six grand children, three of whom were born to Ms S from two different men. The two boys are their grandchildren, one of whom is a double orphan. They also stay with another grandchild whose parents are in the rural areas; however, he was not attending school because of a lack of money to pay school fees. The household occupies three rooms two core rooms, the third one being a verandah which was converted into living space.

They also stay with two of their sons, who are both married. The sons live with their wives in makeshift rooms at the premises. Judging by the interviews, the level of bad blood between the daughter and the sisters-in-law is high. Ms S accused her sisters-in-law of not supporting their parents at all although they are better off since they are also cross-border traders. The brothers were said to be away in South Africa during the time of the interviews. It was reported that the brothers and their families used to stay on their own, but as a result of Operation Murambatsvina, they came back to stay at their parents' house. They are the ones who constructed the makeshift houses in which they are living. The level of polarisation between the sons staying on the same premises and Mr N's household was surprising. One would have expected those considered to be better off to also assist the household conversely, the support was not forthcoming.



## **Livelihood Activities**

The head of household, who is in his mid-seventies, works as a security guard. He formerly worked as a gardener, then as a driver, retiring in 1995 to go into the firewood-selling business before becoming a security guard. Due to the economic crisis, he decided to go back to formal employment. The daughter works as a cleaner with the Harare city council at Mbare Musika, the main market in Harare. She reported earning ZWD 4 million, which was almost twice the salary of a teacher in July 2007. She said that although her earnings are insufficient to meet her basic needs, her job provided other income-generating opportunities. She works at the main market, therefore she can easily buy commodities for resale. She pointed out that because of her work, she could easily get bargains at the market, e.g. buying commodities from farmers late in the day when they dispose of their produce at reduced prices to get money to go home or before the commodities perish. Highlighted here is the interaction between the formal food and formal wages systems. The household further interacts with the informal food system when they resell commodities sourced from Mbare Musika.

The household also sells basic commodities, such as sugar, cooking oil and eggs, which are sourced from Mbare Musika by their daughter Ms S. The father, who is a security guard, also sells the basic commodities at work. To cut on transport cost, the father uses a bicycle to go to work and the daughter uses a variety of forms of transport, including the heavily subsidized commuter train, city of Harare vehicles and also commuter omnibuses.

The household at one time tried to raise extra income by giving children sweets to sell at school. The sweets were confiscated by school authorities because they do not allow children to engage in petty trading at the schools. However, the children allege that the main reason why the commodities were confiscated is that teachers also sell these commodities and did not want competition. Additionally, the household undertakes urban agriculture, growing maize and vegetables for own consumption and for sale.

Although the household reported that only the mother and the daughter (Ms S) are involved in petty trading, it was observed during the interviews that even children are involved. Children are the ones who run up and down from the street to the house to collect commodities, as they display only small portions on the street to show the commodities that they have for sale.



According to the daughter (Ms S), the major challenges the household is facing in trying to raise income is lack of capital and passports. The daughter noted that there are many opportunities which she can take advantage of, but due to a lack of capital, there is very little she can do. She wanted her brother, T, to get a passport so that he could become a cross-border trader.

### **Social Network**

The household is a member of the Apostolic Faith Mission, although the mother is the only one who regularly attends church services. They also belong to a local burial society. The household also receives some support from relatives and friends although they pointed out that now it is difficult for these relatives to provide support because *“everyone is suffering”*.

During one of the visits, Ms S, a single mother brought some groceries which she said was given to her by friends. As part of the community practice they contribute mealie meal to local households in the event of a funeral. In August 2007, they contributed ZWD 10 000 and a plate of maize meal to one household which had lost a member. Ms S was assisted to get the job at Harare city council by a relative of the orphan they were staying with. *“She organized a job for me so that I could look after the boy who lost both parents,”* she said. This illustrates the value of contacts in the livelihood of Mr N’s household.

### **Household Expenditure**

Reported household expenditure was ZWD 2 216 000, which was spent as follows: rent - ZWD 170 000, Electricity - ZWD 140 000, Water - ZWD 163 000, and the rest on food and non-food items, including soap and lotion. Public utilities such as water and electricity are heavily subsidised by the government. This is a general reflection of the Zimbabwe economy. Because of price controls, most commodities sourced from the formal market are sold at controlled prices, and this includes electricity and water.

## **Sources of Food and Consumption**

Information was sought from the household regarding consumption patterns. The day before the survey, the household had consumed three meals. For cereals, the family used to rely on urban agriculture, but the land they tilled was turned into a residential area. At the time of the interview, they had bought 50kgs of maize grain for ZWD 400 000 from a nearby farm. Cooking oil, soap, and bread were sourced from nearby home industries. They have a garden in the open spaces, where they grow vegetables for consumption. Now and again, the daughter brings food items from Mbare Musika. Items such as tea leaves are bought from street vendors. They also buy soya chunks from the local retail supermarkets.

## **Household Food Security**

The household was classified as moderately food insecure. The household reported not consuming preferred foods, consuming a limited variety of food, eating smaller meals and eating fewer meals because there was not enough food. The household was involved in multiple income-generating activities, which included formal employment, petty trading and urban agriculture. To cope with food insecurity the household expanded income-generating activities: an elderly man came out of retirement to work as a security guard. One strategy the household was using to reduce expenditure was to rely on the cheapest mode of transport, which was the commuter train. Mr N was cycling to work.

