

**Women and Food Security in Mozambique: Introducing Theologies of *Okhala***

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## Declaration

I declare that this thesis, unless noted through references, is my original work. Furthermore, I declare that I have not submitted this thesis to any other university.

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Eva Agostinho Paulo

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Date

As a supervisor, I agree to the submission of this thesis.

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Rev Dr Beverley Haddad

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Date

## Abstract

This study investigates the theological resources of poor and semi-literate women of the Union Baptist Church in Murrupula District, Nampula province, Mozambique in the context of food insecurity and poverty. It makes use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework as a tool to analyse the vulnerability context of Murrupula women in relation to the existing livelihood assets. It also uses the notion of survival theologies to analyse the theological resources that Murrupula women have and use in their struggle to survive within a context of food insecurity. The study aims to recover the theological resources of women in order to contribute to a relevant contextual theology for social transformation in Mozambique. It is a qualitative study based on interviews, field observation and personal experience. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten women. The women interviewed were between the ages of eighteen to seventy years old relying on the practice of subsistence agriculture as their main source of livelihood. The findings reveal that women have theological resources they use in their response to food insecurity, poverty and illness. These include women's faith, prayer and agricultural work, networking and fundraising groups. Women rely on God, through prayer, to provide for all their needs. Their network functions as a safe social site and is an important resource for spiritual, physical and economic support. The study argues that the theological resources of these women are important for their own and their households' survival and well-being. The findings also reveal that Murrupula women do not only literally survive, but have a desire to live a full and quality life despite poverty and food insecurity. They do so through their use of agricultural work as a livelihood and survival strategy which is not only about producing food, but is also about a process of well-being. This study thus argues that the theological resources of Murrupula women indicate that they live by theologies of *okhala*. *Okhala* means life and well-being. Its usage describes the life conditions and well-being of people. In introducing theologies of *okhala*, the study proposes the need for further research into the full recovery of the notion of *okhala* and its theological significance for the *Makhuwa* Christian community.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my stepfather Agostinho Araujo who laid the foundations of my educational career by giving me the opportunity to study at an early age and encouraged me to further my studies even after I married. I also dedicate to my mother, Jacinta Namucoio, for her love and caring heart.

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## Map of Mozambique: Localization of Murrupula district



Source: Tvedten, Inge et al. “Opitanha”: *Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique*. CMI Report, 2006, p. vi.

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## Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DFID	Department for International Development
EN	Estrada Nacional (National Road)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
MAE	Ministerio da Administração Estatal (Ministry of State Administration)
NGOs	Non Government Organizations
PARPA	Plano de Acção para a Redução da Pobreza Absoluta (Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty)
REBA	Regional Evidence Building Agenda
RHVP	Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme
RENAMO	Resistencia Nacional de Moçambique (Mozambique National Resistance)
SETSAN	Secretariado Técnico para Segurança Alimentar e Nutrição (Technical Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition)
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
UBC	Union Baptist Church
UNAC	União Nacional de Camponeses (National Union for Farmers)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# Chapter One

## Introducing the study

### 1.1 Introduction

The lack of food poses an enormous challenge for Mozambique, despite its rich natural resources, arable land and water. Mozambique is characterized by a high prevalence of vulnerability to chronic and transitory food insecurity. The prevalence of vulnerability to food insecurity in Mozambique is “34.8% of households, where 20.3% are classified as highly vulnerable and 14.5% are classified as very highly vulnerable.”<sup>1</sup> The households most vulnerable to chronic food insecurity are in the northern and central regions of Mozambique particularly in the provinces of Nampula and Zambezia, while households vulnerable to transitory food insecurity are in the southern region.<sup>2</sup> Their vulnerability is exacerbated by overlapping factors, including political factors, such as the war that ended in 1992. It had destroyed basic social infrastructures, particularly in the rural areas. Furthermore, natural disasters such as drought, floods and cyclones have also had a negative impact on food security. Health issues such as HIV and AIDS, malaria, diarrhoea, cholera and leprosy erode the coping ability of households and individuals. Other factors that contribute to food insecurity include poverty, crop failure and the instability of food prices.<sup>3</sup>

Although Mozambique has maintained an annual average economic growth rate of 8% since the civil war ended in 1992, and reduced poverty from 69% in 1997 to 54.5% in 2003, the country remains one of the poorest countries in the world, particularly in Africa. The estimated population of Mozambique by early 2007 was 18 million inhabitants. Of this number, 80% lived in rural areas and agriculture was their main source of livelihood.<sup>4</sup> More than 80% of peasants were women practicing subsistence agriculture which constituted a great contribution for household food

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<sup>1</sup> SETSAN, ‘Baseline Survey of Food Security and Nutrition in Mozambique’, Maputo 2006, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> SETSAN, ‘Baseline Survey of Food’, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> FEWS NET, ‘Mozambique Food Security Update, June 2008’.

[http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/Mozambique\\_2008\\_06\\_final\\_en.pdf](http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/Mozambique_2008_06_final_en.pdf) Accessed on 20/05/2009.

<sup>4</sup> CEDAW, ‘Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique: In Reference to Government Report: “First National Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW”’, Maputo 2007, p. 43.

security. This indicates that women play a crucial role in household food production.<sup>5</sup> However, the role of rural women in agriculture is characterized by low productivity due to different factors, as will be discussed in section 3.3. One of the major factors that hinder women from generating household food security is poverty. It is estimated that two thirds of the rural population, mostly women and children, live in absolute poverty.<sup>6</sup> This indicates that this group of the poor are the group most vulnerable to food insecurity<sup>7</sup> because they rely on a single source (agricultural work) which is dependent on unreliable rainfall. This is the case with the women in Murrupula district, Mozambique.

This study focuses on the district of Murrupula. Murrupula is one of twenty-one districts of Nampula Province in the northern part of Mozambique. It is bordered by Nampula District in the northeast, Gile (Zambezia Province) in the south, Mogovolas in the southeast and Ribaue in the northwest.<sup>8</sup> Murrupula District “has a dry tropical climate with two main seasons: dry, from April to October and rainy, from November to March.”<sup>9</sup> The district is predominantly inhabited by *Makhuwa* speaking people. Its population is “generally poor, with low levels of income and consumption.”<sup>10</sup> The district is characterized by poor food security, with over 90% of the population relying on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods.<sup>11</sup> Women play a crucial role in household food production and provision. However, women face many barriers in generating household food security.

Women struggle to diversify their livelihood strategies that would enable them to have access to enough and nutritious food. This is pertinent in Murrupula District during the “hunger” season that starts in November and continues to March when households wait for the harvest. This season coincides with the rainy season and is

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<sup>5</sup> Kathleen Sheldon, ‘Mozambique’, in Aili Mari Tripp (ed), *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Women’s Issues Worldwide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), p. 247; Joana Mahumane, ‘Household Food Security: A Case Study of Daque Unit – Tete Province, Mozambique’, Unpublished Master Dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2000, p. 76.

<sup>6</sup> CEDAW, ‘Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique’, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Rekha Mehra and Mary H. Rojas, *A Significant Shift: Women, Food Security and Agriculture in a Global Marketplace* (Washington: ICRW, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> World Vision Mozambique, ‘Niheziue Area Development Program Profile 2005’.

<sup>9</sup> World Vision Mozambique, ‘Niheziue Area Development Program Profile’.

<sup>10</sup> Inge Tvedten, et al, “‘Opitanha’”: Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique’, CMI Report, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> World Vision Mozambique, ‘Niheziue Area Development Program Profile’.

accompanied by high incidence of infectious diseases. During this period of hunger, women within the context of scarce livelihood opportunities employ a variety of coping strategies, including faith, for their survival. Women respond to the situation by reducing the number of meals they consume per day, harvesting wild fruits and selling their labour. Socially, women depend on their extended family, other women within the church women's groups, and neighbours to cope with food crisis and poverty (see sections 4.4.8 and 4.4.10).

In addition, faith in God is a resource that is very important to women as they trust God to provide food and sustain their families (see section 4.4.9). However, a scholar such as Chingondole has not taken in account the theological resources of poor women when assessing their coping strategies.<sup>12</sup> The analysis of coping strategies has tended to focus on assessing women's material conditions. By not focusing on the theological resources of semi-literate women, there is little opportunity to reflect theologically on how they struggle to survive. In an attempt to address this issue, this study investigates the theological resources of women of the Union Baptist Church (UBC) in Murrupula District in the Nampula province of Mozambique. It analyses the role that faith plays in the lives of poor women in their struggle to survive within the context of food insecurity and poverty. This study argues that women have theological resources that they utilize in their struggle to cope with a lack of food security. These resources need to be recognized and recovered. It is these theological resources, it is argued in this study, that could contribute to the ongoing discussion of relevant contextual theologies for social transformation.

## **1.2 Research problem and objectives**

This study attempts to answer the following key question: What are the theological resources that women use in their response to food insecurity and how can they contribute to a contextual theology for social transformation? In order to address the research question, the study considers the following sub-questions:

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<sup>12</sup> Samuel Mpeleka Chingondole, 'Investigation of the Socio-Economic Impacts of Morbidity and Mortality on Coping Strategies among Community Garden Clubs in Mphephetheni, KwaZulu-Natal', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2007.

- What are the survival strategies employed by women in the context of food insecurity?
- What are the socio-political, cultural and religious factors impacting the role of women in food security?
- What role does faith play in their struggle to survive?
- What are theological themes emerging from women's struggle to survive within a context of food insecurity?

Therefore the main objectives of the study are to:

- Identify women's livelihood assets that they use in their response to food insecurity.
- Identify theological resources that enhance these livelihood assets.
- Identify and examine theological themes emerging from their lived experience of survival in order to contribute to a contextual theology for social transformation.

### **1.3 Theoretical and theological framework**

This study, in the first instance, makes use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to analyse livelihood assets and the vulnerability context of Murrupula women. The SLF recognizes that people have a range of strategies they use for their survival.<sup>13</sup> The SLF seeks to find ways to enhance that survival by removing any constraint and help people to become resilient and better able to achieve their own objectives.<sup>14</sup> The SLF recognizes that poor people have assets they utilize to ensure their survival. It does this by drawing attention to the existing portfolio of assets of the household and community. The SLF outlines five key livelihoods assets, namely human, social, natural, physical and financial.

Human capital refers to people's skills, knowledge, ability to work and good health status that enable people to employ different livelihood strategies in order to survive. Social capital refers to the "social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of

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<sup>13</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets', Livelihoods Connect CD-ROM, Distance Learning Guide, (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies 2005).

<sup>14</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

their livelihood objectives.”<sup>15</sup> Social capital is developed through informal networks and connectedness between people with shared interests and ability to work together; membership of more formalized groups; trusts; reciprocity and exchange.<sup>16</sup> Natural capital refers to the stocks of natural resource available for the household to draw on in search of positive livelihood outcomes. Natural capital includes natural resources such as land, trees, marine/wild resources, air quality and water.<sup>17</sup> Physical capital denotes basic infrastructure such as transport, secure shelter, water and sanitation, energy, communication and the productive resources such as tools and equipment required to support livelihoods.<sup>18</sup> Financial capital refers to the financial resources or available stocks in form of money, bank deposits or assets such as livestock and jewellery, credit, money transfers and remittances that people use to pursue their livelihood objectives.<sup>19</sup>

The SLF recognizes that people require a range of strategies to use these assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes within the vulnerability context. The vulnerability context includes shocks, trends and seasonality.<sup>20</sup> The SLF recognizes that within the vulnerability context, people have limited or no control over these factors. As a result, people’s assets are destroyed, thus constraining them from achieving their livelihood objectives. The SLF seeks to make such livelihoods resilient in the face of external shocks.<sup>21</sup>

From a theological point of view, the study, in the second instance, builds on Beverley Haddad’s concept of “survival theologies”<sup>22</sup> as incipient theologies of poor and marginalized women. Incipient theologies are theologies that emerge when ordinary believers who are not trained theologically reflect on their faith in a provisional way, “gathering an as yet untested wisdom about the meaning of their

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<sup>15</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>16</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>17</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>18</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>19</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>20</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>21</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>22</sup> Beverley G. Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminism, and Development’. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2000.

faith.”<sup>23</sup> Theologies of survival are an expression of faith that reflect women’ struggle to survive within a context of material deprivation and oppression.<sup>24</sup> Women attribute the transformation of their material state to faith in the power of God who can perform the miraculous.<sup>25</sup> Faith, for many poor women, is a source for coping with poverty and it is what keeps them alive, literally.<sup>26</sup> The ability to survive shows women’s agency to employ different survival strategies (including their faith) to sustain their households. The theologies that poor women live by are theologies born out of their struggle to survive. The theological concept of “survival theologies” provides a framework in which to identify and analyse theological resources that enable women to respond to challenging issues such as food insecurity, poverty and illness.

#### **1.4 Research methodology**

This qualitative study collected primary data through fieldwork using semi-structured interviews with ten women of the Union Baptist Church in Murrupula which included an informed consent process. The participants interviewed were limited to ten women between the ages of eighteen to seventy years old, who rely on the practice of subsistence agriculture as their main source of livelihood. The data collected was tape recorded, transcribed and then translated from the local language, *Makhuwa*, into English. In the process of data analysis, texts dealing with the same theme were identified, grouped accordingly, and colour coded. This helped my theoretical and theological analysis.

The research findings revealed that women in Murrupula live within a context of food insecurity, poverty, poor health care, and a lack of employment opportunities. Their main livelihood strategy is the practice of subsistence agriculture, which is characterized by low productivity. This is due to illness and limited access to resources and credit. The lack of women’s access to resources, particularly productive resources, constrains their role in generating sustainable household food security. The

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<sup>23</sup> James R. Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity: Community and Theological Reflection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 22.

<sup>24</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 410.

<sup>25</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 103.

<sup>26</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 313.

study argues that Murrupula women have theological resources that they use in response to food insecurity, poverty and illness. These include women's faith, prayer and agricultural work, networking and fundraising groups. For Murrupula women, faith in the form of human capital and networks in the form of social capital are theological resources crucial for survival and well-being. The study argues that these theological resources indicate that these women live by theologies of *okhala*. The word *okhala* has a wider meaning than experiences of survival of women in *Makhuwa* society. The word *okhala* is used to describe the daily living conditions of people. *Okhala* means "life" or "to exist" as a process, and it describes people's daily courage and determination to confront and deal with all forms of oppression. The word *okhala* is used by *Makhuwa* people to describe their status of "being", as well as their continued existence, despite of lack of food and material deprivation. The word *okhala* also means "well-being". It is related to the word *okhalano* which means "to possess". It describes people's ability to work using the acquired knowledge and skills and through their labour acquire good output.<sup>27</sup> It also means the ownership of different types of resources that contribute to the household sustenance and well-being.

Theologically, the term *okhala* is used to describe women's reliance on God and their courage and determination to deal with food insecurity. Women entrust their daily lives and living conditions to God's care; a God who enables them to exploit available resources in the search for a quality life. Therefore, Murrupula women not only literally survive, but they have a desire to live a full quality of life despite food insecurity and poverty. It is a God of life who enables them to do this. The word *okhala* is used in this study to mean both terms life and well-being.

### **1.5 Outline of the study**

Chapter two discusses theoretical issues of food security, food insecurity and poverty. It briefly discusses the role of women in food security in developing countries and their access to resources. In addition, this chapter discusses the state of food security

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<sup>27</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha': Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique", p. 57.

in Mozambique. Furthermore, the role of Mozambican women in generating household food security is also discussed.

Chapter three introduces the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. Only two elements of the framework - including the livelihood assets and the vulnerability context - are discussed and used to examine the vulnerability context of Murrupula women.

Chapter four presents and examines the findings from the field work carried out with the ten women of the Union Baptist Church in Murrupula District, Nampula province, Mozambique.

Chapter five analyzes the theological resources that women possess and use to cope with food insecurity and poverty using Haddad's notion of "survival theologies." Furthermore, it discusses the importance of recovering subjugated knowledge of poor women. In an attempt to recover the subjugated knowledge of Murrupula women, it is argued in this chapter, that women live by theologies of *okhala*. This is shown through a definition of the term *okhala* followed by a brief discussion on emerging theologies of *okhala*.

Chapter six provides the conclusion of the study which includes the summary of the study and the reflection for future research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Women and food security in Mozambique**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the role that women play in food security. It presents the definitions of the terms food security and food insecurity. It examines the relationship between poverty and food security. It also discusses the role of women in food security in developing countries with the focus on the role that Mozambican rural women play in generating household food security. Finally, this chapter discusses the challenges that Mozambican women face in the agriculture sector, such as gender division of labour, limited access to productive resources, and particularly their access to land.

#### **2.2 Definition of the term food security**

According to the World Bank, food security is the “access by all people at all the time to enough food for an active, healthy life. Its essential elements are the availability of food and the ability to acquire it.”<sup>28</sup> In addition to food availability, accessibility and purchasing power, food security is also defined in “terms of resource distribution to produce food.”<sup>29</sup> From the perspective of the household, Maunder defines household food security as the

access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum (1) the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, and (2) an assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).<sup>30</sup>

Both definitions, food security and household food security, focus on the individual entitlement to food. The definitions include four elements of food security namely

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<sup>28</sup> World Bank, ‘Poverty and Hunger: Issues and Options for Food Security in Developing Countries’ (Washington: World Bank, 1986), p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> FAO, ‘FOCUS: Women and Food Security’, <http://www.fao.org/FOCUS/E/Women/Sustin-e.htm>. Accessed on 01/07/09.

<sup>30</sup> Eleni Maunder, ‘Nutrition, Human Rights and Food Security’, a Paper Presented at Food Security Workshop January 2008, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2007, p. 3.

food availability, sustainability, accessibility and utilization. Food availability is about the quantity and quality of food available, at all times at the household level. Food sustainability is the effectiveness of food distribution systems, people's access and utilization at all the times. Food accessibility is the ability to access enough, and nutritious, food acceptable to each cultural context, and access to the means of production by all including the most vulnerable groups.<sup>31</sup> Food utilization is the consumption of the food available and people's ability to take in nutrients effectively, including the use of clean water and adequate sanitation. Effective food utilization depends basically on knowledge within the household of food storage and processing methods, and basic principles of nutrition.<sup>32</sup> Food security is not just to have enough food but it is to have a variety of foods for an adequate dietary intake. According to PARPA II,

Food and nutritional security requires that all people have, at all times, physical and economic access to a sufficient quantity of safe, nutritive foodstuffs that are acceptable within a given cultural context in order to meet their nutritional needs and their food preferences, so that they can lead an active and healthy life.<sup>33</sup>

Inadequate dietary intake leads to inadequate maternal child-care and malnutrition, resulting in disease and death. Food security leads to nutritious security that leads to a healthy life. Food insecurity results in nutritious insecurity, according to Pinstrup-Andersen, that contributes to malnutrition.<sup>34</sup> The ability to acquire food is the major challenge that has not yet been effectively assured in developing countries. The poor are more vulnerable to food crisis as they “usually do not have adequate means to gain access to food in needed quantities.”<sup>35</sup> The persisting incidence of malnutrition within the households or communities is a signal that reflects the effects of food insecurity.