### 4.3.3 Case Study 3: Mr M's Household – Poor but Moderately Food Insecure

#### Household Profile

Mr M's household is made up of five household members. These are Mr and Mrs M, who are both over 60 years old and are originally from Mozambique and their three grand children, two of who are double orphans. One of the orphans was not attending school but the reasons for this differed. The grandparents were of the view that he does not like school at all, whereas he felt it was a waste of time because he did not have the necessary stationery to use at school and also did not have a school uniform. Withdrawing children from school was identified as one of the major indicators of poverty by the community. Using community indicators of poverty, this household can be classified as poor. They own a core house in which they are resident. On the same premises are makeshift rooms constructed by their son who is married with one child and started staying there in March 2007, after returning from Kwekwe. Mr and Mrs M worked as domestic workers and their former employer assisted them to buy the house. Mr M is having problems with his eyesight. His health problem was reported as being the major stress the household is facing. Mrs M noted that she is not able to devote much of her time to the main livelihood activity because she has to look after her husband. They know of a "person" in Norton (40km away) who is renowned for treating this kind of illness, but they do not have money for transport. .

#### Livelihood Activities

The household's livelihood is derived from practising urban agriculture in open spaces around the suburb and also in areas allocated to residents for gardening by the City of Harare authorities. In 2007, the household harvested 400 kgs of maize, which is enough to last for eight months, assuming per capita consumption of 120kgs per annum per person (FAO and WFP, 2007). They sell some of the maize to raise income to meet other basic household needs. In addition, they grow vegetables in a community garden for own consumption and for sale. The main problem they are experiencing with urban agriculture is persistent theft of their produce mainly maize from the field. They have come together with other farmers to hire people to guard the field at night. Given the household composition, which is made up of children and elderly people, the ability to expand income-generating activities is limited. It was reported that children also help from time in the agricultural plots. The other limiting

factor is lack of capital to start any income-generating activities. Mr M's problems with his eyesight mean that he is no longer able to undertake any income-generating activities.

### **Social Networks**

Mrs M is an active member of the Roman Catholic Church, which is a source of support to other church members, although they are yet to receive such support from the church. In June 2007, the church provided blankets to the elderly and orphans. Despite being eligible, on both accounts she did not benefit. She alleges that there is a lot of favouritism in the way beneficiaries are chosen. Three of Mrs M's relatives provide support from time to time, however, she feels as if she is a burden to them and is therefore too embarrassed to request assistance. Their son, who stays on the same premises with them, pays rent and water bills. The family has debts of over a million ZWD and they are in possession of a final letter of demand from the city authorities. Social networks were noted as a source of livelihood for the household. Indeed, they acknowledged that "*times were difficult for everyone*", so they were too embarrassed to continuously request assistance from their relatives. This shows that social networks can also be exposed to stress, therefore the utility of these networks should not be taken for granted

### **Sources of Food and Consumption**

The maize they were consuming is what they harvested from their urban agriculture plot, as well as vegetables from the garden. The household reported that it now mainly consumes one meal a day. They advised that during the day, they pick up "*this and that*", which included left-over food. They consume sadza and vegetables every day. When they have money, they buy commodities such as cooking oil, sugar and salt from street vendors in small packages which are commonly referred to as "*ZviTsaona*".

### **Household Expenditure**

Given the purchasing patterns of the household, it was difficult to establish the household expenditure in the month prior to the survey. "*My child, whatever we spent is too little to mention,*" remarked Mrs M. Their son, who had paid the rentals for that month amounting to ZWD 644 000 and water charges of ZWD 150 000, had used money from a piece job he had undertaken, which earned him ZWD 3 million. Since the household does not have electricity, they search for firewood from the nearby forest, and sometimes buy firewood from street vendors. During the time of the survey, a bundle of firewood sufficient to prepare one meal

was ZWD 40 000. This was quite expensive, considering that those households with electricity were paying ZWD 50 000 for a month's supply.

### **Household Food Security**

The household reported not consuming preferred foods, eating a limited variety of foods and consuming smaller meals due to a lack of resources. The household was classified as moderately food insecure. The main livelihood activity for this household is urban agriculture. One can argue that the household is extremely vulnerable to food insecurity, since it consists of two elderly people and three children. The configuration of the household does not allow for the expansion of income generating activities and neither does it allow for the intensification of their main livelihood activity. The situation is not being helped by the fact that Mr M is half-blind, therefore he cannot undertake any income generation activities.

#### **4.3.4 Case Study 4: Mrs D - Severely Food Insecure**

Mrs D, the head of household, is an elderly widowed woman of over 65 years. She heads a household of nine; these include two of her own children, S, a man aged 42 years, who was chronically ill and T, a 29 year old man. All the other household members are grandchildren, three of whom are double orphans and the other three single orphans. The three single orphans were children of her daughters, who are deceased. The household occupies two rooms. One of her sons, who were not considered a member of her household, stays in makeshift rooms on the premises with his wife and children. Mrs D owns the house in which they are staying.

Mrs D's son, who is chronically ill, was receiving medical attention from the local Rujeko Clinic although consultations are free, they are struggling to find money to buy the required medication. Mrs D's husband passed way in 1992, two of her children passed away in 1993, two in 1996 and one in 1998. According to the death certificates shown to the researcher, all these people died from Immuno suppression and pneumonia. Considering that the household lost six members in a space of 6 years, it is not surprising that the household mentioned having a chronically ill person in the household as a source of stress.

### **Livelihood Activities**

The main livelihood activity highlighted was urban agriculture. In 2007, the household harvested 250 kgs of maize and at the time of interview, they said they had one 50 kg bag left. Among the challenges which the household is facing is the rising costs and shortage of agricultural inputs, particularly fertiliser, and theft of produce from the fields. T also contributes to household income. He does piece jobs from time to time. For the month of July 2007, the month prior to the survey he said he had not done any jobs worth mentioning, so had not brought any money home.

### **Food Sources and Consumption**

The household reported consuming one meal the day before the first interview. They ate sadza with vegetables prepared with cooking oil and tomatoes. During the three times the household was visited during the day, the researcher found at least one member consuming food. On the first day, Mrs D was having tea and buns in the afternoon; at the next visit, the researcher found the grandmother eating boiled grain maize and at the third visit, T was preparing sadza. Mrs D did not consider these to be meals - when probed, she responded “*Do you consider eating boiled maize grain to be a meal, my child?*”. T reported that he normally has meals during the day, but away from home.

### **Social Networks**

Unlike other households who were of foreign origin, Mrs D had a rural home in Beitbridge (about 600 kms from Harare) and her late husband originally came from Filabusi over 250 kms from Harare. Due to the distances involved and also the restrictions in the movement of grain, she could not get support from her relatives in the rural areas. She is a member of the Apostolic Faith church and a burial society these organisations provided support when her husband and children passed away. She also receives support from the community in which she is staying.

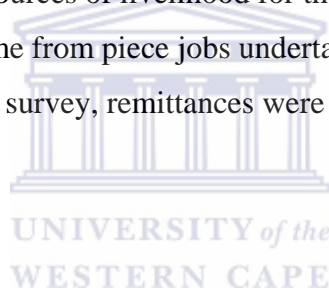
### **Expenditure**

The household was asked about the expenses they had incurred the month before the surveys. They had paid rent - ZWD 200 000, water - ZWD 150 000, milling charges - ZWD 30 000 and school fees - ZWD 224 000. The household estimated to have received ZWD 1 million

from an uncle who is a truck driver and in addition they received income in the form of rent from their son who stays at the premises. The son also pays the rent, electricity and water bills. The household consumes vegetables, fats and cereal daily. They consume sugar now and again when they purchase “ZviTsaona” from street vendors. The ever rising prices and shortage of basic commodities on the formal market were identified by Mrs D as some of the problems the household is facing.

### **Household Food Security**

The household responded in the affirmative to five of the seven questions asked to establish household behaviour as it relates to food insecurity. The household was classified as severely food insecure, although the household is consuming maize from their urban agriculture plot. The household reported that they had not reduced the number of meals, because they are only consuming one meal anyway. They further reported that they had not gone to bed hungry at night because of a lack of food. Sources of livelihood for the household included: urban agriculture, remittances and income from piece jobs undertaken by one of the household members. For the month prior the survey, remittances were the main source of income for the household.



#### **4.3.5 Case Study 5: Ms S' Household – Severely Food Insecure**

Ms S is a lodger and her household consists of three members - herself, her child and the father of her child, who is a non-resident but staying in the same suburb. Ms S' child is under 2 years old, is malnourished and is receiving supplementary feeding from Rujeko Clinic. She occupies one makeshift room, and the core house at the premises is occupied by a fellow lodger. The landlord stays in the rural areas.

Ms S, who is 20 years old, is from a family of four girls. Ms S' mother is deceased and her father is married to two wives and stays in another low income suburb in Harare. Ms S was brought up by her maternal grandparents in Mhondoro. She came to Harare to work as a domestic worker, occasionally visiting her sister in Dzivaresekwa. She met the father of her child during one of her visits. She did not know that he was married until she was pregnant. His wife has since passed away and he is currently staying with another woman.

#### **Livelihood Activities**

Ms S is not involved in any income generating activities because she has to look after her sick child and on the other hand the father of her child does not want her to work. Her ambition is to go into vending to sell bread, sugar and meat, but she has neither capital to start the business, nor the time to go out and source commodities.

#### **Social Networks**

Ms S reported that she does not have a good relationship with her father and her step-mothers. She also fell out of favour with her sister in Dzivaresekwa, over involvement with a married man. She is receiving support from fellow lodgers at the house where she is resident. It was difficult to establish the nature of reciprocal arrangements between the households. From the interviews it was revealed that she receives a lot of support from the fellow lodger for reasons which were not apparent to the researcher. Ms S' fellow lodger is involved in petty trading. The researcher observed Ms S assisting her fellow lodger in her business. It was not clear if this is what bonded the households.



## **Sources of Food and Consumption**

The day prior to the survey, she had consumed 2 meals. In the morning, her breakfast consisted of tea with buns and mealie rice. In the evening, she ate sadza and vegetables. She survives on hand-outs from her fellow lodger. Ms. S revealed that her husband is her other source of food. When he brings food that's when he also eats with the family.

## **Expenditure**

She could not estimate the amount of money spent on food the month prior the survey, because she does not buy any food herself. The father of her child pays rent in the amount of ZWD 500 000; electricity, ZWD 50 000 and water, ZWD 50 000 and occasionally brings food.