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<sup>31</sup> ‘Acção Brasileira Pela Nutrição e Direitos Humanos’, Unpublished Book, Brasil, No Date, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> William McLead Rivera, *Agricultural Extension, Rural Development and Food Security Challenge* (Rome: FAO, 2003), p. 31.

<sup>33</sup> PARPA II, ‘Republic of Mozambique: Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty 2006-2009 (final revision)’, Maputo 2006, p. 62.

<sup>34</sup> Per Pinstrup-Andersen et al, ‘A 2020 Vision for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment, in Southern Africa’, in Lawrence Haddad (ed), *Achieving Food Security in Southern Africa* (Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>35</sup> Pinstrup-Andersen, ‘A 2020 Vision for Food, Agriculture, and the Environment’, p. 17.

### 2.3 Definition of the term food insecurity

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food insecurity “exists when people lack secure access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active, healthy life.”<sup>36</sup> This definition states that food insecurity is not just a lack of staple food, but the lack of variety of foods to lead a healthy life. Food insecurity is a rural phenomenon<sup>37</sup> that affects many rural poor households.

The World Bank classifies food insecurity into two types: chronic food insecurity and transitory food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity exists when there is a continuously inadequate diet caused by the inability to acquire food. It affects the individuals and households that persistently lack the ability to produce their own food or buy sufficient food. Transitory food insecurity is when there is a temporary decline in a household’s access to sufficient food. It always results from instability in food production, food prices or household’s purchasing power. In its severest form produces famine.<sup>38</sup>

The above concepts are based on food entitlement. According to Sen, food entitlement refers to the command that individuals or households have over food. Sen argues that the centrality of the entitlement approach is that people do not necessarily go hungry due to an insufficient food supply, rather they are hungry because they cannot afford to buy food.<sup>39</sup> Food insecurity occurs in situations where food is available but not accessible because of an erosion of people’s entitlement to food.<sup>40</sup> The individuals and households’ entitlement to food is determined by their access over productive resources such as land and labour; the availability of and their ability to use

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<sup>36</sup> FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2008. Biofuels: Prospects, Risks and Opportunities*. (Rome: FAO 2008), p. 72.

<sup>37</sup> Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); James Roumasset, ‘Rural Food Security’, in Anthony H. Chisholm and, Rodney Tyers (eds), *Food Security: Theory, Policy, and Perspectives from Asia and the Pacific Rim* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1982).

<sup>38</sup> World Bank, ‘Poverty and Hunger’, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, p.162.

<sup>40</sup> J. Borton and J. Shoham, ‘Mapping Vulnerability to Food Insecurity: Tentative Guidelines for WFP Offices, Mimeo’, a Study Commissioned by the World Food Programme (London: Relief and Development Institute, 1991).

agricultural technology; and their ability to sell and buy food.<sup>41</sup> Deprivation from access to resources contributes to food insecurity. People who rely on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood are the most vulnerable group “because their entitlement to food derives from a single source (production) which is dependent on unreliable rainfall.”<sup>42</sup> Devies argues that households will have secure access to food if they have variable resources for acquiring food, produced or purchased, that do not contribute to environmental degradation.<sup>43</sup>

Food insecurity is the result of some factors which include war and political instability, inappropriate national policies, population growth, environmental degradation, poverty, inadequate agriculture, barriers to trade, poor health and gender inequality.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the unjust distribution of food and resources<sup>45</sup>, small farm size and the natural disasters such as floods, drought, fires and locusts are also the major contributors to food insecurity. HIV and AIDS constitute a major contributor to food insecurity. HIV affects and AIDS kills the most productive members of the household.<sup>46</sup> When people living with HIV “become ill they can no longer work.”<sup>47</sup> HIV prevents people “from engaging in productive activities, and forcing them to use the scarce resources available for medical care.”<sup>48</sup> HIV and AIDS also affect the whole household. Hendricks, referencing Piot and Pinstруп-Andersen, notes that households affected by HIV and AIDS “face increasing risk of food insecurity and malnutrition increase as sick family members cannot work, income decreases, health-care expenditures increase, care burdens increase and there is less time for caring for

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<sup>41</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), p. 162-163.

<sup>42</sup> Stephen Devereux, ‘Introduction: From “Old Famines” to “New Famines”’, in Stephen Devereux (ed), *The New Famines: Why Famines Persist in an Era of Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Susanna Davies et al, *Food Security and the Environment: Conflict or Complementarity?* IDS Discussion Paper (Brighton: Institute for Development Studies, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> Stover et al, ‘The Futures Group International Strategies for Enhancing Food Security’ (Washington: Government of the United States of America, 1997).

<sup>45</sup> Steve de Gruchy, ‘A Hunger for Justice’, <http://www.sorat.ukzn.ac.za/theology/development/cwm/13.pdf>. Accessed on 18/07/2009; Jan K. Black, *Development in Theory and Practice: Bridging the Gap* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1991).

<sup>46</sup> S. Kadiyala and S. Gillespie, *Rethinking Food Aid to Fight AIDS. Food Consumption and Nutrition Division Paper No. 159* (Washington DC: International Food Policy and Research Institute, 2003).

<sup>47</sup> H. C. Cawthra and Gerald Kraak, ‘Annual Review: The Voluntary Sector and Development in South Africa 1997/98. Quarterly Journal of the South African National NGO Coalition and INTERFUND’, *Development Update* 2 (May 1999), p. 76.

<sup>48</sup> CEDAW, ‘Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique’, p. 41.

children.”<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, “AIDS diminishes investment in agriculture. It strips households of assets: families are forced to sell off what little they have to pay medical and funeral expenses or simply to survive.”<sup>50</sup> In addition to political factors, natural and health issues, the main problem of food security, according to definitions above, is the economic factor whereby poor households and individuals have the inability to buy sufficient nutritious food. The lack of food security, hunger and malnutrition in Africa and particularly within Southern African countries are directly linked to poverty.<sup>51</sup> Poor people have few resources that enable them to acquire food.

## 2.4 Poverty and food security

Poverty is one of the main factors that contribute to food insecurity. According to the World Bank about “1.4 billion people in the developing world (one in four) were living on less than US\$1.25 a day in 2005.”<sup>52</sup> In 2009, FAO estimated that over one billion people worldwide are suffering from hunger, malnutrition and poverty.<sup>53</sup> Poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon.<sup>54</sup> About 75% of the poor live in rural areas in developing countries and rely on agriculture for food and livelihood. They are concentrated in rural areas of East-Central India, North-East Brazil, North-Western Mozambique and North-Western China.<sup>55</sup> The poor are the most vulnerable group to food insecurity<sup>56</sup> “because their entitlement to food derives from a single source (production) which is dependent on unreliable rainfall.”<sup>57</sup> The poor usually do not have adequate means to gain access to sufficient food. According to Dhilwayo,

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<sup>49</sup> Sheryl L. Hendriks, ‘The Challenges Facing Empirical Estimation of Household Food (in) security in South Africa’, *Development Southern Africa* 22 (March 2005), p. 117.

<sup>50</sup> George McGovern et al, *Ending Hunger Now: A Challenge to the Persons of Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Cleophas Lado, ‘Environmental and Socio-Economic Factors Behind Food Security Policy Strategies in Botswana’, *Development Southern Africa* 18 (June 2001), p. 143.

<sup>52</sup> World Bank, ‘World Bank Updates Poverty Estimates for the Developing World’, 2008. <http://go.worldbank.org/C9GR27WRJ0>. Accessed on 18/10/2009.

<sup>53</sup> FAO, ‘The State of Food Insecurity in the World: Economic Crises – Impacts and Lessons Learned’, Rome, 2009, <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/i0876e/i0876e.pdf>. Accessed on 08/12/2009.

<sup>54</sup> World Bank, *World Bank Development Report* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1989).

<sup>55</sup> Uwe Kracht, ‘Whose Right to Food? Vulnerable Groups and the Hungry Poor’, in Wenche B. Eide and Uwe Kracht (eds), *Food and Human Rights in Development* 1 (Oxford: Intersentia, 2005), p. 125-126.

<sup>56</sup> Mehra and Rojas, *A Significant Shift*, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Devereux, ‘Introduction: From “Old Famines” to “New Famines”’, 2007, p. 6.

The level of poverty is determined by a number of factors namely; lack of access to the basic agricultural resources - land and livestock; lack of access to a reasonable and regular income. For those with access to land, the level of income they can derive from that land is also determined by the size of the land *vis-à-vis* the size of the household, the availability of labour to operate the land, access to basic agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, improved seeds and credit, access to training and extension services and the capacity of the farmer to transport and market his/her produce.<sup>58</sup>

Factors that contribute to poverty are the same factors lying behind food insecurity. Amongst the poor, female-headed households are the most vulnerable group to poverty and food insecurity than male-headed households. According to FAO, “in almost all countries female-headed households are concentrated among the poorer strata of society and often have lower incomes than male-headed households.”<sup>59</sup> Poor households rely primarily on the food they produce for their survival. They have few assets and their entitlements often get eroded.<sup>60</sup> The poor are unable to cope with shocks and stress.

## **2.5 Women and food security in developing countries**

Women in developing countries play a fundamental role in food production generating household food security.<sup>61</sup> According to Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO), rural women produce 60% and 80% of the food in developing countries.<sup>62</sup> In Sub-Saharan Africa, women produce 80% of the household food.<sup>63</sup> The majority of women food producers live in rural developing countries particularly in rural African countries. Within the agricultural sector, there is inequality in the division of labour in many African rural households.

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<sup>58</sup> K. J. M. Dhillwayo, ‘National Food Security Policies and Challenges: SADCC Countries’ Experiences’, in Mandivamba Rukuni (eds), *Food Security Policies in the SADCC Region* (Harare: UZ/MSU Food Security Research in Southern Africa Project, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>59</sup> FAO, ‘FOCUS: Women and Food Security’.

<sup>60</sup> Rivera, *Agricultural Extension, Rural Development and Food Security Challenge*, p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Women: The Key to Food Security; Looking into the Household’, <http://www.ifpri.org/pubs/ib/ib3.pdf>. Accessed on 01/09/2009.

<sup>62</sup> FAO, ‘FOCUS: Women and Food Security’.

<sup>63</sup> Raana Haider, *Gender and Development* (Cairo: American University Press, 1996), p. 135.

Moser notes that in African rural areas and particularly in agricultural production, gender division of labour is more visible.<sup>64</sup> Although it is believed that men play a predominant role in food production and food provision for the household, in reality this is not the case. Moser argues that men produce cash crops while women produce food crops for the household consumption without cash returns.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, Moser argues that in most rural communities, many economic activities of women are not visible and remunerable, but they are what sustain their families. In cases where women have access to land separately from their husbands, they work in their own fields and they also work in their husband's fields carrying out the tasks of hoeing, planting, weeding,<sup>66</sup> harvesting and storing the crop<sup>67</sup> while men are responsible for land clearing, burning and ploughing.<sup>68</sup> Women also work in other people's fields, "as wage labourers, most frequently seasonally, to supplement household income."<sup>69</sup> They produce food for the household and together with their husbands work on cash crops fields. According to World Bank, women also contribute to household food security by growing secondary crops such as legumes and vegetables in home gardens. These crops provide essential nutrients and are always the only food available in times of food shortage.<sup>70</sup>

Besides the existing gender division of labour in food production, there is also inequality in gender complementary tasks in household food security. Women's "obligations are more time-consuming than men's."<sup>71</sup> In almost all societies, women tend to work many more hours than men. The difference in workload is more visible for rural women. In addition to their involvement in every stage of food production, preparation and processing, women fulfil their fundamental role of nurturing and caring for children and the elderly members of the household.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Caroline O. N. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training* (London: Routledge, 1993).

<sup>65</sup> Moser, *Gender Planning and Development*, p. 33; Haider, *Gender and Development*, p. 137.

<sup>66</sup> Moser, *Gender Planning and Development*, p. 33.

<sup>67</sup> Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1970), p. 17.

<sup>68</sup> FAO, 'FOCUS: Women and Food Security'.

<sup>69</sup> Moser, *Gender Planning and Development*, p. 33.

<sup>70</sup> World Bank, 'Food and Agriculture Organization and International Fund for Agricultural Development', *Gender in agriculture: sourcebook* (World Bank: Washington, 2009), p. 522.

<sup>71</sup> James Price Gittinger, *Household Food Security and the Role of Women*, World Bank Discussion Paper No. 96 (Washington DC: World Bank, 1990).

<sup>72</sup> FAO, 'Gender and Food Security Division of Labour', <http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/lab-e.htm>. Accessed on 10/09/2008.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the workload of women, particularly of female-headed households, is increasing due to the lack of employment and other income generating opportunities that lead to seasonal or permanent emigration of men. With the absence of male labour, women with an expanded workload rely on child labour. This has implications on women's well-being and child development.<sup>73</sup> Female-headed households tend to be poorer, own less land, less labour and credit.<sup>74</sup> They are more vulnerable to stress than are better off households, and begin to suffer earlier with the incidents of food shortages.<sup>75</sup> In order to survive, female-headed households resort early to selling off livestock, selling labour and borrowing grain.<sup>76</sup> Their situation is worsened due to their lack of access to resources.

According to FAO, in most developing countries, women's access to productive resources is limited due to cultural, traditional and sociological factors. Although women are the mainstays of small-scale agriculture, the farm labour force and household survival, they have more difficulties than men do in gaining access to productive resources such as land, credit, agricultural inputs and services. Land reform programs give land rights to males as head of the households, ignoring the existence of female-headed households and the rights of married women to a joint share.<sup>77</sup> In cases where women have access to land for farming, it is often poor land and with no means to increase productivity. Women's access to agricultural inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers and pesticides is limited because they are frequently not reached by extension services. Although "the majority of African farmers are women, the majority of agricultural extension workers are men and trained to work with men."<sup>78</sup> According to Boserup the agricultural technology has benefited men rather than women. The resources necessary for increasing productivity are always exploited by men, leaving women reliant on physical labour.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> FAO, 'Gender and Food Security Division of Labour'.

<sup>74</sup> Sandra Rosenhouse, *Identifying the Poor: Is "Headship" a Useful Concept? Living Standards Measurement Study* (Working Paper No 58. Washington: World Bank, 1998).

<sup>75</sup> T. R. Frankenberger and D. M. Goldstein, 'Food Security, Coping Strategies and Environmental Degradation', *Arid Lands Newsletter* 30, Office of Arid Lands Studies, University of Arizona, Tucson, 1990.

<sup>76</sup> M. Watts, 'Coping with the Market: Uncertainty and Food Security Among Hausa Peasants', in, I. de Garine and G. A. Harrison (eds) *Coping with Uncertainty in Food Supply* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

<sup>77</sup> FAO, 'FOCUS: Women and Food Security'.

<sup>78</sup> Haider, *Gender and Development*, p. 137.

<sup>79</sup> Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*; Haider, *Gender and Development*, p. 137.

Furthermore, women often lack cash income to purchase agricultural inputs and meet other household needs. In order to achieve household food security, it is necessary that there should be gender equality in the access to resources to produce food, and purchasing power to buy food where is not produced. In research done in Africa, Asia and Latin America, it was found that improvements in household food security and nutrition are associated with the access of women to income and the role they play in household decisions on expenditure. It was also found that women tend to spend a significantly higher amount of their income than men on food for the household subsistence, school fees and health care.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, agricultural investments to improve food security are practically directed to male small farmers producing cash crops, rather than women producing subsistence crops. Inequality in gender division of labour and access to productive resources within the agriculture sector and household contribute to the vulnerability of women to food insecurity and health problems, such as malnutrition and illness. This is the case with Mozambique, one of the poorest of the developing countries, as it is discussed below.

## **2.6 The state of food security in Mozambique**

Mozambique is rich in natural resources such as arable land and water. Mozambique has a total land area of “78m.ha, of which 36m.ha is considered arable. At present only 5% of arable land is cultivated.”<sup>81</sup> The estimated population of Mozambique by early 2007 was 18 million inhabitants. Of this number, 80% live in rural areas and agriculture is their main source of livelihood.<sup>82</sup> Two thirds of rural population, mostly women and children, live in absolute poverty.<sup>83</sup> About 85% of peasants are women, having agriculture as their main source for household sustenance.<sup>84</sup> According to George, the main cash crops produced are cotton, cashew nuts, sugar cane and tobacco. Prawns are the principal agricultural export earner that contributes to the country with 4.4% of export earnings. Cassava is the main food crop produced in

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<sup>80</sup> FAO, ‘FOCUS: Women and Food Security’.

<sup>81</sup> Edward George, ‘Mozambique: Economy’, in Ian Frame (ed), *Africa South of Sahara 2010*, 39<sup>th</sup> Edition (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 841.

<sup>82</sup> CEDAW, ‘Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique’, p. 43.

<sup>83</sup> CEDAW, ‘Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique’, p. 43.

<sup>84</sup> CEDAW, ‘Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique’, p. 43.

Mozambique. Other crops include maize, rice, coconuts, bananas and sisal.<sup>85</sup> The production of livestock is very poor due to the prevalence of the tsetse fly over two-thirds of the country.<sup>86</sup> Despite the country being rich in natural resources, particularly arable land, its population remains poor, and always experiencing food crisis.

Mozambique has a high prevalence of vulnerability to chronic and transitory food insecurity. The most vulnerable households to chronic food insecurity are localized in the northern and central parts of the country. The highest prevalence of households non-vulnerable to food insecurity is found in the southern region. While the southern region has high levels of transitory food insecurity, the northern region of Nampula and Zambezia provinces have high transitory food insecurity households among chronically insecure ones.<sup>87</sup> The prevalence of vulnerability to food insecurity in Mozambique is “34.8% of households, where 20.3% are classified as highly vulnerable and 14.5% are classified as very highly vulnerable.”<sup>88</sup>

The causes lying behind food crisis in Mozambique include political factors, for instance, the war that ended in 1992, which destroyed social infrastructure particularly in the rural areas. Other factors include natural disasters such as drought, floods and cyclones. The severest drought affected the country during the periods 1982-1984 and 1986-1987.<sup>89</sup> It is estimated that in 2002 and in 2003 about 500,000 people and 949,000 people respectively, were affected by drought and were in need of food aid. In 2005 a severe drought in the south affected the crop and left about 500,000 people food insecure.<sup>90</sup> The floods of 2000 seriously affected the country, displacing many people and damaging the country’s infrastructures,<sup>91</sup> crops and livestock.<sup>92</sup> Mozambique was again affected by floods and cyclone in 2007 and 2008 that destroyed crops and displaced people.<sup>93</sup> Despite the fact that in 2005-2006 the agricultural sector had an increase of 10.5% cereal production, the cereal output fell to

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<sup>85</sup> Edward George, ‘Mozambique: Economy’, in Iain Frame (ed), *Africa South of the Sahara 2009: 38<sup>th</sup> Edition* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 799.