## **Food Security**

Ms S responded affirmative to all the questions which were asked to establish household behaviour over the last thirty days as relates to food insecurity. The household was classified as severely food insecure. In the household, there was a child who was malnourished and receiving supplementary feeding from Rujeko Clinic. Acute malnutrition is commonly associated with short-term food insecurity and/or illness. Social networks were the main livelihood source. Ms S was relying on support from a fellow lodger, although it was difficult to establish the nature of reciprocal arrangements between the households. Indications were that since she was always at home, she also assisted the fellow lodger in her petty trade business and in keeping an eye on the house. The social configuration of the household does not allow for expansion of income generating activities or even for the undertaking of any income generating activity.

#### **4.3.6 General Information**

During household interviews, general information was sought on income generating activities and other sources of income for households in the area. Respondents were further asked to characterise households which they considered to be better off and the income generating activities they were undertaking. The general views are summarised below.

The livelihood income generating activities mentioned by respondent households in the area cover a variety of income generating activities, which include vending, urban agriculture, formal employment, cross-border trading, welding, carpentry and hairdressing. Remittances were also mentioned as sources of income for some households in the area.

Respondents noted that some income generating activities are a result of the economic crisis. These include illegal dealings in foreign currency as well as cross-border trading. These new economic activities were associated with households which were considered better off in the community. Remittances mainly from outside the country were one income source which households associated with better-off households. The economic crisis was equally reported to have resulted in the intensification of petty trading, which was clearly evident by just visiting the street - at almost every household, there were commodities on display. During interviews, it was noted that children had information about other households, particularly as regards consumption. Children had their way of measuring or classifying these households. According to them, households which were better off were those whose children brought lunch-boxes with bread, rice and other food items to school and are never turned away from school for not paying school fees on time. The children could identify livelihoods of almost every household in the street, however, their parents or guardians were not at liberty to let them discuss other households.

Although food and other basic commodities were readily available on the informal market, the interviewed households preferred buying from the formal market where prices were generally lower because of the price control regime which was in place. Shopkeepers, cross-border traders and street vendors shared the same view on the issue of availability of commodities.

## 4.5 Conclusion

The case studies discussed above give an illustration of the realignment of the food supply system and the strategies households are undertaking to deal with food insecurity. Despite all the controls and regulations, the food supply chain is terminating in the informal market, through a chain of connections. There are marked price differentials between the formal market which is heavily subsidised and controlled by the state and the informal market whose price is determined by market forces. As such subsidised commodities are finding their way from the formal to the informal market, where they are sold for a premium, generating huge profits for the traders involved. Given the nature of the income households are receiving, the informal market is responding to the needs of consumers by repacking the basic commodities into smaller packages or “*ZviTsaona*”, which are accessible to people.

Strategies households are utilising to get food include urban agriculture, support from social networks, and undertaking multiple income generating activities. Activities which were associated with food security were cross border trading, illegal dealing in foreign currency and remittances from outside the country. One important point to note is that all these activities and sources of income are linked to foreign currency, therefore one can argue that having access to foreign currency guaranteed household food security.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Zimbabwe is going through a unique period in its history. It has a socio-economic crisis which is characterised by negative trends in all key macro indicators, shortages of basic commodities, political polarisation, deteriorating quality and quantity of social services. Despite the fact that the crisis is affecting both rural and urban areas, major forms of formal safety nets by the Government and NGOs have been confined to rural areas, where traditionally vulnerability to food insecurity has been considered to be worse than in urban areas.

Using qualitative research methods, the study set out to understand livelihoods of low income urban households in Dzivaresekwa and strategies being used to cope with the negative macro—economic environment prevailing in Zimbabwe, particularly food insecurity.

This chapter discusses some of the major findings as they relate to livelihood activities, the food supply system, social networks and formal safety nets, household expenditure, food security and coping strategies.

### **5.2 Livelihood Activities**

Potts and Mutambirwa (1998) observed that, despite the fall in real wages, low income urban households were still surviving on a single wage. ZimVAC (2003) found out that 55 percent of the households interviewed indicated that formal employment was the major source of income. A closer look at the case studies presented in Chapter 4 indicates that there has been a major shift: low income households are no longer able to survive on a single wage. The household with two formally employed people (one in his mid-70s who had come out of retirement because of the difficult times) indicated that they get more money from activities such as petty trading rather than from formal employment. Interviews with those formally employed, including the households studied in-depth, revealed that the value of formal employment is not based on the salary one receives at the end of the month, but on the host of opportunities created by such

employment. Some of the opportunities mentioned included the possibility of getting piece jobs, the ability to get credit from the formal and informal system, and the possibility of buying and selling commodities to fellow employees.

As highlighted in the literature review of this thesis, low income households expanded their income generating activities within the space provided by the availability of capital and labour. Illustrations emerging from the cases studies are that households which were somehow linked to the illegal foreign currency market were better off. These include households which were involved in cross-border trading, illegal foreign currency dealings and those which were receiving remittances from relatives resident outside the country. These activities came to the fore because of the economic collapse. To illustrate this point, a school teacher resigned from formal employment to engage in cross-border and petty trading on a full-time basis. Relative's resident outside the country emigrated as a result of the economic crisis.

Street vending was one activity which was prevalent in the area; a lot of households were trying to take advantage of the formal and informal linkages to earn a living. This was happening despite the fact that government policies were not enabling, most of those employing this strategy risked loosing both the wares and being arrested. Despite this constraint the majority of households in the suburb were engaged in street vending. However, from the in-depth interviews with the street vendor, one can argue that some were able to take advantage of this if they had the capital to invest, labour to wait in the various queues and, most importantly, connections to assist them to get commodities in bulk.