<sup>86</sup> George, ‘Mozambique: Economy’, 2009, p. 800-801.

<sup>87</sup> SETSAN, ‘Baseline Survey of Food Security’, p. 113.

<sup>88</sup> SETSAN, ‘Baseline Survey of Food Security’ p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Rene Pelissier, ‘Mozambique: Physical and Social Geography’, 2009, p. 792.

<sup>90</sup> George, ‘Mozambique: Economy’, 2009, p. 801.

<sup>91</sup> Pelissier, ‘Mozambique: Physical and Social Geography’, 2009, p. 792.

<sup>92</sup> George, ‘Mozambique: Economy’, 2009, p. 799.

<sup>93</sup> George, ‘Mozambique: Economy’, 2009, p. 789.

1.9m. tons in 2007 before recovering to 2.6m. tons in 2008. The decline of cereal production forced the government to import 1.25m. tons of cereals in 2008 to meet domestic food demand and provide emergency food aid to 150,000 Mozambicans affected by flood.<sup>94</sup> Other factors that contribute to food insecurity include the exacerbating high levels of poverty mostly in rural areas,<sup>95</sup> crop failure, poor soil fertility and the instability of food prices.<sup>96</sup> In addition, health issues such as HIV and AIDS, malaria, diarrhoeas, cholera and leprosy erode the coping ability of the households and individuals.

## **2.7 Women and food security in Mozambique**

In Mozambique, women play a crucial role in food security. Of 80% of population, 90.9% are women relying on agriculture as their main source of livelihoods.<sup>97</sup> Both urban and rural women play a crucial role in generating household food security. Urban women cultivate gardens where they produce food crops to supplement household food security.<sup>98</sup> Rural women are responsible for household food production for the survival of the family<sup>99</sup> and some of them also produce cash crops. However, their role in food security is hindered due to gender division of labour and limited access to productive resources.

### **2.7.1 Gendered division of labour**

Women play an important role in food production. Women's role in agriculture varies from place to place. In Mozambique where 80% of population relies on agriculture, both men and women are active in food production. However, there is a gender division of labour in agricultural work. According to *Food Security Support and Gender Entrepreneurship Development Pilot Project* report,

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<sup>94</sup> George, 'Mozambique: Economy', 2009, p. 801.

<sup>95</sup> Joseph Hanlon, 'Renewed Land Debate and the 'Cargo Cult in Mozambique'', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 30 (September 2004), p. 604.

<sup>96</sup> FEWS NET, 'Mozambique Food Security Update, June 2008'.

<sup>97</sup> UNDP, 'National Human Development Report 2001', p. 81.

<sup>98</sup> Kathleen Sheldon, 'Machambas in the City: Urban Women and Agricultural Work in Mozambique', 1999.

<sup>99</sup> IFAD, 'Rural Poverty in Mozambique',

<http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/home/tags/mozambique>. Accessed on 08/12/2009.

In agriculture, women are mainly engaged in food-crop farming and are mainly responsible for household food security and well-being. On the other hand, men tend to be engaged in cash-crop farming and non-agriculture employment which also increases their migration patterns (in search for employment opportunities in the main cities and neighbouring countries) leaving the women, children, the sick and elderly in the villages. As a consequence, women's work load has dramatically increased in the past few years.<sup>100</sup>

In food production, as has been mentioned above, men are mainly responsible for clearing and ploughing the land while women play a major role in sowing, weeding, food processing and preparation. In some places within the country, both men and women take part in land preparation and harvesting. In animal husbandry, men are responsible for large livestock - for instance cattle - while women care for the small livestock such as goats, pigs, sheep and poultry. Women also take care of all livestock by providing water, food and cleaning the stalls. In fishing, men take tasks in off-shore fishing and women fish in the rivers. In addition, women undertake tasks of collecting food and firewood from the forests.<sup>101</sup> As in other developing countries, women, in addition to agricultural production work, also play other roles as mothers and housekeepers.<sup>102</sup> Due to many responsibilities that women have, their work is more time consuming than men's work. This situation is exacerbated by women's lack of access to resources that would lessen their work and time.

### **2.7.2 Women's access to resources**

The role of women in agriculture is "characterized by low productivity and concentration on subsistence agriculture for household consumption."<sup>103</sup> This fact is exacerbated by women's lack of access to the means of production such as land,<sup>104</sup> labour, enhanced agricultural tools and techniques, seeds, irrigation facilities, credit

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<sup>100</sup> Agriculture and Rural Development Department, 'Women's Entrepreneurship and Skills Development for Food Security: Pilot Project', Mozambique, 2005, <http://www.afdb.org/pls/portal/url/ITEM/0BAODD6088265A32E040C00A0C3D1DFC>. Accessed on 03/06/2009.

<sup>101</sup> Edda Van den Berg-Collier, 'Gender Profile in Mozambique: Analysis and Action Plan for the New Strategy Period 2004-2010', p. 15.

<sup>102</sup> Haider, *Gender and Development*, p. 136.

<sup>103</sup> Berg-Collier, 'Gender Profile in Mozambique', p. 16.

<sup>104</sup> In the case where women have access to land this is limited given that they hold small size of land and in many cases with poor soils for agricultural purposes.

and extension services. Women's low productivity is also aggravated by their limited access to adequate infrastructures such as roads, communication and transport. Women produce food crops such as cassava, groundnuts, beans and vegetables. According to USAID's report on gender analysis it states that,

Apart from producing food stuffs, women also contribute to household food security as wage earners earning an income to purchase food. In this respect it is noted that when women have direct control over income they tend to spend it on the family and prioritize improved nutritional security of children and elderly dependents.<sup>105</sup>

Women in rural areas face the challenges of food insecurity. They have a lack of access to enough nutritious food to feed the household members all the time. Their lack of nutritious food leaves the household members, particularly women and children, in a critical health condition of undernourishment and vulnerability to diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, cholera and HIV and AIDS. Women also have limited access to independent assets to diversify their coping strategies. This situation is more visible in the northern part of Mozambique where women "do not have direct access to assets. Although traditionally the north is matrilineal society, property passes through the male on the female side of the family."<sup>106</sup> Gender inequality in distribution of productive resources remains visible in rural areas of Mozambique where the majority of rural women have low level of literacy, lack of employment opportunities, lack of access to information,<sup>107</sup> lack of time and mobility due to their reproductive and family well-being responsibilities. The right of access to productive resources is given to men considered to be the head of households.<sup>108</sup> Women in relation to men continue to have limited access to the means of production.

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<sup>105</sup> Berg-Collier, 'Gender Profile in Mozambique', p. 15.

<sup>106</sup> Agriculture and Rural Development Department, 'Women's Entrepreneurship and Skills Development for Food Security'.

<sup>107</sup> CEDAW, 'Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique', p. 44.

<sup>108</sup> Mahumane, *Household Food Security*, p. 76.

### 2.7.3 Women and land

In Africa, land has a great significance. It provides both spiritual and physical nourishment to the well-being of humanity.<sup>109</sup> Land is associated with female human fertility. As women's fertility enables them to reproduce children, the fertility of land provides good productivity. Traditionally, in some places of Africa, people perform rituals for the earth at the planting period to ensure the fertility of crops. Other people pray to "Mother Earth" in the beginning of every agricultural season, asking her permission to be cultivated for the people's subsistence.<sup>110</sup> Most of the rituals are performed by women, particularly the lineage queens who have "the powers to heal the land and to oversee its fertility, and the fertility of the community through female initiation rites and other healing practices."<sup>111</sup> Land, for women and particularly rural women, is an important source to their livelihood and survival.

In Mozambique's context of subsistence agriculture, women, land and food are clearly connected. Rural women, especially mothers and grandmothers, are related to land due to their responsibility in feeding the offspring. Women are allocated land by their mothers or family line members in order to cultivate it with the purpose to maintain the survival of their children.<sup>112</sup> Although women are regarded as connected to land more than men are, they face discrimination in land distribution. This factor is attributed to the Portuguese colonizers' policies and to the teachings of Christianity that have disempowered women in land access. In order to understand this factor, it is important to briefly discuss land allocation in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial period.

The first people who inhabited in the northern Mozambique were Bantu. They were farmers and ironworkers.<sup>113</sup> For Bantu people, land was their main livelihood asset.

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<sup>109</sup> Jean Davison (ed), *Agriculture, Women and Land: The African Experience* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p. 15.

<sup>110</sup> Davison, *Agriculture, Women and Land: The African Experience*, p. 16.

<sup>111</sup> Liazzat Bonate, 'The Women and Land Studies: Women's Land Rights in Mozambique: Cultural, Legal and Social Contexts', in L. Muthoni Wanyeki, *Women and Land in Africa: Culture, Religion and Realizing Women's Rights* (London: Zed Books, 2003), p. 102.

<sup>112</sup> Signe Arnfred, 'Sex, Food and Female Power: Discussion of Data Material from Northern Mozambique', in *Sexualities* 10(2) (Uppsala: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 146.

<sup>113</sup> Republic of Mozambique profile July 1996.

<http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/bgnotes/af/mozambique9607.html>, Accessed on 11/10/2007

Traditionally, indigenous people had access to land use through occupation. Land was a collective property whereby its allocation within the tribe or social organization depended on the needs of each family.<sup>114</sup> In matrilineal societies, women inherited land from their mothers which they used with their husbands.<sup>115</sup>

With the coming of the Portuguese colonizers and Christianity, the sustainability of traditional structure of Mozambican indigenous' way of life was broken. Tique argues that during the Portuguese colonial period the colonizers ignored the customary system of access to land and rather introduced a legal system of access to land that served their own interests. As a result the colonial government had access to the most fertile land.<sup>116</sup> Tique also notes that in the 1950s, the colonial government created an incentive policy to attract colonial Portuguese settlers to Mozambique who then dispossessed large portions of fertile land from indigenous people to create their own agricultural estates.<sup>117</sup> Approximately 2000 indigenous families were forced to leave their ancestral land in Limpopo Valley in the south of the country.<sup>118</sup> In the northern part of Mozambique "(a)lmost all-productive farm land was diverted to cotton and sisal production."<sup>119</sup> The indigenous people, both men and women, were used as forced labour to produce cotton not only in the colonizers' fields but in their own fields used for food crop production.<sup>120</sup> This means that indigenous people had access to the poor land for their own subsistence farming.

When Mozambique became independent in 1975, all land was nationalized. The land law stated that all land belonged to the state and that it could not be sold.<sup>121</sup> Mozambique's government introduced socialism in the agriculture sector. Abandoned agricultural states of the Portuguese colonizers were transformed into communal

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<sup>114</sup> Cesar A. Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts', 2002. [http://www.sarpn.org.za/EventPapers/mozambique\\_april2002/tique/rural\\_land\\_markets.pdf](http://www.sarpn.org.za/EventPapers/mozambique_april2002/tique/rural_land_markets.pdf). Accessed on 13/10/2009.

<sup>115</sup> Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi* (Blantyre: Christian Literature Association in Malawi, 1997), p. 22.

<sup>116</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>117</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>118</sup> Kenneth Hermele, *Land Struggles and Social Differentiation in Southern Mozambique: A Case Study of Chokwe, Limpopo 1950-1987* (Uppsala: The Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1988), p. 38.

<sup>119</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>120</sup> Allen Isaacman and Jean Hay, *Cotton is the Mother of Poverty: Peasants, Work, and Rural Struggle in Colonial Mozambique, 1938-1961* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1996), p. 52-53.

<sup>121</sup> Hanlon, 'Renewed Land Debate and the "Cargo Cult in Mozambique"', p. 603.

farming for indigenous people to work, together with the view of ensuring their communities with food.<sup>122</sup> Although indigenous people had access to communal lands, these still belonged to the government. This policy was against the expectation on indigenous people who had the hope of gaining their land back that was dispossessed by the colonizers, after independence.<sup>123</sup> In 1997, a new land law was implemented reaffirming the state ownership of land, but acknowledged that everyone, men and women as individuals, had the right to own land.<sup>124</sup> Although the law recognizes women's rights of access to and use of land, "these rights are systematically being left aside during the process of land titling."<sup>125</sup> Women, particularly poor women, are left with limited access to and use of land.

In Mozambique, there are two main land tenure systems that give both men and women rights of access to land, namely, legal and customary systems. In general, private sectors use the legal system to gain access and rights to land, and the family sector exploits the customary law.<sup>126</sup> The latter is explored with the purpose to understand ways in which rural people, particularly women, have access to land. The customary law (community tenure rights) has been shaped by "different socio-economic and political processes occurred since the pre-colonial and the colonial Portuguese penetration in Mozambique to the post-independence period."<sup>127</sup> The customary system continues to be more practical in the rural areas of Mozambique. Within the traditional land tenure system, land belongs to the group, community lineage, families or individuals and it is not a tradable asset.<sup>128</sup> The customary tenure system is divided into two systems, the patrilineal and the matrilineal kinship.

The patrilineal system is more practiced in the centre and south of Mozambique. According to Phiri, "patrilineal societies trace descent through the father."<sup>129</sup> Within

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<sup>122</sup> Allen Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, *Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), p. 148.

<sup>123</sup> Hermele, *Land Struggles and Social Differentiation in Southern Mozambique*, p. 47-49.

<sup>124</sup> Amade Sucá, 'Land reform in SADC Region - Mozambique Land Reform and Poverty Alleviation', a Paper Presented at the SARP Conference on Land Reform and Poverty Alleviation in Southern Africa held at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Pretoria, June 2001.

<sup>125</sup> CEDAW, 'Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique', p. 44.

<sup>126</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>127</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>128</sup> John M. Erskine, *Ecology and Land Usage in Southern Africa: A Survey of Present - day Ties, Problems and Opportunities* (Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa, 1987), p. 19.

<sup>129</sup> Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p.12.

the patrilineal system land is inherited through the male line (through father to son). Women do not have the right to inherit land given that after marrying, they will leave the family and then have the right to use their husbands' land.<sup>130</sup> As long as they are married, the right of women to use their husband's family land is safeguarded. After divorce or widowhood, the women lose their right to use their husband's land, leading them to land tenure insecurity.

The matrilineal system is practiced in the northern part of Mozambique. Matrilineal societies trace descent through the mother.<sup>131</sup> Within matrilineal system land is inherited through the female line (through mother to daughter). Women have access to and use of land through inheritance from their mothers' family line.<sup>132</sup> From their young age (married teenagers), women are allocated small plots of land for subsistence agriculture. A study done by Phiri and Mbanjo-Moyo among matrilineal Chewa, Mang'anja and Yao people of Malawi is of consideration as matrilineal societies found in Malawi and in Mozambique have cultural similarities. Phiri and Mbanjo-Moyo point out that within matrilineal societies, after a woman is married, the couple is given a portion of land by the wife's mother or uncle to build a house on and for family subsistence.<sup>133</sup> This is the same case with the customary system still practiced in rural areas of Mozambique. Within the matrilineal system, the right of women, particularly married women, to use land, is protected due to their responsibility in generating food for the household consumption. Husbands join their wives in using their wives' family land.<sup>134</sup> Upon divorce or becoming widowed, the husband loses his right to use the land. However, it must be noted that the right of women to use land does not translate into their rights to hold land titles, given that within traditional land tenure, land cannot be alienated and it cannot be sold because it belongs to the group, the extended family. Women's lack of access to independent assets such as land titles leads them to land tenure insecurity.

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<sup>130</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>131</sup> Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p.12.

<sup>132</sup> Bonate, 'The Women and Land Studies', p. 106.

<sup>133</sup> Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p.37-38; Fulata L. Mbanjo-Moyo, 'A Quest for Women's Sexual Empowerment through Education in HIV and AIDS Context', Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2009, p.114.

<sup>134</sup> Arlindo Chilundo et al, 'Research report 6: Land Registration in Nampula and Zambezia Provinces, Mozambique', (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 2005), p. 16.

Besides inheritance, there are other ways that rural women (especially foreigners) can access land, namely through purchasing, occupation, and renting. According to Tique, land is purchased directly from local people, or from local official or traditional authorities or both the entities. He notes that land is bought or sold without community leaders' knowledge and the process of selling and buying land from local people is secretive because of the law that does not allow this practice.<sup>135</sup> However, land access through purchasing is often exploited by men who are engaged in economic activities, because they have the ability to buy land. Women are unable to access land through purchasing because of their lack of finances. People, particularly women foreigners in the area, have access to land through requesting from local authorities to buy and use an unoccupied land they have identified or to borrow land from local people.

Occupation of virgin lands is a common way that local peasants gain access to land, with the purpose to increase the available land for family subsistence and to cultivate cash crops to generate income.<sup>136</sup> When a peasant wants a piece of land for use, he or she will identify through the local community a forest that is not occupied, clear and use it for farming. The right of occupation of virgin lands in accordance with customary norms and practices is recognized and protected by the law. The law gives right of occupation to land to nationals who have stayed, and with good purposes, used the land for more than ten years.<sup>137</sup> It also seeks to protect the rights of local people using land without having land title. The aim of the government is to provide equal opportunities of access of local communities and peasants to land.<sup>138</sup> However, land access through occupation of virgin lands is largely exploited by men. In many cases, cleared new land is used to produce cash crops. Often married women use these lands together with their husbands. But upon divorce, the husband continues using the land while the wife loses her right of access. Upon becoming widowed, the woman often loses her right to use land in favour of the deceased husband's family.<sup>139</sup> Women, as individuals, have difficulties in their access to virgin lands or forests due

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<sup>135</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>136</sup> Bonate, 'The Women and Land Studies', p. 107.

<sup>137</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>138</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>139</sup> Bonate, 'The Women and Land Studies', p. 123.

to their lack of resources such as labour, money to hire labour and machinery to clear the land.<sup>140</sup>

Women foreigners have access to land by borrowing from relatives, friends or local people.<sup>141</sup> For instance, the elders who are unable to use their land allocate it to people needing to use it. This process occurs within the same family lineage or community without involving community leaders.<sup>142</sup> However, women who have access to rented lands have insecure land tenure. Insecure land tenure deprives women's of their role in achieving sustainable household food security. Furthermore, women without land title lack identity, ownership, and they are socially and economically insecure. Rented lands cannot provide economic security (food, income) in the long term. In a rented land, trees and long-term crops cannot be planted.<sup>143</sup> This is because the owners can claim their land back at any time.

#### **2.7.4 Gender inequality in land distribution**

In some areas within the country, land rights based on traditional custom have shifted from traditional extended family land ownership to individual land ownership. When land is used according to the family regime, 75% of men take the responsibility for the family land.<sup>144</sup> In both matrilineal and patrilineal lineages, women have access to land through men, husbands and male relatives.<sup>145</sup> Land is allocated to men considered to be the head of the household. By giving the land title to men, as the head of the households, they become beneficiaries of land rights rather than women.<sup>146</sup> In land distribution, women face discrimination. The majority of women do not have land title deeds. Furthermore, in many cases, women as individuals also

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<sup>140</sup> Bonate, 'The Women and Land Studies', p. 107-108.

<sup>141</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'; also see section 4.4.3.

<sup>142</sup> Tique, 'Rural Land Markets in Mozambique, its Impact on Land Conflicts'.

<sup>143</sup> Bonate, 'The Women and Land Studies', p. 109.

<sup>144</sup> MAE, 'Perfil do Distrito de Murrupula: Provincia de Nampula: Edição 2005', Moçambique, p. 25, [www.undp.org/mz/en/content/download/652/2826/file/Murrupula.pdf](http://www.undp.org/mz/en/content/download/652/2826/file/Murrupula.pdf). Accessed on 10/07/2009.

<sup>145</sup> Sally Baden, 'Post-Conflict Mozambique: Women's Special Situation, Population Issues and Gender Perspectives: to be Integrated into Skills Training and Employment Promotion', 1997, <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/R44%20Pc%20Moz%20c.doc>. Accessed on 20/06/09.

<sup>146</sup> Claire Whittemore, *Land for People: Land Tenure and the Very Poor* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1981), p 27.

do not own land due to their lack of knowledge about their legal rights.<sup>147</sup> Concurring with this view, Waterhouse argues that,

...most rural women are ignorant, or make little use, of their formal land rights. Even when the national peasants' organisations, like UNAC, and other NGOs are able to carry this message to them, most towns, let alone villages, have no functioning court or tribunal. Local justice is usually meted out according to a mixture of formal law and custom, by male elders, traditional leaders, FRELIMO party secretaries or religious leaders, all of whom are almost exclusively male.<sup>148</sup>

Women's ignorance is aggravated by their illiteracy, and their lack of inclusion in community leadership and development. The dominance of male leadership, influenced by patriarchal ideologies in the government and community development programmes, hinder women from accessing resources to generate household food security. Women have limited "direct contact with representatives of the state and NGOs"<sup>149</sup> because these representatives work through traditional leaders mainly represented by men. This indicates that women have little to say in the community decision making. Besides land, women also have limited access to the means of production such as credit, seeds, labour, fertilizers and irrigation systems. They depend on favourable rainfall for irrigation.<sup>150</sup> Divorced women and widows are the most vulnerable groups, and they face intentional discrimination in the distribution of land. This gender inequality limits peasant women in the capacity to diversify and secure their livelihoods. Women's discrimination in the process of land distribution constrains their role in generating food, thus contributing to the prevalence of food insecurity at the household level.

Women's limited access to resources and opportunities to diversify their coping strategies contribute to their continuous economic dependence on men. According to Pontara, women, particularly *Makhuwa* women, are economically dependent on their husbands for income. Additionally, she argues that,

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<sup>147</sup> CEDAW, 'Stage of Implementation of CEDAW in Mozambique', p. 44.

<sup>148</sup> Rachel Waterhouse, 'Women's Land Rights in Post-War Mozambique', a Paper Presented at the Inter-Regional Consultation in Kigali, Rwanda, February 1988, <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/learning/landrights/downloads/mozwomen.rtf>. Accessed on 01/06/2009.

<sup>149</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique', p. 49.

<sup>150</sup> World Vision Mozambique, 'Nihessiu Area Development Program Profile'.

In rural areas women bear a heavier burden for agricultural production, but have very little decision-making responsibility about what is planted, when it should be planted, when it is harvested and to whom the crop should be sold. Although women are often accorded the responsibility of watching over savings, they are normally not accorded any rights over its disposal. The greatest hurdle to greater economic independence is the subordinate role of Makua women in economic production.<sup>151</sup>

Furthermore, de Vletter argues that although the *Makhuwa* people are of matrilineal lineage, “matrilineality only confers greater power of the spiritual/ceremonial sort on women while economic power remains firmly in the hands of men who are very averse to sharing this power with women.”<sup>152</sup> Gender inequality in land distribution undermines the role of women in food security and therefore they become marginalized and vulnerable.

## 2.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the role that women in developing countries, particularly in rural Mozambique, play in generating household food security. It has argued that women are the main household food producers. However, women face barriers that hinder them from generating sufficient food for household consumption. These barriers include gender division of labour, and limited access to productive resources. Further, where there is access to land, there is gender inequality in land distribution. This chapter discussed how gender division of labour in agricultural work contributes to women’s bad performance and low productivity. Women have more work than men do. Besides being household food producers, women have other responsibilities including their role as mothers and housekeepers. Due to many responsibilities, women are not able to generate sufficient food for the household consumption. Furthermore, women have limited access to productive resources such as land, credit, labour and enhanced agricultural techniques. Although in rural Mozambique land can be accessed through inheritance, purchasing, occupation and borrowing, women as individuals are unable to own land within customary law, to purchase or to occupy, to

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<sup>151</sup> Horne referenced by Nicola Pontara, ‘Gender and Poverty in Mozambique: A Review of Empirical Literature’, a Draft Paper Presented at the Workshop in February 2001, Maputo and Nampula, p. 29.

<sup>152</sup> Fion de Vletter, *Microfinance in Mozambique: Are Donors Promoting Regional Feminisation of Poverty?* ILO/SAMAT Discussion Paper No. 16 (Harare: International Labour Organization, 2001).

rent or clear virgin lands due to their lack of finances and labour. Their lack of access to independent assets such as land leads them to insecure land tenure, thus preventing them from achieving household food security. The next chapter examines the vulnerability context of Murrupula women by making use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Women's vulnerability context**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the role of Mozambican women in food security. In rural Mozambique, women are the main household food producers. Women rely on subsistence agriculture as their main livelihood. Within the agricultural sector, women face factors such as lack of access to productive resources, including land, labour, credit, and enhanced agricultural techniques. These factors contribute to low productivity, thus hindering their role in generating sufficient food for the household's survival. This chapter discusses the vulnerability context of Murrupula women. Firstly, this chapter introduces the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. It is used, in this study, as a tool to analyse the vulnerability context in which the study participants live.

#### **3.2 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is a tool that helps us to understand and analyse people's livelihoods, particularly of the poor. The SLF has five key elements, namely vulnerability context; livelihood assets; policies, institutions and processes; livelihood strategies; and livelihood outcome. This study does not provide a detailed analysis of the framework as a whole. It rather focuses on some of its elements, namely the livelihood assets and the vulnerability context.

##### **3.2.1 Livelihood assets**

The term "livelihood" has been defined in different ways. The most acceptable definition of livelihoods is given by Chambers and Conway that says, a "livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living."<sup>153</sup> Assets are a "range of capabilities, skills, resources, links, associations, organizations

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<sup>153</sup> Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway, *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods – Practical Concepts for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Institute of Development Studies, (IDS) Discussion Paper 296 (Brighton: IDS, 1991) p. 199.

and institutions already present in a context by which people endogenously engage in activities that respond to their given situation.”<sup>154</sup> From the definition of both terms livelihood and assets, the livelihood assets can be defined as the main assets upon which people’s livelihoods are built, in order to acquire outcomes for their survival within the vulnerability context. The SLF recognizes that although poor and vulnerable people have limited access to assets, they do have assets they utilize to ensure their survival. It does this by drawing attention to the existing portfolio of assets of the household and community.

The SLF outlines five key livelihood assets; human, social, natural, physical and financial. Firstly, human capital refers to people’s skills, knowledge, ability to work and good health status that enable people to employ different livelihood strategies in order to survive. “There is a close relationship between human capital and social capital. Human assets increase with improved social assets such as health services and care, sufficient education and training. Affiliation to institutions and associations boosts human resources in form of skills, knowledge and capacity building.”<sup>155</sup> Secondly, social capital refers to the “social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives.”<sup>156</sup> Social capital is developed through informal networks and connectedness between people with shared interests and ability to work together; membership of more formalized groups; trusts; reciprocity and exchange. Social capital is very important within the context of vulnerability. It provides a buffer that helps the poor and vulnerable to cope with shocks, such as death in the family and works as an informal safety network to ensure survival in difficulty times.<sup>157</sup>

Thirdly, natural capital refers to the stocks of natural resource available for the household to draw on in search of positive livelihood outcomes. Natural capital includes natural resources such as land, trees, marine/wild resources, air quality and water.<sup>158</sup> Fourthly, physical capital denotes basic infrastructure such as transport,

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<sup>154</sup> ‘PIRHANA: For Seekers and Health Providers’, Practitioner’s Workbook, June 2007, Version 5, ARHAP, p. 22.

<sup>155</sup> Alfred Chana, ‘Church and Women’s Livelihoods in Zambezi District: A Case Study of Luvale Women and the Evangelical Lutheran Church’, Unpublished Master Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2006, p. 62 .

<sup>156</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>157</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>158</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

secure shelter, water and sanitation, energy, communication and the productive resources such as tools and equipment required to support livelihoods.<sup>159</sup> Lastly, financial capital refers to the financial resources or available stocks in form of money, bank deposits or assets such as livestock and jewellery, credit, money transfers and remittances that people use to pursue their livelihood objectives.<sup>160</sup> According to Kalonga, financial capital is the most resourceful asset because it can be converted into other types of assets. It can be used to achieve livelihood outcomes such as purchasing food and medicine.<sup>161</sup> It can also be used to free people, enabling their participation in organizations that have social and political influence. Financial capital is the one least available to the poor. These assets are crucial for the enhancement of the household and community's well-being.<sup>162</sup>

The SLF also recognizes that people have a range of strategies for using these assets, in order to achieve their livelihood objectives within the vulnerability context.<sup>163</sup> People with various assets are more likely to make positive livelihood choices. This is because people with various assets are able to choose “from a range of options in order to maximise their achievement of positive livelihood outcomes, rather than being forced into any given strategy because it is their only option.”<sup>164</sup> On the other hand, people with limited access to assets are more vulnerable as they are unable to diversify their livelihood strategies. Furthermore, their “portfolio of assets and their livelihood strategies are subject to a range of influences that prescribe and determine the opportunities and choices that they have for their livelihood strategies.”<sup>165</sup> These ranges of influences take place in a vulnerability context.

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<sup>159</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>160</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>161</sup> Kelvin B. Kalonga, ‘Food, Faith and Livelihoods: A Case Study of World Vision Malawi’s Food Security Programme in Chata ADP’, Unpublished Master Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg 2005, p. 52.

<sup>162</sup> John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight referenced by Steve de Gruchy, ‘Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation: Seeking some Communalities between Theology and Development’, *Journal of Theology of Southern Africa*, 117 (November 2003), p. 31.

<sup>163</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>164</sup> DFID, ‘Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets’.

<sup>165</sup> de Gruchy, ‘Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation’, p. 33.

### 3.2.2 Vulnerability context

The vulnerability context describes the context in which people live. It comprises external factors such as shocks, trends and seasonality that have impact on people's lives, livelihoods and assets.<sup>166</sup> Shocks are factors that unexpectedly affect people's livelihoods. There are human health shocks such as illness and death in the family; economic shocks such as price fluctuation; natural shocks such as drought and fire, politic conflicts; and crop and livestock health shocks. Trends are predictable factors that have both a positive and negative impact on people's livelihoods.<sup>167</sup> These include trends in population, economic, governance, technology, social services and urbanization. Seasonality factors refer to seasonal shifts of prices, employment opportunities, food production and availability and health status.<sup>168</sup> As a result of the trends, shocks and seasonality of the Vulnerability Context, assets are both destroyed and created. These factors make people vulnerable because they are less able to strategize in order to secure and enhance their livelihoods. Although the trends can have a positive effect on livelihoods, the poorest are frequently unable to get benefits because of their lack of assets and institutions with power to advocate in their favour.

De Gruchy suggests that policy, laws, institutions, culture, religion and customs make part of the vulnerability context.<sup>169</sup> Policy, laws and institutions refer "to the intentional structures, institutions, formations and contracts that are set in place to regulate social and communal life."<sup>170</sup> The structures determine people's access to various types of capital, livelihood strategies, decision-making bodies and sources of influence.<sup>171</sup> The absence of appropriate and adequate structures constitutes a major constraint for development, particularly in the rural areas. For instance, the inadequate service delivery and the malfunction of the markets in the rural areas increase people's vulnerability and poverty.<sup>172</sup> Furthermore, de Gruchy suggests that culture, religion and customs have a great influence on the portfolio of livelihood assets, livelihood strategies and desired livelihood outcomes in most African contexts, and

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<sup>166</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

<sup>167</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

<sup>168</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

<sup>169</sup> de Gruchy, 'Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation', p. 56.

<sup>170</sup> de Gruchy, 'Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation', p. 56.

<sup>171</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

<sup>172</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

any strategy that desires to enhance such livelihoods ignores them.<sup>173</sup> These three elements of the vulnerability context constitute a major cause of poor African women's vulnerability.

### **3.3 The vulnerability context of Murrupula women**

The vulnerability context is a complex of influences that directly and indirectly affect people's lives, assets and livelihoods in different ways. There are complex sets of vulnerabilities that affect women in Murrupula District which include shocks, trends and seasonality, socio-political factors, culture and religion, policies, laws, and institutions. It is important when analysing the vulnerability context to discuss these elements because women are usually the most affected group in society.

#### **3.3.1 Shocks, trends and seasonality**

As the SLF suggests, the vulnerability context includes external factors such as shocks, trends and seasonality that have impact on people's lives, livelihoods and assets. Shocks are factors that unexpectedly affect people's livelihoods.<sup>174</sup> Shocks destroy assets in the event of war, fire, floods or death. Murrupula District experiences human health shocks such as illness. Some of the causes of illness are malnutrition and diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, cholera, tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, hernia, leprosy and skin infections. Malnutrition is mostly caused by poor food security that characterizes the district, inability of the households to grow enough nutritious food that can last the whole year, and their inability to purchase nutritionally balanced food.<sup>175</sup> Women and children constitute the majority of the malnourished population and those vulnerable to diseases. The death of a family member results in the loss of human labour. The prevalence of diseases contributes to the lack of labour, since ill people are unable to work. Household members, especially women, spend most of their time taking care of the ill members.<sup>176</sup> During the period

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<sup>173</sup> de Gruchy, 'Of Agency, Assets and Appreciation', p. 56.

<sup>174</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

<sup>175</sup> World Vision Mozambique, 'Nihessiue Area Development Program Profile'.

<sup>176</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula district.

of illness, the agricultural work remains unattended and becomes less productive.<sup>177</sup> The poorest households, particularly female-headed households, tend to suffer most as they do not have other resources, for instance, enough money to get medical assistance or hire human labour to keep their agricultural work going.

Natural shocks such as irregularity of rain, plant and livestock diseases are factors that cause vulnerability for women, particularly women relying on subsistence agriculture as their main source of livelihood. Agriculture is predominantly under conditions of drought and it is not always successful. The risk of crop loss is high due to the low storage capacity of moisture in the soil during the growth of crops.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, plant disease and pest (40%) affect the crops growing in the fields, and poor quality of land contributes to low food production.<sup>179</sup> Livestock is a great source of cash income for many households. Many households in Murrupula experience seasonal outbreak of animal disease, especially affecting chickens afforded by the majority of poor households. Due to these factors, women relying on the practice of agriculture to generate household food security and livestock rearing for cash income are vulnerable to food insecurity.

Economic shocks, such as seasonal food price fluctuation, constitute one of the major challenges for the population relying on subsistence agriculture in Murrupula. It affects their ability to cope from one harvesting season to another. There is no food price control. Due to the lack of food storage and safety, farmers sell their crops at any price. For example, in the harvest season, the period that goes from April throughout July, the price of food goes down. The farmers are forced to sell most of their products at a low price. Furthermore, during this period, the traders coming from the city of Nampula and Zambezia Province pay “minimal prices to producers who often do not have any alternatives.”<sup>180</sup> The money gained from the selling is insignificant when compared with the effort expended on food production. On the

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<sup>177</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview from 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula district.

<sup>178</sup> MAE, ‘Perfil do Distrito de Murrupula: Provincia de Nampula’, p. 40.

<sup>179</sup> ‘Murrupula’,

[http://www.mct.gov.mz/portal/page?\\_pageid=613,1228416&\\_dad=portal&schema=PORTAL](http://www.mct.gov.mz/portal/page?_pageid=613,1228416&_dad=portal&schema=PORTAL). Accessed on 13/05/2009.

<sup>180</sup> ‘Monitoring and Evaluating Poverty Reduction Policies in Mozambique: Study 1: Social Relations of Rural Poverty’, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/CMibrief-eng.pdf>. Accessed 03/07/2009.

other hand, during the period from October throughout March the prices rise and the district experiences food shortage. It is also a hungry period. This is the most difficult period for the population that relies on agriculture for subsistence and income, because their crops are still in the fields. Many households in Murrupula, particularly female headed households, lack money to buy food, to pay medical fees and school fees for their children.

### 3.3.2 Socio-political factors

Women's vulnerability to food insecurity and poverty in Murrupula District has roots in the period of Portuguese colonizers from 1500 AD to 1974. This was exacerbated by the war between Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO)<sup>181</sup> and Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO)<sup>182</sup> that lasted sixteen years. The presence of the colonizers disrupted the socio-economic and political structure of the district.<sup>183</sup> The Portuguese colonizers envisioned "the transformation of the matrilineality into patrilineality and associated patriarchy."<sup>184</sup> Concurring with this view, Tvedten argues that

...the Portuguese substituted the traditional *Makuwa* authorities (with *mwene* or chief as the central authority) with a system of *regulos* (reminiscent of the *mwene*), *cabos* (adjuncts to *regulo*) and *reis and rainhas* (lineage kings and queens). Many of those community leaders had limited local legitimacy. They were primarily used to collect taxes, act in land conflicts, settle domestic disputes and in some cases to manage agricultural production for the colonizers.<sup>185</sup>

Currently, this legacy continues to be intact in Murrupula District. The district's leadership structure is represented by both government and traditional authorities. The latter is represented by *regulos* (traditional local chiefs) which are community leaders, *cabos* (headmen) and *mwenes* (lineage kings) in charge of small units and *apwiyamwenes* (lineage queens) which are local women's leaders. The *mwenes* and *apwiyamwenes* are the head of matrilineal clans. *Mwenes* are usually men and they attain their position through matrilineal inheritance patterns. The nephew inherits the

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<sup>181</sup> Renamo is an opposition party that fought against Marxist one party to multi-party system.