The other activity, which is not new, but has always been part of the livelihoods of low income households in Dzivaresekwa, is urban agriculture. Those households interviewed noted that productivity is reducing due to a lack of inputs, particularly fertiliser. The value of urban agriculture to those households practising it was almost 30 percent of the low income food basket, excluding the cost of production.

### **5.3 Food Supply and Sources of Food**

As was discussed in the background section of this thesis, the Zimbabwean economy was characterised by shortages of basic commodities, exacerbated by the implementation of the June 2007 price controls. The price controls resulted in serious shortages of basic commodities, including bread, maize meal, cooking oil, rice, beef, chicken and milk, which were experienced in markets throughout the country.

Contrary to the widely held view of shortages as was discussed in the context section of the study of basic commodities in Dzivaresekwa, the issue had more to do with access than availability. Food items were erratically available on the formal market where they were affordable to a majority of people in the suburb because prices were controlled. It was noted though, that food items were always available on the informal market, albeit at high prices. Interviews with stakeholders involved in the food supply chain revealed that there are strong linkages between the formal and the informal sector. As such, it is now important to consider the informal sector as a source of basic commodities: because of the pricing structure, basic commodities are being siphoned from the formal retail system to the informal system. If quantities reported by the cross-border trader interviewed are anything to go by, cross-border traders are bringing in a significant amount of food, which is not being captured by the formal system. The situation attaining in Dzivaresekwa shows a major shift in the food marketing system. In 1994 Drakakis Smith found that the majority of the food in Harare was being marketed through the formal retail system. It was interesting to note that although the supermarket in the area reportedly catered for customers who do not want to buy commodities from the street for health reasons, some of the food commodities sold in the supermarket, including fish, are supplied by informal traders.

### **5.4 Social Networks and Formal Safety Nets**

Kinship and social networks were identified as sources of both livelihoods and support during difficult times. The general view of the area, which was illustrated by one of the interviewed households, revealed that support from family members' resident outside of the country contributed significantly towards household food security. Almost all households reported receiving support now and again from relatives and friends,

however, given the prevailing economic situation, they indicated that the support they receive from relatives and friends has decreased. Some informed that they were embarrassed to seek help from relatives. Most of the people in the area and households interviewed are of foreign origin. As such they do not have rural homes they can rely on for remittances in the form of food. Those with relatives in the rural areas noted that transport costs and the controls in place regarding grain movement are resulting in households not utilising the urban-rural linkages to their advantage.

Despite the high levels of food insecurity, it was surprising to note that formal food assistance was limited. Formal assistance support mentioned includes therapeutic feeding at the clinic and support from churches, which was reported to be limited. The school supplementary feeding programme was reportedly stopped after a disease outbreak at one of the schools.

Illustrations from the study show that not everything about social networks is positive; there are also some negative aspects of social networks. At four of the households with which in-depth interviews were conducted, one can argue that these households are losing potential income from rentals because children are staying in rooms which they can let out. Although in some cases the children are contributing by paying electricity and water bills, this contribution is far much less than potential income which the households could earn. In one of the cases the children were not contributing anything to the parents' household.

## **5.5 Food Security and Household Expenditure**

Considering two of the three dimensions of food security, availability and access, it is not surprising that low income households were food insecure. Given the shortages of commodities prevailing at the time of the survey, food items were available on the informal market at a premium, making it difficult for low income households to acquire them. The diet of low income households interviewed was made up of cereals and vegetables, which was consistent with the findings of a study undertaken in the urban areas by ZimVAC (2003), which observed that the diets of poor people consisted mainly of carbohydrates and vegetables.

Surprisingly asked about priority expenditure items, paying rent, electricity and water bills were identified as the priority expenditure items by the households not food. As shown in figure 5.1 there were significant variations in the amount of money paid as rent by the households. The amount of money paid as rent, depended on whether one was a lodger, owned the house therefore only paid rates or the household was paying rent to buy from the city of Harare.

Those households which were only paying rates paid the least (households Mrs D & Mrs N), followed by households on rent to buy arrangements (households Mr M & Mrs F) and then by those lodging (Ms S) depending on the number of rooms being occupied. Ms S was renting one room and paying rent which was almost the same as those paying rent to buy for two rooms. Because of the price control regime in place, rentals and rates were very low except for lodgers who were paying market related rentals.

**Figure 5.1 Priority Expenditure Items by households (in ZWD)**

	Mrs D	Mr M	Mrs F	Mr N	Ms S
Rent	200,000	644,000	700,000	170,000	500,000
Electricity	75,000		71,000	140,000	50,000
Water	75,000	150,000	71,000	163,000	50,000

Households with electricity connected to the households were paying a subsidised ZWD140 000 per month, which was very low considering that firewood for preparing one meal was worth ZWD 30 000, which meant that households without electricity were paying close to ZWD 1 800 000 for firewood per month. Of the five households, three households (Mr M) did not have electricity as such they depended on firewood as the main source of energy for preparing meals. Water like electricity was also heavily subsidized by the state, as shown above water consumed by a household for the whole month was costing households between ZWD150 000 – ZWD163 000.