<sup>182</sup> Frelimo is a government and leading party in Mozambique since 1975.

<sup>183</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique', p. 18.

<sup>184</sup> Bonate, 'The Women and Land Studies', p. 102.

<sup>185</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique', p. 18.

position of *mwene* from his uncle. Alongside the *mwene* is *apwiyamwene*, usually his eldest sister or aunt. The *apwiyamwene* has the responsibility to assist with issues relating to women and particularly ceremonies such as female initiation rituals and healing practices.<sup>186</sup> The *apwiyamwene* is also a spiritual leader of the community who plays a particular role, in the event of ceremony, of pouring *makeya*<sup>187</sup> or *ephepa* in the process of calling of rain and attention of the ancestors.<sup>188</sup>

Generally, the district's leadership structure is male dominated and influenced by patriarchal ideologies. The government administration works with traditional leaders. Extension services and development programs are male dominated.<sup>189</sup> Regardless of the district being inhabited by the majority of matrilineal population, women are not entrusted with leadership roles at the community level, they are seldom included to participate in community decision making, and therefore they lack the enjoyment of equal gender opportunities. Furthermore, women's exclusion from community development processes exacerbates their vulnerability to food insecurity, poverty, and limited access to various assets that would enable them to generate sufficient food for their households.

The war between RENAMO and FRELIMO that lasted sixteen years had destroyed the few existing social infrastructures such as health, education, roads and communication networks, particularly in rural areas, built by the Portuguese colonizers and also built after independence.<sup>190</sup> As a result of political conflict, the rural areas of Mozambique, especially Murrupula District, continue to be characterized by little adequate social infrastructure.

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<sup>186</sup> Anne M. Pitcher, 'Disruption without Transformation: Agrarian Relations and Livelihoods in Nampula Province, Mozambique 1975-1995', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 24, No.1, Special Issue on Mozambique (Mar. 1998), p. 121.

<sup>187</sup> *Makeya* or *Ephepa* is the name of the finely grounded flour of millet used in a ceremonial event (Arnfred, 'Sex, Food and Female Power', p. 147).

<sup>188</sup> Arnfred, 'Sex, Food and Female Power', p. 147.

<sup>189</sup> Koos Neefjes, *Environments and Livelihoods: Strategies for Sustainability* (Oxford: Oxfam, 2000), p. 66.

<sup>190</sup> MADER and FAO, 'Mozambique Historical Context', 2002.

[www.odi.org.uk/Food-SecurityForum/docs/MozCIP.pdf](http://www.odi.org.uk/Food-SecurityForum/docs/MozCIP.pdf), Accessed on 25/05/09.

### **3.3.2.1 Health care**

Health is an important aspect of human life. However, the health sector in Murrupula District is in decline. The health structures are inadequate for effective service delivery, and the health units do not have qualified doctors. They are run by nurses with basic level of education. In the remote rural areas of the district, the health units are run by one to two nurses.<sup>191</sup> The access to health care is very limited. People walk long distances, of about 20 kilometres, to go to post clinics, and this has negative implications on the well-being of people, especially women. Due to the lack of health infrastructures, inadequacy of few existing health services, and long distances to get to the health service, the major percentage of population primarily seeks assistance from local traditional healers. However, traditional healers pose a great risk for the health of the population due to their lack of formal training in health care. The lack of access to adequate health care aggravates people's ill health, and thus contributes to the high incidence of mortality of pregnant women and children. Many pregnant women die, not only due to diseases, but due to complications in the process of labour. Women and their babies lack pre-natal and post-natal health care, contributing to the high incidence of child mortality. New-born babies die in the process of labour and in their early stage of life (0-5 years old). The inadequate health services in the rural areas also reduce people's ability to work.<sup>192</sup> Thus, the agricultural work becomes less productive, contributing to the prevalence of household food insecurity (see section 4.4.4).

### **3.3.2.2 Education system**

The level of education in Murrupula is very low. More than 84% of the population, mainly women, are illiterate. There were eighty-seven primary schools (grades one to five), five complete primary schools (grades one to seven) and one high school (grades eight to ten).<sup>193</sup> The "schools operate multiple shifts and lack qualified personnel."<sup>194</sup> The time that learners spend learning at school is less than four hours,

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<sup>191</sup> World Vision Mozambique, 'Nihessiue Area Development Program Profile 2005'.

<sup>192</sup> Cawthra and Kraak, 'Annual Review: The Voluntary Sector and Development in South Africa', p. 76.

<sup>193</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique', p. 23.

<sup>194</sup> Baden, 'Post-Conflict Mozambique'.

and this contributes to continuous high rates of illiteracy. This factor is attributed to the lack of school infrastructure. According to Baden, the lack of effective extension of the school network is due to the lack of investment in education, which has been inherited from colonial period and further aggravated by the effects of the war between FRELIMO and RENAMO after independence. The colonial education policies did not encourage literacy for indigenous Mozambicans. Many of the existing schools facilities “are made of temporary material that needs rehabilitation every year.”<sup>195</sup> In many areas, children learn under the trees. Most of the schools do not function during the rainy season and heavy winds. Many of the poorest parents cannot afford to supply materials such as text books, exercise books, pencils, pens and school uniforms for their children. Many children who finish the primary school have limited access to few existing senior primary schools in remote areas, and one high school located in Murrupula Vila. Due to the lack of schools facilities, many children who wish to continue their studies end up doing the same grade over and over again or they drop out and join their parents in agricultural and domestic work. The lack of schools infrastructure, qualified teachers and school materials such as textbooks, contributes to the low level of education.

Another factor contributing to the low level of education is the long distances that children have to walk to schools. For instance, after finishing grade seven, children have to walk about 20 kilometres to attend the high school in Murrupula Vila. This becomes an impossible situation for the poor with low cash income and without means of transport to take their children to secondary school. Furthermore, the “poorest tend to take their children out of schools when they are needed for work, looking after siblings, or other tasks.”<sup>196</sup> The highest incidence of low levels of education is among girls and women. Parents give their primary choice for education investment to boys and not girls. Girls are given to marriage at ages as early as twelve years old. People do not see that investing in educating their children will enhance the living conditions of the household in a context where there is a lack of employment opportunities. As a response to high incidence of illiteracy, the government and NGOs have initiated adult literacy courses, “Alphabetization”, to reach the illiterate population, particularly illiterate women. However, these courses do not really make

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<sup>195</sup> World Vision Mozambique, ‘Nihessiue Area Development Program Profile’.

<sup>196</sup> Tvedten, “‘Opitanha’”: Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique’, p. 39.

rural people literate.<sup>197</sup> A major number of people attending the courses, particularly women, are unable to read, write and communicate in Portuguese.

### **3.3.2.3 Transport and communication systems**

Murrupula district has a very poor transport system. The few existing roads are not paved, with the exception of national road EN 232 that connects Murrupula Vila with the city of Nampula and Zambezia Province. The very few roads that exist within the district are difficult to travel with vehicles during the rainy season, due to poor road network and services.<sup>198</sup> There is no public transport within the district. People travel on foot for long distances to get to health care facilities, to exchange and sell their produce within the district. The better-off people use or hire bicycles and motorcycles for transportation. World Vision, an NGO working there, has given some bicycles to its volunteers, comprised largely of men, to enable their community service.<sup>199</sup> The only vehicles that circulate to some remote areas belong to the NGOs working in the district. In addition, some traders from the city of Nampula provide accessible transport to some local people two days weekly (Saturdays and Sundays), when they go to sell and exchange goods in some rural trade fairs within the district.<sup>200</sup> The district benefits from a phone system through satellite for communication with the rest of the country and the world in general.<sup>201</sup> However, the mobile phone network service is poor. Its network is accessible in some remote areas within the district. People, mainly men, who benefit from the satellite system, are those working with different NGOs, and those who are better-off financially.

### **3.3.2.4 Electricity, water and sanitation systems**

Since 2008, still few households in Murrupula benefit from an electricity system. It is only the better-off households that have access to electricity. Most of the poor households do not have access to electricity. Women whose households have access

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<sup>197</sup> Tvedten, “‘Opitanha’”: Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique’, p. 40.

<sup>198</sup> MAE, ‘Perfil do Distrito de Murrupula: Provincia de Nampula’, p. 39.

<sup>199</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District.

<sup>200</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District.

<sup>201</sup> MAE, ‘Perfil do Distrito de Murrupula: Provincia de Nampula’, p. 39.

to electricity have not yet benefited from it. They still continue to face the struggle of using the firewood as their main source of energy for cooking. Water also poses a major challenge for many households. Murrupula District has a poor water system. Most of the population only has access to unclean drinking water from the boreholes, wells and rivers.<sup>202</sup> Many of the drills used in the boreholes are broken and unrepaired, and lack maintenance.<sup>203</sup> The workload of fetching the water from the river for household use lies on women who walk long distances and spend most of their daily time doing this activity. The sanitation system within the district also is very poor. Some of the people in Murrupula Vila use latrines. Nevertheless, these latrines are inadequate. The majority of the population both in the Vila and remote areas use open places and the bush for urination and defecation. However, the use of unclean water from wells and rivers for drinking and body washing, and the lack of an adequate sanitation system contribute to the prevalence of diseases such as diarrhoea, malaria, bilharzia and skin infections that leads to the high incidence of child mortality.

### 3.3.3 Religious and cultural factors

Religious and cultural practices are some of other factors that hinder women from engaging and diversifying livelihood strategies. The predominant tribe in Murrupula is *Makhuwa*, which is characterized by a matrilineal system. While little research has been done on the influence of Christianity on the matrilineal system of the *Makhuwa*, Phiri has carried out a study on the *Chewa* matrilineal society in Malawi.<sup>204</sup> Phiri suggests that this matrilineal society was influenced by patriarchal Christianity.<sup>205</sup> She argues that “the missionaries introduced additional teaching and practices which placed women in subordinate positions in society, and reinforced some of the negative cultural elements. All this was legitimized by reference to biblical texts.”<sup>206</sup> The wives of the missionaries taught indigenous African women what was, according to their culture, expected from them such as Bible study, sewing, cooking, home making

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<sup>202</sup> ‘Murrupula’.

<sup>203</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District.

<sup>204</sup> Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p.48.

<sup>205</sup> Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p.48.

<sup>206</sup> Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p.12.

skills and to be subordinate to their husbands, church and community leaders.<sup>207</sup> A similar argument could be made about the *Makhuwa* women. For instance, de Vletter believes that,

Religion is undoubtedly a factor that has influenced the extent of women's economic empowerment. The conservative influences of both the Moslem and Catholic faiths in the North (of Mozambique) are said to have negatively affected women's entry into the cash economy. In Nampula, women very often mentioned that they required their husbands' permission to undertake economic activities.<sup>208</sup>

Religious teachings and cultural perceptions on gender division of labour, influenced by patriarchal views, have contributed to women's economic disempowerment and dependence on men. Within Christianity, particularly *Makhuwa* tradition influenced by patriarchal views on gender division of labour, men are regarded as wage earners through their engagement in economical activities, while women are regarded as housekeepers, child care and household food producers. However, women attempting to engage in activities that involve money outside their homes without their husbands' permission are threatened with divorce.<sup>209</sup> Having made the commitment to remain in the marriage, women continue to be economically dependent and live in submission to their husbands, with the fear of being divorced. This provides necessary leverage for the husband, to keep his wife submissive.

Women in matrilineal society have limited opportunity to participate in decision making. Culturally, women are placed in a position of submission under male's authority. According to Tvedten, the uncle, the mother's brother, constitutes the advisor of the family. Furthermore, Tvedten states that the uncle's role includes advising, assisting financially and materially in difficult times, and investing in education for his extended family, particularly his nephews and nieces.<sup>210</sup> The women and their children are cared for by uncles.<sup>211</sup> This cultural practice disempowers husbands from playing an effective role in generating household food security and the

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<sup>207</sup> Molly Longwe, 'Growing up: A Chewa Girls' Initiation' (Zomba: Kachere Series, 2007), p.35.

<sup>208</sup> de Vletter, *Microfinance in Mozambique*.

<sup>209</sup> Baden, 'Post-Conflict Mozambique'.

<sup>210</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique', p. 50.

<sup>211</sup> In *Makhuwa* culture, children belong to their mother's lineage. Maternal uncles play a significant role for the well-being of their nephews and nieces rather than their own children. Maternal uncles are considered to be more important than the fathers.

general well-being of their families (wives and children), thus increasing women's workload. It also undermines and limits the voice of women within their household and extended family structures. By realizing the uncles' inability to help in raising their children, women submissively engage in strategies for their families' survival.

Women's subordinate role is reinforced by cultural and religious practices such as female initiation rites. These rituals take place both in religious and secular settings. Signe Arnfred has done research in Ribaué, one of the districts of Nampula Province, on *Sex, Food and Female Power* and her findings reveal that despite the church's (UBC) clear prohibition of female initiation rituals,<sup>212</sup> women still engage in these activities. In the process, the older women tell the young women to be submissive to their husbands by being obedient and good wives. Arnfred also found that young women are also instructed in sexual arts to show their pleasure and gratitude to their husbands.<sup>213</sup> Female initiation rituals not only put women in a position of submission, but they encourage young women to be involved in early sexual experimentation and marriage. De Vletter quoting Nancy Horne (2000) argues that

...initiation pressures on young women lead to early sexual experimentation that has led to the lowest average childbearing age in the country. Early child bearing not only inhibits women from pursuing economic activities away from home, it also results in very high school dropout rates and thus poorer income earning prospects.<sup>214</sup>

Female initiation rituals prevent young women's skill development in the sense that young women are not encouraged to seriously engage in education and skill empowerment courses that will prepare them for becoming economically independent. In my observation, there is consensus that the role of girls is to be

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<sup>212</sup> The practice of female initiation rites has its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand it constitutes a source that contributes to household food insecurity. The households that take their daughters to go through female initiation rituals have to provide food and drinks for all women invited to be part of the ritual for the whole period. Usually, the ritual takes three to seven days. For the households relying on the practice of subsistence agriculture, they perform this activity in the period soon after the harvest season when they have food, thus depleting resources that would sustain the household. On the other hand, female initiation rites constitute a source for socialization and coping with food insecurity and poverty. Women participating in these activities get meals. In the last day of the ritual, the parents of the girl organize a party in celebration of their becoming woman daughter and in acknowledgement of the great work done by the women involved in the ritual process. The food given to them is the same food that women take to feed their families. Although female initiation rites practice is prohibited within the church, this site is strongly safeguarded by women.

<sup>213</sup> Arnfred, 'Sex, Food and Female Power' p. 155.

<sup>214</sup> de Vletter, *Microfinance in Mozambique*.

worthwhile as marriage partners. They are encouraged to marry in order to give birth to children, and to be worthwhile to their husbands by bringing in income for their family and extended family.

Culturally, having many children is important for economic purposes. The children represent an important source of labour.<sup>215</sup> The idea is that by having many children, there will be a greater labour force for agricultural work, resulting in good productivity. However, having many children has implications for women's well-being in the context where access to health care is very limited. It also negatively impacts the role of women in food security. Giving birth to many children weakens the women's body, thus resulting in their inability to work effectively. Furthermore, children constitute a burden in the sense that they need to be fed. The more children one gives birth to, the more food is needed to be produced for their consumption.

This factor is reflected in the high incidence of malnutrition in the district. The little food produced for household consumption benefits men rather than women and children. Although women play the key role for the household food production, processing and preparation, there is unequal food distribution within the household, community and church celebrations. This inequality is reinforced by cultural practices that support male supremacy. According to my experience and observation, men are first to be served with the best food while women and children eat the leftovers. Furthermore, culturally, there are certain nutritious foods that are prohibited from being eaten by pregnant women and during lactation. These religious and cultural practices contribute to women's ill health and inability to effectively generate household food security.

### **3.3.4 Policies, laws and institutions**

As it was pointed out in section 3.2.2 above, policies, laws and institutions have a great influence on access to assets. They create assets and determine access to assets.<sup>216</sup> In response to food insecurity and poverty, the government of Mozambique has drawn a strategic plan, *Action Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty 2006-*

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<sup>215</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique', p. 50.

<sup>216</sup> DFID, 'Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets'.

2009 (PARPA II), with the view to reduce the vulnerability of rural women and improve their well-being. Some of the objectives of PARPA II include:

- (a) Development and dissemination of improved farming technologies, particularly for food crops that involve an important contingent of female labor; and
- (b) Provision of goods and services that can alleviate the burden of domestic tasks on women (such as reducing the distance they must travel to get water and health services, and rural electrification) and that would increase the time they have available to spend in other productive activities.<sup>217</sup>

This policy plan has not yet effectively assisted poor women in rural areas particularly in Murrupula District. The women in Murrupula, particularly the poor and illiterate, are not aware of the opportunities that the government offers and they do not know the rights and opportunities that they have in society. Illiteracy is one of the main factors that contribute to women's lack of information and inability to seize opportunities in search for a quality life (see section 3.3.2).

The government of Mozambique has also established a variety of internal programs that financially help the poor to meet their basic needs. One of these programs include *Food Subsidies Programme* which “provides a monthly cash transfer to people who are destitute and have no capacity to work, including older, disabled and chronically ill people (but those living with HIV/AIDS and TB), and pregnant women who are malnourished.”<sup>218</sup> However, the women benefiting from the program in the rural areas are very few. Many of them, particularly Murrupula women, are unaware of the program's existence in their villages. Some of the study participants indicated they were aware of this program, however, they complained of not having the identification document in order to become beneficiaries. Some indicated they did not know where to apply for pension and food subsidy.<sup>219</sup> Lack of information about their rights is a great obstacle for women in searching and seizing opportunities and strategies that would contribute to their families' survival and well-being. Strategies

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<sup>217</sup> PARPA II, 'Republic of Mozambique', p. 25-26.

<sup>218</sup> Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP), 'Food Subsidies Programme, Mozambique', REBA Case Study Brief, No. 7 (November 2007).

<sup>219</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District.

to improve women's livelihoods and increase their well-being should focus on empowering them through skills, and knowledge about their rights in society.

As it was pointed out in section 3.2.1, the SLF focuses on assets rather than on deficits. It seeks to make the livelihood assets sustainable within a context of vulnerability. Even if this chapter has looked at the deficits, there are important assets that women have. As discussed in section 3.2.1, the SLF discusses different types of assets, namely, human capital, physical capital, natural capital, financial capital and social capital. However, this study focuses on both human capital and social capital. One of the things lacking in SLF strategy is the focus on religious resources. This is the key resource of survival. This study argues that women have theological resources that they utilize in their response to food insecurity, poverty and illness and these could contribute to a contextual theology for social transformation. This study has found the work of Beverley Haddad to be useful for the assessment of these religious resources. In her work, Haddad discusses poor and marginalised women having theological resources.<sup>220</sup> These are discussed in chapter five. Furthermore, both terms "assets" and "resources" will be used interchangeably throughout this study.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the vulnerability context of Murrupula women. Although women struggle to generate household food security and improve their lives, the vulnerabilities continue to negatively impact upon their livelihood activities. It was found that shocks such as illness within the household, irregularity of rain, plant and livestock disease, and price fluctuation, constitute some of the factors that contribute to the vulnerability of women to food insecurity. The impact of these factors on the household members and on the crop contributes to the vulnerability of women to food insecurity. It was discovered that women live within a context of inadequate social basic infrastructures, such as health, education, transport and communication, electricity, water and sanitation. The lack of access to these infrastructures puts the well-being of women in jeopardy. Religious and cultural teachings prevent women from engaging in economic activities. Therefore, they become economically

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<sup>220</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival'.

powerless and dependent on men. It was noted that the government policy drawn with the view of reducing the vulnerability and improve the well-being of rural women, particularly Murrupula women, has not yet benefited them. Illiteracy was the major factor that limited women's access to information, to claim their rights and seize opportunities to enhance their livelihoods. In the discussion of livelihood assets, it became clear that although the SLF focuses on assets and recognizes that poor and vulnerable people have assets, it does not really discuss religious resources as part of the asset portfolio that people utilize to enhance their livelihood strategies. Thus, religious resources will be discussed in chapter five. The following chapter presents the findings from the study as a way to better understand Murrupula women's resources, particularly their theological resources.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Research Findings**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework was introduced. It was used to describe and analyse the vulnerability context of the study participants. The analysis revealed that Murrupula women live within the context of vulnerability. It was found that women are vulnerable to human health shocks, natural shocks and economic shocks. These shocks are the major contributors to women's low productivity because they destroy assets and decrease labour productivity. The vulnerability of women is exacerbated by their limited access to adequate health care, education, clean drinking water, transport, communication and lack of inclusion in community development leadership and processes. This chapter presents the fieldwork findings which include interviews of ten women in Murrupula District in the province of Nampula, Mozambique. It also attempts to understand women's resources, including theological resources, that they utilize in their struggle to survive within the context of food insecurity and poverty.

#### **4.2 Research process**

The field work was conducted in Murrupula District in the localities of Murrupula Vila and Kazuzu with ten semi-literate women from Union Baptist Church (UBC). I, while being Mozambican, was an outsider to these particular communities. It was, therefore, important to seek the assistance of the pastor, the church provincial leader, and the leader of the women's organization in enrolling women into the study. I chose this particular church because as a member of this church, it was easier to establish contacts. The study is limited and does not attempt to understand the history of the UBC in Mozambique nor the influence of the Baptist teachings on women's theologies of *okhala*. Rather, it is restricted to understanding the faith experience of semi-literate rural women in their struggle to survive within the context of food insecurity.

This study is qualitative based on semi-structured interviews. Informed consent was obtained from the women, including permission to record the interviews on a tape recorder. These interviews were conducted in *Makhuwa*, the local language, and later transcribed and translated into English. The participants of the study were limited to ten women between the ages of eighteen to seventy years-old, who rely on the practice of subsistence agriculture as their main livelihood. Women were recruited to join the study with the assistance of the pastor as well as the leader of the women's organisation in the church. The fieldwork took place over three weeks in January 2009. For the first two weeks, having arrived in Nampula city, it became clear that there would be delays in carrying out the field work. There was much illness in the community and those who were to assist me with the recruitment process were affected. The fieldwork did eventually take place in two locations within Murrupula District, in the locality of Kazuzu in the area of Nanrele and in Murrupula Vila. The pastor's wife who was recovering from malaria was able to accompany me to Nanrele and assisted in gathering women at the UBC for a meeting. At this meeting, I introduced myself, explained the purpose of the study and invited the women who were interested to participate in the study. Three women were interviewed in the locality of Kazuzu in the area of Nanrele.

Secondly, interviews were conducted in Murrupula Vila. The UBC senior pastor of Nampula Province invited women from three areas - Mulhaniua, Morrupa and Murrupula Vila - to meet in the local church of Tapatheryo, in Murrupula Vila. Again, there were many factors hindering the research process which highlighted for me, just how much life was a struggle for women in the area. In the week that the provincial pastor, a young man, and myself planned to go to Murrupula Vila, two pregnant women from Murrupula District arrived at the pastor's house looking for medical assistance. These two pregnant women were admitted in the hospital, with one of the babies dying shortly after birth. The planned research trip to Murrupula had to be cancelled as the pastor needed to conduct the funeral. After this delay, we did manage to leave for Murrupula the next day, where we attended the church service. As soon as church service ended, I was introduced to the church members by the provincial church leader and I requested that women remain behind for a meeting. I explained the purpose and the benefits of the study and indicated that participation in the study was voluntary and that those who did not want to participate were free to leave. Seven

women volunteered themselves to participate in the study by remaining in the room. In both of the two locations there were ten women in total who volunteered to be interviewed.

I informed all the participants in two locations, Nanrele and Murrupula Vila, that I would be seeing them individually. Each woman was seen in a private church room where I once again gave a detailed explanation about the study and then obtained informed consent before the interview. All the women that I interviewed agreed to be tape recorded and their names to be included in the research. In both locations, Nanrele and Murrupula Vila, where I conducted the fieldwork, I observed that health issues and the lack of adequate health care services within the district were some of the major factors that hindered the role of women in food security. During the fieldwork in Nanrele, a child of one of the participants became ill. The woman who had accompanied me was asked to take the child to his relatives in Nampula city in order to be taken to hospital. The mother was financially unable to travel with her child to the city. I also observed a similar situation in Murrupula Vila. While I was at the pastor's house, his daughter was called from her farming field because her baby was ill. Illness, especially amongst children, constitutes a major hindrance to women in generating household food security, as they spend most of time taking care of them.

### **4.3 Profile of study participants**

The women interviewed were selected according to their age group. Two women were of the age group between eighteen to twenty-five years old. Two women were of the age group between twenty-six to thirty-five years old. Two women were of the age group between thirty-six to forty-five years old. Two women were of the age group between forty-six to fifty-five years old, and two women were of the age group between fifty-five to seventy years old. Out of the ten women interviewed, seven were married and three women were widows. All the participants had children, ranging from one to seven children. They also had relatives living in their household, adding to the burden of ensuring food security.

The educational level of four of the participants ranged between grade two to seven. One had grade two, one had grade four, one had grade six and one had grade seven.

This indicates that out of ten participants, two were fully literate, while eight were either not literate or semi-literate. This confirms the literature review (see section 3.3.2.2) that states the high illiteracy levels among women in the district.

The ten participants were involved in subsistence farming. Out of the seven married women, four had husbands who were farmers, one had a husband who was a retired pastor, one had a husband who was an informal trader and one had a husband who was employed by the non-governmental organisation, World Vision.

#### **4.4 Research findings**

##### **4.4.1 Cash income**

Nine out of ten women interviewed indicated that they practiced subsistence agriculture with no cash income. Only one woman practiced subsistence agriculture and had an extra work as a teacher for an adult literacy programme. However, she commented that her extra work does not bring in a significant income because she gets a payment of 500.00 Meticaiss<sup>221</sup> on a monthly basis. All ten women interviewed indicated that their farming work is what enables their family to survive. They produce food crops such as cassava, groundnuts, yellow peas and beans. The produce is stored and used for the household consumption from one harvesting season to the next. Apart from producing food, two out of ten women had livestock. One of these two women had a pig and goats, and another woman had a goat, a sheep, pigs and chickens. The eight women stated that the reason for not having livestock was due to a deadly infection known as *edema* affecting chickens, and other diseases affecting other livestock. The following are some examples of women's responses regarding their survival strategies in order to sustain their families through subsistence farming.

*Makhalelo miva kinikhaliheryaka vatthokoni waka, tinenle kiruiyaka onanrele wenna, kinalima omattha, weiwo kinruweryakawo vakhani pahi. Kapwanya, kinawerya wakhaviherya anamwane aka ni asisuluaka yale pahi.*

[The way that I sustain my household, is me coming here in Nanrele to do the agricultural work where I produce a little food. When I get it I am

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<sup>221</sup> 500MT was equivalent to more or less than US \$20 at the time that the research was conducted.

able to feed my children and my grandchildren].<sup>222</sup>

*Kinolima. Kalima, kinnirela eyolya. Yakhuma, kinnirehererya eyolya yele kinavaha anaka ni emusi aka yele kinkhalakano vatthokoni vava.*

[I am a farmer. If I cultivate and produce enough food, I process it. Then, I prepare the food to feed my children and relatives living with me].<sup>223</sup>

*Kinolima omattha weiwo kimpwanyakawo eyolya, kiinavaha anamwane aka.*

[I do the agricultural work where I get food to feed my children, yeah].<sup>224</sup>

These are some of the examples affirming that these women do not have an annual cash income but rely almost entirely on subsistence agriculture. Their main livelihood strategy is the practice of subsistence agriculture. They do so because they are concerned with their household food security, especially with their children's survival.

When asked how they did actually obtain cash, six out of the ten participants said that they obtained money by selling some of the produce they grow. One said she obtained money by working in neighbouring fields, while one indicated she sometimes gets money from her husband. The remaining participants relied on gifts from children, relatives and church members. All women said that they use the little money they get to buy foodstuffs most needed within their households, and clothes. Out of the eight women, two said that besides buying food and clothes they also spend their money on tithes. One woman uses the money to pay her son's school fees and another woman uses her money to assist widows and orphans.

Answering the question if they were saving any money, seven out of ten said they were not saving any money because what they had was very little in the first place. The little they had was used to meet the immediate needs of their households. This is indicated in the following comment:

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<sup>222</sup> Interview with Maria, on 08 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>223</sup> Interview with Deolinda A., on 13 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Mdalena, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

*Kahiyee musurukhu kimpwanyaka ntakhara ki hihaa kokhala ni mwana onettha muxikhola. Yoletho onnikihaleliha makhalelo omwiriha. Kinimwi ovinya ovinya kinamunweha pahi. Navetho veri sowara, inimwi sothene inamukihaleliha. Nkanono musurukhu wowi ola kipwan'nyaka kininpweha. Kampwanya pauntte koreriwa, kapwanya apauntte aili, iii! Nto yole kikusha kinavyera itthu seiye inikihaleliha vatthokoni vaka navetho kinawerya wahuwano anamwane ni asisuluaka.*

[It is not a lot of money that I get because the little that I get I use it for my child's school fees. He is also a great burden for me. I am just without means to help him, yeah. About clothing, it is also a great need that I am unable to meet. I do not have money that I can say that this money that I got I am going to save it. If I get a 100 MT<sup>225</sup>, I am a lucky person if I get 200 MT<sup>226</sup>, wow! So that money I used it only to buy things that I need within my household that enables me to raise my children and grandchildren].<sup>227</sup>

The remaining three women said they were able to save little money. They kept the saved money in their houses because there is no local bank. From women's responses concerning finances, it is clear that women are financially vulnerable. When they get money they primarily tend to spend it on food and then school and medical fees, and clothes. This confirms the literature review stating that when women have access to finances they tend to spend it for the household's well-being (see section 2.5). For women, food is a primary concern on their agenda because, according to them, access to food ensures the survival and well-being of the household members.

#### **4.4.2 Economic independence**

Concerning the question of who decides how money is spent within the household, five of the seven married women said that their husbands were the decisions makers. Their husbands were responsible for saving and keeping the money. One woman did not answer the question. Out of the seven married women only one said that she was the one making decisions concerning the use of money. However, she also indicated that all the household responsibility was left to her as her husband was getting old and was ill. She commented,

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<sup>225</sup> MT (Meticais) is Mozambican currency. 100MT was equivalent to more or less than US \$4.5 at the time that the research was conducted.

<sup>226</sup> 200MT was equivalent to more or less than US \$8.5 at the time that the research was conducted.

<sup>227</sup> Interview with Maria, on 08 January 2009, Murrupula District.

*Kinona variye enira anene awo ekhorommene, sothesene ahiya.  
Akihiyenrye yomi.*

[I think since the owner (my husband) is unable, he has left everything.  
He left everything under my responsibility].<sup>228</sup>

Answering the question on how the money has been allocated within the household, five out of the seven married women said that the money they obtained was not distributed to individual household members. Two of these women said that if they want to buy something they ask for money from their husbands. One said that it is her husband who buys her clothes.

*Aiyaka yawo, tanikuxa (musurukhu) erowa yathuma ikhuwo saka iii...  
yakhala etthu kintthunaka othuma.... kinim'malatuu.*

[It is my husband who takes the money and goes to buy me clothes,  
yeah... and if there is something that I would like to buy... I just keep  
silent].<sup>229</sup>

One of them said that they both, husband and wife, spend the money buying food, children's clothes and her clothes. Two women did not respond to the question. In my observation, married women in the study were financially dependent on their husbands. Although some women were the ones keeping the household money, most of the time, their husbands made decisions on how to spend the money. Women were not free to use the money for the wellbeing of the household without the acknowledgement of and consent from their husbands. This indicates that women are economically dependent on their husbands. Their economic dependency and lack of voice to make decisions within their households place them in more vulnerable and deprived conditions and thus prevent them from achieving food security at the household level.

#### **4.4.3 Access to land**

Regarding land ownership, seven out of the ten women indicated that they have their own land. Five of them inherited the land from their relatives. Of these, three

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<sup>228</sup> Interview with Maria, on 08 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>229</sup> Interview with Juliana, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

inherited from their mother's side and two from their father's family side. Two out of ten women said that they had land that they shared with their husbands. From the remaining three women, one was farming on her deceased husband's family land, and two had land that was lent to them by the local people as they were foreigners in that area. The number of the farming fields that all the women possessed ranged between one to two small pieces of land.

These findings indicate that the women in the study had access to land for agricultural use, but lacked access to land for ownership. Their access to land through inheritance and borrowing does not necessarily mean that they have land tenure security. Inherited land belongs to a group, family, and it cannot be sold. Furthermore, borrowed land also does not guarantee land tenure security because it cannot be used for a long term. The access to land through a borrowing system leads to land tenure insecurity. Women without land tenure are without identity, and they are socially and economically insecure. They are not free to use land in order to meet their needs in the long term. Borrowed land can be taken back, at any time, by the owner, resulting in food insecurity. Women's access to small land size does not guarantee food security at the household level. As argued in the literature review (section 2.3), having small land size constitutes one of the factors that contribute to food insecurity. The reason is that small pieces of land likely may not produce enough food for an extended household family.

#### **4.4.4 Food production**

When asked if in the last six months there had been enough food produced for the household sustenance, six out of the ten women indicated that they had had enough food. For all six women, this meant that they had dried cassava roots. In addition to the dried cassava roots, one woman had groundnuts and three women had some beans. One of them had reserved her beans for seed plantation and not for consumption. Four out of the ten women indicated they did not have enough food by the time of the interview. The reason for this situation was due to the small land size for cultivation, the produce being destroyed by domestic pigs belonging to some community members, lack of resources to enhance productivity, lack of labour to assist them with agricultural work, and illness. One of the women explained that she

did not produce enough food because she spent most of her time in bed with malaria and after she recovered, her baby died.

*Nari yoruweryaka yaroyeva ntakhara nkalimme sana mwaha wa owereiwa. Miva kanvoreiwa. Karorupala nto kimwaleiwaka kirowa kapwhanyiwakano malaria nave kirowa kakhalaka miyeri mili oxipiritali. Omattha havo yalimawo ntakhara aiyaka yaweiwe okithokorerya yomi. Kikhummakawo sisatho mwanaka anakhwa nave nihala tho nikattamihen'ye.*

[It was a little because I did not produce enough (food) due to illness. I was sick. I was pregnant and I got malaria whereby I was admitted in the hospital for two months. No one was working in the field because my husband was looking after me. Soon after I was discharged my baby died and we were mourning the loss].<sup>230</sup>

It is clear that the women's inability to produce enough food for the household consumption is contributed to by a number of factors already mentioned above. The study participants indicated that they had small farming lands where they produce cassava and groundnuts as their main food crops. They also produce secondary food crops such as beans and yellow peas which are cultivated in the same farming lands with the main food crops. In my observation, there is a lack of knowledge and skill for vegetable cultivation. However, the food produced in these small farm lands is not sufficient to ensure that households have food from one harvesting season to another, which is a period of, more or less, one year. Consequently the continual use of the same land for agricultural work leads to poor soil. Furthermore, the land with poor soil results in poor crop diversification and poor productivity. To illustrate the consequence of low productivity, one of the women interviewed said:

*Elapo n'ryahu, ikhutte ni epwiri kinisuwanyeya sana. Kahi va kimulimme matthuvi matxokhwa pahiru ntakhara seiya tinisuwanyeya sana, uuuh.*

[In the land where we live, it is not favourable for the production of beans and yellow peas. At the moment I have only cultivated groundnuts and cassava which are suitable to the type of the land, yeah].<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Interview with Ermelinda, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Filomena, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

Concerning this statement, one can observe that the overused land is less productive and requires additional resources in order to increase productivity. During my field research, I had observed that women use traditional agricultural tools such as hoes for farming and rely on rain for irrigation. The use of the hoe for farming requires physical strength and, therefore, puts the health of women in jeopardy. In addition, the use of inadequate traditional agricultural instruments and the lack of fertilizers and irrigation systems prevent women from achieving household food security.

Women lack labour to make their agricultural work more productive. This factor is exacerbated by their lack of access to finances and inability to hire labour to assist them with the agricultural work. Besides their lack of access to productive resources, poor health constitutes the major factor that prevents women from engaging in agricultural work and thus contributing to low productivity. When she herself or a member in the family is ill, women cannot work as they have to take care of the ill person. Women spend most of their time taking care of the ill household members. Another issue is the crop loss due to destruction by livestock, which also contributes to household food insecurity.