A reconstruction of the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) basket based on items reported to be consumed by households, and sources of this food, indicate that there is a huge difference between the CCZ low income food basket and what is practically being consumed. This partially answers the question: what strategies are households employing



to deal with food insecurity? They are not consuming all the food items listed on the CCZ basket which are important for the wellbeing of individuals.

**Table 5.2: Reconstruction of the Low Income Food Basket**

Quantity & Item	CCZ (ZWD)	Study (ZWD)	Notes
2 x Margarine 1kg	629 893.34	0.00	Not being widely consumed
2 x Mealie Meal 20kg	180 000.00	0.00	Mainly from own production
3 x White Sugar 2kg**	101 820.00	101 820.00	Occasionally
2 x Tea Leaves 250g**	242 680.34	242 680.34	Occasionally
3 x Fresh Milk 500ml	842 580.00	0.00	Not mentioned at all
6 x Cooking Oil 750ml**	364 472.00	364 472.00	Occasionally
31 x Bread ( Ordinary Loaf)**	837 000.00	837 000.00	Occasionally
1 x Flour 2kg**	14 000.00	14 000.00	Occasionally
2 x Rice 2kg	503 903.38	0.00	Not being widely consumed
4 x Salt 500g	25 000.00	25 000.00	
31 x Vegetable- Cabbage	1 865 928.13	0.00	Mainly from own production
8 x Meat Beef 1kg (Economy)	1 152 000.00	0.00	Not being widely consumed
<b>Food</b>	<b>6 759 277.19</b>	<b>1 584 972.34</b>	

It was interesting to note that food items which are considered basic, such as bread, rice and meat, were used by children as an indicator of households they considered to be better off. Asked to characterise these households, children identified them as those who brought a sandwich to school. To a certain extent, this confirms that basics are now considered to be a luxury.

For households which were consuming maize and vegetables from own production, the cost of their food basket was as shown in table 5.2. Maize meal and vegetables accounted for 30 percent of the CCZ basket for July 2007. Therefore, by relying on urban agriculture, this implied a saving of 30 percent, not including the cost of production.

One can argue that only price controls on water, electricity and rates were benefiting households directly. The other intervention by the government which is directly assisting

low income households in Dzivaresekwa is the commuter train, despite the hassles of using this form of transport which is available only twice a day - early in the morning and late evening. Low income households are now relying on this mode of transport at the expense of having many redundant hours, if one is to use the same mode of transport in one day.

## **5.6 Coping Strategies**

Coping strategies mentioned by households include consuming less diverse food items, increasing income generating activities, switching to cheaper modes of transport, withdrawing children from school, moving back to stay with or at parent's houses, and forgoing the purchase of luxury commodities. From the discussions above, it is clear that households are consuming less diversified food and expanding income generating activities, as demonstrated by an elderly person who came out of retirement to work as a security guard and by the withdrawal of children from school.

From the analysis of food items consumed by households, it can be seen that they are consuming less diversified diets. Forgoing the purchase of luxury commodities was mentioned as a coping strategy. Unfortunately, the list of luxury commodities has been extended to include important food items for the nutritional wellbeing of individuals, such as meat, bread, rice and milk. Considering that these food items are important for the nutritional status of people, it is clear that in the long run this will have a negative effect on their wellbeing. Bringing lunch-boxes with bread, rice and food items such as orange juice was identified by children as an indication of better-off households.

The withdrawal of children from school was also observed, although not reported as a coping strategy by the households. It was reported that the children were not interested in going to school. One of the children though pointed out that there was no use in going to school without uniforms and the necessary stationery, since the government was no longer providing stationery.

Moving back to stay with a parent or at a parent's house was a strategy which was benefiting the children than parents. As highlighted in the case studies, some of the

parents who were subletting makeshift rooms to their sons informed that they were being supported through the payment of rentals, rates, electricity and water. This was not always the case, in one case the relationship was quite polarised. It was reported that no support was being provided to the parents by the sons, who were staying in makeshift rooms at the premises.

A closer look at the livelihood undertaken by low income households reveal that the some of the capitals highlighted in the sustainable livelihoods were critical. However it is important to note that possessing these capitals alone was not a panacea for success. Having sufficient human capital and financial capital was considered important for one to be able to take advantage of the activities in the informal sector. However skills and education appeared not to be that critical in the livelihood of low income households interviewed. For example, the cross border trader interviewed was a teacher who resigned to move into cross boarder trading which did not require much skill but only capital and the necessary travelling documents. Access to natural capital such as land for urban agriculture had a positive influence of the livelihoods of poor people. The study noted that household could save as much as 30% of food costs by relying on urban agriculture excluding the costs of production. Social capital played a critical role in the livelihoods of interviewed households both in terms of providing remittances and also as sources of commodities which ended up being traded on the informal market.

The transforming structures and processes which existed were detrimental to the livelihoods of the majority of households. Some households though managed to take advantage of the disabling policy framework to earn a living. That is cross border traders , foreign currency dealers and petty traders all were reaping the benefits of a chaotic policy environment and the expense of many.

## 5.7 Conclusion

The case studies illustrate that there has been a significant shift in the livelihoods of low income households as well as food supply systems. As articulated in the literature reviewed in this study, low income households are now depending on multiple income generating strategies, most of which are enabling them to raise subsistence income. Unlike, in the 1990s income from formal employment is not enough to meet household requirements.

By engaging in informal activities such as petty trading, illegal foreign currency dealing, cross border trading, low income households are able to raise income to buy food. Urban agriculture is also contributing significantly to household food security. The way one is positioned in the informal sector and the ability to exploit the linkages between the formal and informal sector has a major influence on the household's food security status.