During the time of the interview, all the study participants and their households were relying on the consumption of cassava roots and its leaves. The consumption of cassava only is an indication of the lack of food security. As it has been defined in section 2.3, food insecurity is the lack of sufficient amounts of nutritious food required to lead a healthy life. The reliance on cassava meal and leaves for consumption on daily basis means that women have a lack of access to enough and nutritious food. Its consumption also has implications for people's health. A study on human nutrition in tropical Africa found that the consumption of a great quantity of cassava without other nutritious supplements has a negative impact on human well-being.<sup>232</sup> Latham argues,

...cassava has the great disadvantage of containing little but carbohydrate. It fills the stomach and produces energy but, unless other foods are eaten, the consumer is likely to suffer from deficiency

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<sup>232</sup> M. C. Latham, *Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa: A Text Book for Health Workers with Special Reference to Community Health Problems in East Africa* (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1979), p. 171.

conditions. It is especially unsuitable as the main source of energy for the infant or young child because of its low protein content. It should therefore be supplemented liberally with cereals and also with legumes or other protein-rich foods.<sup>233</sup>

Furthermore, Latham argues that cassava contains one percent of protein and it is the main cause of kwashiorkor, protein deficiency, in young children relying on cassava for consumption.<sup>234</sup> Cassava has less iron and B vitamins. It “sometimes contains a cyanogenic glucoside (...) present mainly near the outer coat of the tuber.”<sup>235</sup> When cassava roots containing cyanide are not properly processed, it constitutes a cause of “severe disease problems (konzo) in some of the drier areas of Nampula Province where the population relies on a monotonous cassava diet.”<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, this poisonous substance not only leads to health problems but can also lead to death.

#### 4.4.5 Relationship between food and health

Concerning the relationship that exists between food and health, all ten women said that food is “life”. Food is life in the sense that it provides nourishment and promotes the well-being of people. The following comments from three women show that when they speak of food as “life” they immediately introduce God and Jesus into the discussion.

*Kinupuwela wi okhala ni eyolya vate ennikhaviherya vantxeni. Okhalano eyolya, okhalano okumi. Ntakhara havo oniwerya okhala mukumi, nari wetta mukwaha mmirimani ohetthumo. Hon'khala ni ikuru ohilyiye etthu. Nto tivavo wi orino eyolya, okhalano okumi, ohirino eyolya okumi hanono tho. Yesu oruhale okumi wa mmunepani ni okumi tho wa mmwilini.*

[I think that having food sustains the household. Having food is to have life. Because you cannot exist or you cannot walk a long distance on an empty stomach and be alive. You cannot have energy if you have not eaten. That is why if you have food you have life and if you do not have food you do not have life... Jesus has brought spiritual life and physical

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<sup>233</sup> Latham, *Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa*, p. 171.

<sup>234</sup> Latham, *Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa*, p. 172.

<sup>235</sup> Latham, *Human Nutrition in Tropical Africa*, p. 172.

<sup>236</sup> Calisto Bias and Cynthia Donovan, ‘Gaps and Opportunities for Agricultural Sector Development in Mozambique’, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development: Directorate of Economics Research Report, 2003, p. 62.

life].<sup>237</sup>

*Kinupuwela wi muthu ahilyiye etthu, mwili onimutthettheya nari masu (a Muluku) haniwa, ni olima nari ovara muteko mukina konwerya. Mashi walya onnipwanya ikuru sovava muteko, uuuh.*

[I think that if a person does not eat something, the body gets weak and cannot hear the Word (of God), you are unable to cultivate and work. But if (a person) eats food gets the strength to work yeah].<sup>238</sup>

*Muluku etta ahokhaliherya okhalano eyolyayeyo, muttho onikhalano etala. Ntakhara wakhhalano etala, honlima, onrwela nantthethe, onowereywa, ophiyerya onakwa. Etthuene tiwi mutthu alimaka, (Muluku) onnamukhaviherya, solima sammatta ikhalamo, solima areliha, ohattha, opweha mpa onalyatu.*

[If God does not help a person to get food, will experience hunger. Because if you are hungry you cannot cultivate, you become weak and sick to the point of death. That is why when a person cultivates, with his (God) help, the produce grow, it is blessed, you harvest and store it in the house for consumption].<sup>239</sup>

According to these three women, food is life and when eaten, it sustains them and their families. The access to enough and nutritious food gives them the strength to work in their farms. Nevertheless, the lack of food contributes to illness and malnutrition. Food insecure people are unable to work because their bodies are weak. Food security is, therefore, crucial in the lives of the people as it contributes to their well-being.

#### **4.4.6 Church attendance**

Eight out of the ten women interviewed are members of the Union Baptist Church (UBC) in Murrupula District and two women interviewed in Nanrele have membership at both the UBC in Nanrele and in Nampula city. Six women had indicated that in a week they go to church twice a week; on a Thursday for the women's prayer meetings and on a Sunday for the church service. The other four women said they go to church three days in a week; in addition to the above, they attend a choir rehearsal on a Saturday. As part of their faith and spirituality, these

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<sup>237</sup> Interview with Deolinda A., on 13 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>238</sup> Interview with Filomena, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Igelita, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

women showed commitment to attend church services, particularly women's prayer meetings.

*Vasemanani mahiku a nexexe, sabado ni murunku, kinniyawo okerexa. Nihiku naxexe nimmwira nexexe asimayiru ni okhaviheryana ni olelihana sa masu a Muluku, miruku sa vate wahu, sintoko etthu muthiana enampwanela.*

[In a week I go there on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. On Thursday we have women's group prayer meetings where we help each other on issues such as sharing the word of God and instructions about our household responsibilities as women].<sup>240</sup>

*Sahikhale irettha, namaxexe ni murunku kinnimurowela. Nari vavale kinikhalaka wenna hinavovo nihiku niphin'ye, n'sha, kikilathi. Nihiku na nexexe kiri vava, navetho murunku kiri vava. Kahinoniwa kihiri mumu, kosuweliwa wi kinninvoreiwa. Okinanara okilatthi kihirowa okerexa kihirikinvoreiwa.*

[If there is no illness, I go there on Thursdays and Sundays. Even in those days that I am here, there is no day that I have missed women's prayer meetings. On Thursdays (women's meetings) I am here, Sundays I am here too. If people do not see me there they know that I am ill. I do not like missing church services if I am not sick].<sup>241</sup>

According to these sayings, women's commitment to women's group prayer meetings has some indications that the group is a place of safety where they feel more comfortable to share their issues with one another and together pull resources to assist those facing more difficulties.

#### **4.4.7 Position in the church**

Eight women out of the ten indicated that they were preachers in the women's group meetings. Besides being preachers, one of the women held the position of secretary of the women's group, and one held a provincial position of being counsellor. Two women did not hold any position in the church. Although these eight women are leaders, their leadership roles are only confined within women's groups. In other words, it is accurate to observe that the UBC women are voiceless even within the leadership structures of the entire UBC. They only have impact on their fellow

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<sup>240</sup> Interview with Deolinda A., on 13 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>241</sup> Interview with Maria, on 08 January 2009, Murrupula District.

women's lives through the preaching of God's word and encouraging women to engage in social issues (food shortage and illness).

The major task of UBC women's leadership is limited to promoting awareness and contributions of money and food to help others. They organize visitations to the households with ill members. They also play a role in cultural social events such as female initiation rites (see section 3.3.3). Out of these practices, the UBC women are not part of other high position within the church. Consequently, they do not have influence in decision-making. Practically, the women's work is separate from the church's leadership structure, which is mainly composed of men. The lack of women's voice and participation in the church leadership and decision making places them in a disadvantaged position. Women do not have influence on the entire church leadership structures.

#### **4.4.8 The role of the church**

When the women were asked if the church was helping them when they have a food crisis, eight of the ten women said that in general the church did not help them. They also stated that they have never seen the church assisting the poorest with food. Furthermore, two women said that within their local churches there are some individual church members, and there is also the women's group, which help those in need. The following are what these two women said:

*Ekerexa ahu hiyanono ikuru somukhaviherya muthu... N'nyaa akiristu amoha amoha, yawoo aniwerya, animukhaviherya mukwaya. Ekerexa hiyanono ikuru somukhaviherya muthu... Mashi, yokhala nikhuru na asimayi anemererya othukumana yirano yovelela ya yolya, nari yamusurukhu enawerya wavahanto atthu yale otepa ahawa. Mwayala akhalamo aniwerya wakhaviherya atthu mashi eri asimayi amukerexa, mahiku makinatho nari eri asimayi ohikhala amukerexa, mashi anira ari asimayi otepa ohawa. Asimayi anniwerya oreherya yavakhani aya yakhaviherya akwaya yale.*

[The church does not have the power to help a person... But even individual Christians, those who are better off, are able to help their friends. The church does not have the power to help a person.... However, there is a women's group that have agreed to come together and contribute food or money to help the poorest. Within this group there are some who have the ability to assist people, particularly women who

are church members and sometimes to the women who are not church members, particularly the poorest women. The women's group is able to pull together some goods to help their friends].<sup>242</sup>

*Ninnimukhaliherya mayi. Sakhala somukhumela, orettha, nnimukana asimayi nrowa ntthoko nenle, nrowa namukhaliherya ni eyolya. Sa athu ahiniweryawerya, ninnirowa walimiha etthima aya, nahiyerya enalamo mmiso/iphyo saya.*

[We help a woman. If she has a preoccupation such as illness, we take food to help that needy household. For instance, for the elderly, we go and help them by ploughing their field to enable them to plant seeds].<sup>243</sup>

The two comments above indicate the lack of a defined approach regarding the involvement of the church in social issues, particularly in response to the food crisis. In response to the social issues affecting them, some concerned women, within the women's group, have agreed to form a fundraising group with the view to help other women in need. In addition, the issue addressed in the question above was a new issue for some of women. One of the women commented particularly on the fact that the social responsibility of the church was a new issue for her to think about.

*Opattxerya vopattxerya niwaliahu masu a Muluku, hinsuwele wi mukerexa ennikhalamo yamahala mutthu onivahiwaiye. Niwale masu a Muluku wi wamuroromela Muluku nihiku nokwa on'ya ovuluwa wakhale vamoha ni Muluku. Athu anthhipale yayaka okerexa iwe, anroromela wi yavulushiwe wirimu. Hiyavovo yottharaxa ya mahala wi navahiwe nari yowara, nari yolya. Etokotokoxa nnimuroromela Muluku wi nakhele okumi wohimala nihiku nokwa.*

[Since in the beginning that we have heard God's word, we did not know that in the church there is any assistance that is given to the person. What we heard about the word of God was that if you believe in God, after death, you will be saved and be with God. Many people when they go to church, they believe that they will be saved in heaven. There is nothing specific to depend on, such as an assistance that we might receive like clothes or food, nothing. The most important thing is that we believe in God that we will receive the everlasting life after death].<sup>244</sup>

Two out of the ten women said their local churches in Murrupula area help them when they are in need. One of them said if the church has or does not have food it could not interfere with her commitment to attend church services because she is not

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<sup>242</sup> Interview with Henriqueta, on 16 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>243</sup> Interview with Deolinda A., on 13 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>244</sup> Interview with Henriqueta, on 16 January 2009, Murrupula District.

going to church to look for material assistance, but to worship God.

*Mashi yiraka vakerexa vavale, erivovo, kinnikhaviheriwa. Yahikhalevo kinlipiherya onvekela Muluku pahi. Yeyo onikivahaiye kinalya yeyo. Mashi nkinre wi okerexa nkin'yawo ntakhara nkikhanle ni eyolya, nari wi ekerexa hekikhavihenrye. Ntakhara kahiye okerexa kinrowela eyolya, mi kinrowela onvekela Muluku.*

[If there is food in the church I do get assistance. If there is no food I only keep praying to God and what he gives I only eat that. But I have never said that I am not going to church because I was not given the food or the church did not assist me. I do not go (to church) because of food, I go there because of God].<sup>245</sup>

The role of the church is perceived by women to be a source of spiritual help. Although the church does not have a significant impact on women's socio-economic life, their faith in God is what drives their commitment to attend church services and as well as to survive.

#### **4.4.9 God as a source of help**

With regard to the health challenges, six out of ten women said that when one of their family members is sick they turn to God in prayer for help. They suggested that God is able to help them by healing their family member. Further, God helps them to find financial resources that enable them to get medical assistance. The remaining four women said that they turn for help to the church members and to their relatives.

All women interviewed indicated that when they have a food crisis, it is God who helps them by meeting their needs. God helps them in different ways. Out of the ten women, five said God protects them in time of food crisis. Four women said that God is their hope that sustains them. When they have a lack of food they wait on God to help them with food. This could be the food that is still in the field or food given by other people through God's intervention.

One of the women said that God blesses the little food that she gets in that period and when she prepares and eats it, her family feels satisfied. Seven out of ten women

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<sup>245</sup> Interview with Mdalena, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

agreed that God helps them by giving them the strength to work the land and prepare meals. Similarly, three women said that they rely on God to bring the rain for irrigation, to make their plants grow and produce enough food to sustain their households. The following are some of the sentiments expressed by the women:

*Vava kiryaka oleloeniva kihilya, nari mpawakham'mu ohikhalamo eyolya, kihano kilotthaka, kinroromela wi Muluku tonikikhaliherya.*

[Since this whole day I did not eat, not even I do not have food in my house and until now I am still alive, is God who helps me].<sup>246</sup>

*(Muluku) onnikivaha ikuru kinavya intikwa, kinavotta kinavaha anamwane. Owerya wa mwanene Muluku, aiyaka annimwavya ttottotto, ethuma nikusi eruha nikhaviheryano. Ttottotto ahikhale valee ninttikela ntikwa nenle.*

[He (God) gives me the strength to look for cassava leaves, I prepare and give it to my children. By the grace of God, my husband can look for a part-time job, buys dried small fish, brings and we eat it. If there is no part-time job we continue eating cassava leaves].<sup>247</sup>

*Mulukuru pahi tonkikhaliherya. Ntakhara kahikhale ni eyolya kinninkekela Muluku okikhaliherya. Anakikhaliherya ni okivaha ekumi kinalima. Kalima vale kinninkekela wi Muluku akikhaliherye wi etthimaka, ni mmiso kinalaka owerye winnuwa, okhumemo ethu yokikhaliherya.*

[I only rely on God to help me. Because when I do not have food, I pray to God to help me. He helps me, gives me health and I work in the farm. After I have ploughed the land I pray to God to help me and make the seed that I plant to grow and produce enough to sustain me].<sup>248</sup>

*Muluku onnikikhaliherya. Okikhaliherya wawe oni: kahikhale ni etthu nihikunene nenlo, kinomala kinan'wehererya Muluku. (Muluku) onnimuruma mutthu, akuxa eyolya, aruha, akivaha. Kinaroromela winto etthu ele kipwan'nye mwa ikharari sa Muluku.*

[God helps me. He helps me in the following way: when I do not have anything in that particular day, I wait on God of heaven. He sends a person who takes the food, brings and gives me. I believe that this thing I got it by the grace of God].<sup>249</sup>

These sentiments of women indicate their total reliance on God for survival. For

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<sup>246</sup> Interview with Juliana, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>247</sup> Interview with Lucia, on 08 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>248</sup> Interview with Ermelinda, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>249</sup> Interview with Henriqueta, on 16 January 2009, Murrupula District.

them, God is the source of their life (including plants) and well-being. God is always present in women's daily experiences of struggle to survive. Through love, God identifies with the women by taking care of their needs. God provides them with food and survival resources such as land and rain (for irrigation) enabling their survival. Furthermore, women believe that God is the source of labour. On condition that God provides health, he is giving strength and ability to the women to work the land and employ other survival strategies. Health issues constitute one of the major issues, after food, which women are most concerned with. They have a deep recognition that God through his power gives them life, health and strength. It is through God's strength that they are able to work in the farms for their survival.

Women also depend on the power of God to control the weather, to send rain for the irrigation at the right time, to make plants grow and bring food from the land. Total dependency on God is what keeps the women alive in the context where opportunities are lacking for one to choose a variety of sustainable survival resources. God helps the women to see survival resources that enable them to sustain their families. Women's reliance on the power of God is revealed in their faith experiences such as prayers.

#### **4.4.10 The role of prayer**

All women interviewed suggested that prayer is an important tool that helps them to cope with food insecurity. It is through prayer that they present all their requests to God. When they pray, God hears and answers their prayers. Six out of the ten women said that when praying, God provides food by blessing their farms and making them productive as well as through other people (individual church members, relatives and neighbours). The following are examples of how women had seen God answering their prayers through other people:

*Muluku onniwupusherya atthu ookerexa yavya marereloaya eruha eyolya. Ekivaha, kilya. Ekina tiwi, kihikhanle ni eyolya sisale emusi aka ennikona, wi kokhalano etala. Nave amusiaka yale annavya eyolya, eruhiwa, ekivaha.*

[God reminds the church members to look for ways to get food. They bring and give it to me to eat. The other thing is that my relatives see me

that I have a lack of food and they say, “in that household there is hunger. It is good that we look for food to give them”. The food is found, brought and given to me].<sup>250</sup>

*Kahikhale ni eyolya, kinnikhalakhala kivahiwa na asinaitthokwa aka. Muluku onnakhula mavekelo aka, miva va kinakhala pahi. Mutthu onnikhala nnaitthoko aiye akhala muhimaiye naritho akhala ameyawe. Nto yowo toni: motepa, mwana owo ahikhwe etala. Nto onihavula makhaka awe ovaha nto orowa wathupula owani.*

[If I do not have food, sometimes my neighbours give me (food). God answers my prayers yes, and I survive. A person can have her neighbour and be her sister or her mother. It is the neighbour who says: You are in critical situation your child must not die of hunger. (The neighbour) takes some dried cassava and gives them to you and go to process them at home].<sup>251</sup>

*Muluku tonalamulela athu yawo mmunepani mwaya nto awo yona wirawene kinvahe, nni yahupuwelela. Nto kinnisuwela wi Muluku tolamulenle uuh, tanvan’he ikuru uuh. Nto komwi: obrigado mwanene.*

[God commands people in their hearts and they become concerned to give even when they were not thinking of doing so. In this way I know that God had commanded them yeah, gave (the person) the power, yeah. And I say, “thank you” to the owner (God)].<sup>252</sup>

The above comments express women’s understanding of God’s work in their daily life experience. When there is a lack of food, women see God working through other people, extended family and neighbours, to provide them with food. This indicates that faith in God is a central part of women’s lives, and as a result, their lives in the world connect with their faith in God to meet their needs.