Social networks were also identified to be playing a role in the livelihoods of low income households. This is in line with what is in the literatures, though the specifics were unique. Besides remittances from kinship, moving back to stay with or at parents' houses were also noted to be a common strategy. For the children, this strategy meant saving money on rentals which was then used to buy food.

Literature suggests that rural – urban linkages play an important role in the livelihoods of low income household. However most households interviewed are of foreign origin, therefore they do not have rural homes they can rely on for remittances in the form of food. However even for those with rural homes, the utility of the urban –rural linkages were constrained by the transport costs and the restriction on the movement of gain.

Other strategies households are employing include limiting expenditure to the bare minimum, priority expenditure items mentioned are rent, water, electricity and food. Basic food items however are now considered luxuries by many households, to the extent that children regard better off households as those which consume food items such as meat, bread and rice. Electricity as a source of energy is prioritised because it is heavily

subsidized by the state such that alternative sources of energy are completely beyond the reach of many. This is one of the pro poor government policies which is benefiting the community, enabling them to cope with socio –economic crisis. Some of the pro poor policies benefiting poor households include the heavily subsidized commuter train and water charges.

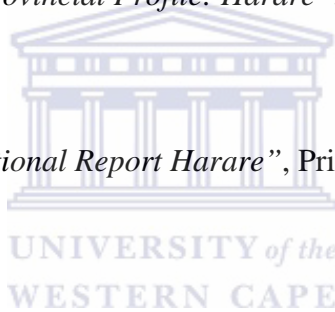
The study highlighted that there has been a significant restructuring of the food system implying that when looking at availability, it is now imperative to equally consider the informal system. The informal market is the main source of food for many households, as such subsidies targeted at the formal market are only benefiting a few. Given the nature of the income households are receiving, the informal market is responding to the needs of consumers by repacking the basic commodities into smaller packages or “ZviTsaona”, which are accessible to people. Literature suggests this is a normal response. Due to the fact that households purchase smaller quantities and low quality food items during periods of economic crisis, informal markets were noted to become major sources of food for low income urban households.

To conclude, it is important to revisit the main research question “*What strategies do low income household employ to cope with food insecurity?*” For the study coping was defined as “*responses to adverse events or shocks*”. Normally shocks are transient and can be viewed as a rapid departure from the norm. However given the protracted nature of the socio-economic problems in Zimbabwe low income households are perennially experiencing shocks. The study illustrates that low income households are now surviving mainly in the informal economy, which is a major shift from how they used to survive in the 1990s. Using a combination of strategies, the households are getting by. One can arguably compare some of the strategies households are engaging in to pain killers, which relieve pain for a while but do not treat the disease.

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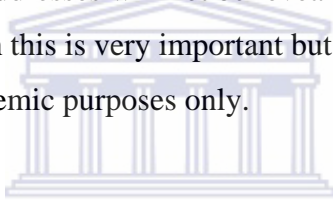
## Annex 1: Semi-Structured Survey Instrument

1. Respondent Name		3. Street Name	
2. House Number		4. Enumeration Date	

### Instructions

- Please identify yourself.
- Explain the purpose of the survey, how the household was selected and assure confidentiality of information provided as follows.

This survey is part of an **academic study** to understand the livelihoods of people of Dzivaresekwa. Your street and your household were selected randomly; your household, together with other selected households in your area, will help paint a picture of how households in your area live. The information you will share with me will be held in **strict confidence**; names and addresses will not be revealed or associated with your responses. Your participation in this is very important but **voluntary**. The information generated will be used for academic purposes only.



WESTERN CAPE

- Allow respondent to ask any questions s/he may have concerning the survey after the interviews.


**A. The objective of this section is to establish household demographics, health status of household activities which household members do to**

A1		A2		A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9
Code	Please give me the first name of each HH member, starting with the head.  Including HH members who do not regularly stay here	a. What is [Name] relationship to the household head? 1 = Head 2 = Spouse 3 = Child 4 = other relative For head only , what is the marital status 1 = Married, 2 = Single 3 = Divorced, 4 = Widowed		Is [Name] male or female?  <b>Male = 1 Female =2</b>	[Name] Date of Birth	IS [name] a  1- usual member - present 2- member – absent 3- Visitor	What is the highest <b>grade</b> [Name] has completed /attending?  Add C- Completed A - Attending	Does [Name] undertake any activities which bring in income or food in the household  1 = Yes  2 = NO	If yes to B7, What does [ Name ] do	Has [Name] been very sick at any time since the beginning of the year? <b>By very sick, I mean that the person was too sick to work or do normal activities around the house for at least 3 of the past 12 months.</b> 1 = Yes 2 = No
01			Marital Status							
02										
03										
04										
05										
06										
07										
08										
09										
10										
11										
12										

A10. If there is a household member who is chronically ill, did they or are they receiving medical attention? Yes/ No. If no, why?

How many meals are normally eaten in this household per day?

What sort of food is eaten in this household?

Breakfast	Lunch	Supper
	 <p>UNIVERSITY <i>of the</i> WESTERN CAPE</p>	



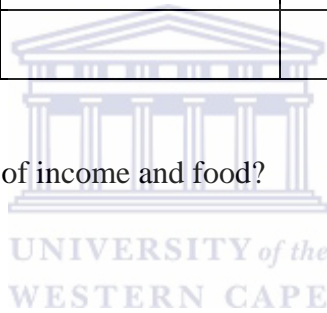
<b>B. Household Food Insecurity Questions – Household behaviour over the last thirty days</b>			
<b>For every question, it will be at any time during the last thirty days.<sup>1</sup></b>			
No	Question	Response Option Circle	Notes, which food items and why where applicable
B1	Were you or any member of your household not able to eat the kinds of foods you preferred because of lack of resources?	0 = No (skip to Q3) 1 = Yes	
B1a	How often did this happen?	1 = Rarely (once or twice) 2 = Sometimes (three to ten times) 3 = Often ( more than ten times )	
B2	Did you or any household member eat a limited variety of foods due to lack of resources?	0 = No (Skip to Q4) 1 = Yes	
B2a	How often did this happen?	1 = Rarely (once or twice) 2 = Sometimes (three to ten ) 3 = Often ( more than ten times)	
B3	Did you or any household member eat smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food	0 = No (Skip to Q6) 1 = Yes	
B3a	How often did this happen?	1 = Rarely (once or twice) 2 = Sometimes (three to ten ) 3 = Often ( more than ten times)	
B4	Did you or any other household member eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food?	0 = No (Skip to Q7) 1 = Yes	
B4a	How often did this happen?	1 = Rarely (once or twice) 2 = Sometimes (three to ten ) 3 = Often ( more than ten times)	
B5	Was there ever no food at all in your household because there were no resources to get any more	0 = No (Skip to Q8) 1 = Yes	
B5a	How often did this happen?	1 = Rarely (once or twice) 2 = Sometimes (three to ten ) 3 = Often ( more than ten times)	
B6	Did you or any member of your household go to sleep hungry at night because there was not enough food	0 = No (Skip to Q9) 1 = Yes	
B6a	How often did this happen?	1 = Rarely (once or twice) 2 = Sometimes (three to ten ) 3 = Often ( more than ten times)	
B7	Did you or any member of your household go a whole day without eating anything because there was not enough food?	0 = No (Skip to Q2) 1 = Yes	
B7a	How often did this happen?	1 = Rarely (once or twice) 2 = Sometimes (three to ten ) 3 = Often ( more than ten times)	

<sup>1</sup> Questions adapted from Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) by USAID

**Section C Income and Expenditure**

What are the priority expenditure items for the household per month?	Amount Spent on each item	Amount still owing if the expenditure was not met

What are the household's sources of income and food?



Total income household received last month

## Annex 2: CCZ Lower Income Urban Earner Monthly Budget for July 2007



The  
Consumer  
Council  
of Zimbabwe

### BUDGET AND BUY WISELY

### LOWER INCOME URBAN EARNER MONTHLY BUDGET FOR A FAMILY OF SIX (MOTHER, FATHER AND FOUR CHILDREN)

July 2007

DESCRIPTION	PRICE \$	QUANTITY	AMOUNT\$
Margarine 1kg		2	629,893.34
Roller Meal 20kg		2	180,000.00
White Sugar 2kg		3	101,820.00
Tea leaves 250g		2	242,680.34
Fresh Milk 500ml		31	842,580.00
Cooking Oil 750ml		6	364,472.00
Bread 700g		31	837,000.00
Flour 2kg		1	14,000.00
Rice 2kg (Silo)		2	503,903.38
Salt 500g		4	25,000.00
Vegetables (Cabbage/Rape, Tomatoes, Onions)		31	1,865,928.13
Meat 1kg ( <b>Economy</b> )		8	1,152,000.00
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>6,759,277.19</b>
Transport			2,200,000.00
<b>Soaps and detergents:</b>			
- Bath Soaps (Geisha)			
- Washing Bars			
- Washing Powder 500 gr			1,727,806.23
Rent (3 roomed High density)			1,350,000.00
Water and Electricity			218,900.00
Health			6,300.00
Education			125,875.00
Clothing and Footwear			785,280.00
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>			<b>6,414,161.23</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>			<b>13,173,438.42</b>

### Annex 3: Categories of Food Insecurity – FANTA Classification

Annex 3 : Categories of Food Insecurity - Fanta Classification				
Number	Question	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1	Did you worry that your household would not have enough food?	SECURE	MILDLY	MILDLY
2	Were you or any member of your household not able to eat the kinds of foods you <b>preferred</b> because of lack of resources?	MILDLY	MILDLY	MILDLY
3	Did you or any household member eat a <b>limited</b> variety of foods due to lack of resources?	MILDLY	Moderate	Moderate
4	Did you or any household member have to eat some foods that you really did not want to eat because of lack of resources to obtain other types	MILDLY	Moderate	Moderate
5	Did you or any household member eat smaller meal than you felt you needed because there was not enough food	Moderate	Moderate	Severe
6	Did you or any other household member eat fewer meals in a day because there was not enough food? (Compare to the normal meals consumed)	Moderate	Moderate	Severe
7	Was there ever no food at all in your household because there were no resources to get any more	Severe	Severe	Severe
8	Did you or any member of your household go to sleep hungry at night because there was not enough food	Severe	Severe	Severe
9	Did you or any member of your household go a whole day without eating anything because there was not enough food?	Severe	Severe	Severe
			Food Secure	
			Midly Food Insecure	
			Moderately Food Insecure	
			Severely Food Insecure	