#### **4.4.11 Perceptions of God**

Based on examples of prayers given by women during the interviews, it was possible to understand how women described God in their daily struggle to survive within the context of food insecurity. Their prayers revealed that all women had addressed God as their “helper.” When praying, they asked God to help to meet their personal needs and those of their household members. They also asked God to give them life, health, strength, food that will enable them to live and work in their farms. Six out of the ten

<sup>250</sup> Interview with Deolinda A., on 13 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>251</sup> Interview with Deolinda D., on 08 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Juliana, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

women addressed God as their “protector.” In their prayers they asked God to protect them until the harvest period, which is the period that takes place from March to June every year. Out of these six women, two had addressed God as their “father” who is always with his people listening and answering their prayers. They also acknowledged God as the one “who takes all their troubles away.” Four out of the ten women had addressed God as “the powerful” God and “sustainer.” They acknowledged that it is God who makes the rain fall, controls the weather and makes the plants grow and produce. From these four women, two acknowledged God as a blessing God. They asked God to bless the little food they have in the house and to bless the products that they have planted in their farms. The following are some examples of women’s prayers seeking help from God. At the same time, their prayers describe who God is for them:

*Kiniveka wi mwakha ola wamutano, vatthokoni vaka Muluku arelihe. Aruhevo mareliho, iphyo kanliaka arelihe, okhuma waya ikhume morera wi kihantthene, kipwen’he mpa waka kihakalalekeno vamosa ni anaka ni emusiaka yothene.*

[I pray God bless my household this year. Fill it with blessings, bless what I have planted to be more productive, and when I harvest it and store it in the house, it will be a joy for me, my children will be happy and my family will be happy too].<sup>253</sup>

*Kinvekela wi Muluku mukimorele ikharari ntakhara etala nipuro nenla yokatthamela, nkinona womalelavo, ntakhara nyu Muluku muri mwanene ovaha ni tho okhaviherya.*

[I pray God has mercy on me because I have hunger in my household, I do not have any means, because God himself, you are the owner, the provider and the sustainer].<sup>254</sup>

*Muluku mukikhaliherye, va kothoiwa navetho kovoliwa. Va nkinimona okikhaliherya, nari ookhanle mukivaha eyolya. Nyu muri Muluku, muri Apwiya muniwerya okimorela ikharari, omuruma mulipa yowo okhanle omoriwa ikharari akikhaliherya ni eyolya. Mi nkimusuwenle, nyu momusuwela ntakhara nyu mosuwela sothesene. Nto tivavo kinnovekakani wi mmurume mutthu wi akivahe eyolya.*

[God help me, I have nothing and I am hungry. I do not see anyone to help me. I do not see anyone who can give me food. Only you are God, you are Lord able to show mercy by sending a person who has food. I do

<sup>253</sup> Interview with Deolinda A., on 13 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>254</sup> Interview with Filomena, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

not know the person. You know the person because you know everything. Please send a person to give me food].<sup>255</sup>

*Muluku, mi kiri mutthu ohawa, mutthu otthoiwa, nyu munawerya okivaha tivi yeyo kihin'hovaka olelo kokhala mwakhela. Munakivaherya ikuru, murimaka munalipiha wi tho ohupuwele itthu ikinatho, nari sorowa wiya ntakhara mahiku othene kiri ni nyuwo. Nyu Muluku munnawerya okikhaviherya.*

[God I am a poor person, needy person, you are able to provide anything that I have no idea of getting it today. Give me the strength and strengthen my heart so that I should not think other things, not to steal because every day I am with you. You God are able to help me].<sup>256</sup>

These prayers of women reveal their daily life experience, particularly their daily struggle to survive food crisis and poverty, based on their faith in God. They identify God as the one who sides with them by meeting their spiritual, economic and health needs. Women's reliance on God, their creator, through prayer, is not a passive act. Women pray while working and believing that God will provide survival resources such as food through the work of their hands or through other human sources. In other words, their faith in God through prayer to provide food is accompanied by their daily activities. Women's faith, based on their prayer to God, constitutes a source for coping with food crisis.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the responses of the ten women interviewed. The responses to each question in the interview are detailed. The study findings affirm the arguments from the literature review (chapter 2) stating the crucial role that women in developing countries, particularly women in Mozambique, play as household food producers and providers. When women do manage to obtain money, they tend to spend it mainly to meet the household needs such as food, clothes, medical and school fees. The study findings also reveal that women have both practical and theological resources they use to cope with food crisis and poverty. Their practical livelihood resources include traditional agricultural knowledge and skills, possession of traditional agricultural tools, access to land use, social relations within the extended

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<sup>255</sup> Interview with Juliana, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>256</sup> Interview with Maria, on 08 January 2009, Murrupula District.

family and community. Among all these resources, the main livelihood source is the agricultural work. However, the agricultural work is less productive due to health issues that affect the women and their household members. Other factors contributing to low productivity include small land size, poor soil, the use of traditional tools such as short hoe, and their lack of access to productive resources such as credit, fertilizers and labour. These factors contribute to persistent household seasonal food insecurity.

Within women's context of food insecurity, poverty and illness, women employ theological resources for survival. Their theological resources include faith in God, prayer and agricultural work, prayer meetings, fundraising groups and sharing practices. These are reflected in the daily struggle of women to survive. They pray to God seeking help and protection, but at the same time having an understanding that human beings should live by their own labour. They also raise funds within their groups, with the view to extend God's love in solidarity with the needy and thus preserve lives. In the following chapter the theological resources of Murrupula women will be analysed. It will also attempt to discuss the importance of recovering the subjugated theological knowledge of the poor and marginalized women.

## Chapter Five

### Theological resources of Murrupula women

#### 5.1 Introduction

In chapter four the research findings were presented. The findings reveal that in an attempt to generate household food security, women of faith employ both practical and theological resources in their struggle to survive. This chapter analyses theological resources of Murrupula women. Their theological resources are faith experiences that have been ignored when assessing women's survival strategies. Rather, the focus has been on assessing women's material conditions. This omission has prevented the emergence of local theologies of poor and semi-literate women from different socio-economic, political, cultural and religious contexts. This study argues that Murrupula women do have theological resources that they exploit for their own and for community survival and well-being. An analysis of these theological resources will be made using Haddad's notion of "survival theologies."

#### 5.2 Faith practices of survival theologies

Delores Williams introduces the idea of women's survival through the story of Hagar in the wilderness.<sup>257</sup> In her study, Williams, discusses survival and a quality of life using Hagar (Gen.16:1-16; 21) as a model for African American women experiences of faith in their struggle to survive in a context of slavery and economic exploitation. She argues that Hagar's story is an example of survival tradition whereby God promises resources for survival rather than liberation.<sup>258</sup> Liberation in Hagar's story is a human initiative.<sup>259</sup> Hagar chooses "to liberate herself from oppressive power structures" by running away into the wilderness.<sup>260</sup> It is in the wilderness where she has an encounter with God who provides her with survival resources.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), p. 20-21.

<sup>258</sup> Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, p. 20-21.

<sup>259</sup> Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, p. 5.

<sup>260</sup> Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, p.19.

<sup>261</sup> Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*, p. 31-32.

Drawing on Williams' notion of survival, Haddad has conducted a study with Vulindlela community outside Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.<sup>262</sup> She found that poor and marginalised women have theological resources they utilize for their survival within their context of poverty. These are found within the context of religious women's networks. She argues that these networks constitute an important source for survival and are where poor and marginalised women take control of their lives.<sup>263</sup> She notes that women form networks in response to religious, cultural and socio-economic issues affecting them. Within their networking groups, women employ faith practices that enable them to survive their daily struggles.<sup>264</sup> Their key faith practices include extensive use of extempore prayer and the preaching of the biblical text, raising funds and the wearing of a church uniform.<sup>265</sup> Here, the first three faith practices are discussed, as they are crucial for this study. Haddad suggests that "(In each of these practices, there is an interconnectedness between the spiritual and material realms."<sup>266</sup>

Haddad observes that prayer is a tool of communication employed by women to voice their burdens to God and suggests that women's reliance on prayer is one aspect of their lived reality of survival faith.<sup>267</sup> Poor women understand that the resources they have are given by God to survive against insuperable odds:

Prayer to God becomes a means through which women voice their burdens away from sites of struggle in their own safe space. It becomes an immediate link with the spiritual realm which enables them to see their lives from a different perspective as they unburden to God and to one another that which weighs heavily on their hearts.<sup>268</sup>

Women pray believing in God to help meet their needs. This can be observed, according to Haddad, that women's prayers and practical strategies are intertwined in their daily life experiences and each day as they are confronted with illness, lack of food, unemployment and death, their testimony "is about how they prayed to God and

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<sup>262</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 408.

<sup>263</sup> Beverley Haddad, 'Theologising Development: A gendered Analysis of Poverty, Survival and Faith', *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 110 (July 2001), p. 16.

<sup>264</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 408-409.

<sup>265</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 313-324.

<sup>266</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 408.

<sup>267</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 319.

<sup>268</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 408.

“made a plan”.<sup>269</sup> However, there is a tendency that if prayer is done without being accompanied with practical action it can be passive where women would only pray to God and wait without making effort to seek practical strategies which can enable them to enhance their lives and livelihoods.

Haddad also observes that women’s prayers express their faith in God and this faith is strengthened through their reading and reflection on the biblical text. “In their extempore preaching practices, women experience a direct link with God through expounding the biblical text, which is always directly related to and connection made with their material reality.”<sup>270</sup> Women share their personal stories when relating the biblical texts to their experiences of struggle to survive and this theological discourse of women is different from that expressed within male dominated structures. It is a discourse that embraces both a life in the church and a life in the world.<sup>271</sup> This social site constitutes a source for a spiritual support as well as for material support. As women within their networks support each other spiritually, they also raise funds to support those who are in need economically.

Haddad notes that women form “networks of their own which are constituted into collaborative groups generally known as *stokvels*.”<sup>272</sup> In the context of the church, fundraising is always associated with acts of faith, deeds of charity, and is accompanied with prayer and chorus singing.<sup>273</sup> She observes that women’s ability to raise funds gives them dignity and self-dependence. The art of giving becomes a vehicle whereby women united gain resources of power that enable their survival.<sup>274</sup> She argues that fundraising practices also reflect an aspect of women’s survival strategy that enable them to resist economic deprivation. Furthermore, she holds that women’s ability to raise funds through giving their money as a communal group reflects acts of care and concern for one another, especially to those in need and facing difficulty times such as illness and bereavement. She thus concludes that

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<sup>269</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 316.

<sup>270</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 409.

<sup>271</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 409.

<sup>272</sup> “*Stokvels* are small-scale savings clubs or credit unions through which women make financial resources available for projects they would otherwise not afford... Members enter into an agreement to pay a fixed sum of money into a common pool on a weekly or monthly basis” (Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 109).

<sup>273</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 110.

<sup>274</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 291.

fundraising practices employed by women are “practices of survival faith that integrate their understanding of the power of God and the need to remain physically alive through financial resources”<sup>275</sup> in their struggle to survive.

Haddad argues that these faith practices are theological resources that are a direct response to the literal need to survive. This struggle for survival “is in itself a form of resistance.”<sup>276</sup>

Survival struggles have tended to be interpreted as a passive acceptance by poor and marginalized women of their victimised state... Survival embraces a dignity, a quality of life, which is intricately intertwined with these women’s understanding of God in their lives. Poor and marginalised women employ strategies that show agency and resistance to their material conditions of oppression.<sup>277</sup>

The ability to survive thus shows women’s agency to exploit different survival strategies (including their faith) to sustain their households. Haddad argues that “strategies of survival, as everyday practices of life, are *“arts of resistance”* that prevent the community from falling into despair and have been used “to keep the community alive and hopeful”.”<sup>278</sup> However, the knowledge and agency of poor women to exploit theological resources for survival remains subjugated in many communities. Haddad argues that there is a need to recover subjugated knowledge of the poor and marginalized women.<sup>279</sup>

### **5.3 Recovering subjugated knowledges**

In an attempt to recover the subjugated theological knowledge of local people, there is a tendency on the part of theologians to do theology *for* the people<sup>280</sup> rather than doing theology *with* the people.<sup>281</sup> Sedmak argues that doing theology is “being

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<sup>275</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 292.

<sup>276</sup> Patricia Collins quoted in Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 338.

<sup>277</sup> Beverley G. Haddad, ‘Surviving the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in South Africa: Women Living and Dying, Theologising and Being Theologised’ *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 131 (July 2008), p. 48-49.

<sup>278</sup> Delores Williams quoted in Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 340.

<sup>279</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 261.

<sup>280</sup> Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), p. 3.

<sup>281</sup> Clemens Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology: A Guide for Artisans of a New Humanity* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002).

attentive to the signs of the times”<sup>282</sup> which are manifested “themselves in local social structures and in local expressions of social life.”<sup>283</sup> This is, according to Schreiter, because in every context there are challenging questions needing new theological answers. He points out that in order to carry out sound theological reflection, social analysis of the context must first be undertaken. Without social analysis of the local context, “a theology readily can become either irrelevant or a subtle tool of ideological manipulation.”<sup>284</sup> Sedmak also suggests that local theologies can be constructed using local theological resources.<sup>285</sup> These resources can be accessed through fieldwork whereby trained theologians go and live with people, listen to their voices, and experience their daily life as they struggle to survive and to sustain their families.<sup>286</sup> To do this is important because, as Cochrane suggests, local people “possess a theologically and socially relevant wisdom about their situation and context,” but this wisdom is marginalised.<sup>287</sup>

However, it is often not recognised that semi-literate and theologically untrained people have the ability to do theology and to reflect on their faith experience in their own contexts. During the last decade, a body of theological work has emerged that has clearly explored the importance of recognizing and recovering subjugated theologies of poor and marginalised communities.<sup>288</sup> Haddad, quoting Michael Foucault, suggests subjugated knowledges are knowledges “that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task... naive knowledges located low down on the hierarchy...”<sup>289</sup> She suggests that the voices of indigenous African women have been neglected and seen as “disqualified knowledges.”<sup>290</sup> Furthermore, it is the disqualified knowledge of poor and marginalised women that “perform a necessary critical function for all theological reflection” and, therefore, their recovery becomes

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<sup>282</sup> Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, p. 3.

<sup>283</sup> Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, p. 124.

<sup>284</sup> Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, p. 3-4.

<sup>285</sup> Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, p. 146.

<sup>286</sup> Sedmak, *Doing Local Theology*, p.147.

<sup>287</sup> Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity*, p. 21.

<sup>288</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’; Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity*; Gerald O. West, *The Academy of the Poor: Towards a Dialogical Reading of the Bible* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1999); Megan Walker, ‘Engaging Popular Religion: A Hermeneutical Investigation of Marian Devotion in the Township of Mpophomeni’, *Semeia* 73 (1996), p. 131-160.

<sup>289</sup> Foucault quoted in Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 260.

<sup>290</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 260.

crucial.<sup>291</sup>

Although some scholars, such as Spivak,<sup>292</sup> have argued that women are voiceless within the dominant structures, Haddad's suggests that women do speak in ways that are not easily acknowledged.<sup>293</sup> Quoting Cochrane, Haddad argues that "[n]o matter how pervasive and extreme their experience of domination, subordinate groups "are never without forms of discourse which both neutralize and negate the hegemonic force of dominant patterns of discourse".<sup>294</sup> Furthermore, with James Scott, she argues that women's discourse takes place within both the public and the hidden realm.<sup>295</sup> According to Scott, the discourse of subordinate groups operates at four levels. Firstly, discourse that takes place in the public realm tends to praise the images of the dominant. Secondly, there is discourse that operates in the hidden realm and "represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant."<sup>296</sup> It "takes place "offstage," beyond direct observation by power holders."<sup>297</sup> It "consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript."<sup>298</sup> Thirdly, there is the realm of "infrapolitics" which is the "politics of disguise and anonymity that takes place in public view but is designed to have a double meaning or to shield the identity of the actors."<sup>299</sup> The discourse is expressed through rumours, gossip, folktales, codes, songs, euphemism, rituals and so forth. Finally, the most explosive discourse of politics takes place when there is a rupture of what is hidden into the public realm.<sup>300</sup>

Haddad, agreeing with Scott, argues that it is in the hidden realm, in a safe social site, away from the dominant structures, where women's voice is to be found.<sup>301</sup> She suggests that women's voice is expressed through the sharing of their faith experiences and through their faith practices in the safe social site located in their

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<sup>291</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 261.

<sup>292</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson, and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 271-313.

<sup>293</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 261.

<sup>294</sup> Cochrane quoted in Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 261.

<sup>295</sup> Scott quoted in Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 261.

<sup>296</sup> James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. xii.

<sup>297</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 4-5.

<sup>298</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 4.

<sup>299</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 19.

<sup>300</sup> Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 19.

<sup>301</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 262.

religious networks. These theological survival resources, Haddad argues, are a form of incipient theology.<sup>302</sup> According to Cochrane, incipient theologies are theologies that emerge when ordinary believers who are not trained theologically reflect on their faith “in a provisional way, gathering an as yet untested wisdom about the meaning of their faith.”<sup>303</sup> Haddad argues that for poor women, incipient wisdom manifests itself in survival theologies.<sup>304</sup> Therefore, this study seeks to better understand the voice of Murrupula women concerning their subjugated theological resources.

#### **5.4 Theological resources of Murrupula women**

According to the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), the key asset of people is found in what is termed human capital and social capital. The findings presented in chapter four revealed that Murrupula women have human capital in the form of faith and social capital in the form of religious networks of support. These resources are crucial for the enhancement of livelihoods and well-being of individuals and communities. These resources are theological resources that women utilize to cope with food insecurity and poverty. Their theological resources thus include reliance on God through faith, prayer and agricultural work, prayer and preaching in their group meetings, and fundraising practices. Prayer and agricultural work will be discussed more fully in section 5.6.

As discussed in chapter four, God plays a crucial role in the lives of women. Women believe in God to provide for their needs in difficult times enabling the survival of their family. For poor women, God is always present with them in their daily struggle to survive. Furthermore, God is their provider and through love God identifies with them by taking care of their needs. The women also rely on God for health-related issues. They rely on God to provide them with wisdom and practical survival strategies that would enable them to cope with illness. For instance, God provides financial resources through other people, enabling them and their family members to get medical assistance. In their struggle to get medical assistance, they acknowledge God as being at the centre of their lives, and through God’s power gives them life,

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<sup>302</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 313-314.

<sup>303</sup> Cochrane, *Circles of Dignity*, p. 22.

<sup>304</sup> Haddad, ‘African Women’s Theologies of Survival’, p. 313, 334.

health and strength in a context where they lack access to adequate health care (see section 3.3.2.1). It is through God's power that they are strengthened and have the ability to work in the fields for their survival. Women also are totally dependent on the power of God to control the weather, to send rain for irrigation, to make plants grow and produce food (see section 4.4.9). Women look to God to provide them with resources in a context where there is a lack of employment opportunities for one to choose and diversify sustainable survival strategies.

As with the women of Vulindlela, women in Murrupula pray to God seeking wisdom, protection, health and provisions. For Murrupula women, prayer is the way that they cry out to God their creator as the only one who knows their situation of poverty, and seek help in a context of food insecurity and poverty. They acknowledge the power of God to intervene in their daily struggles to survive. It is by praying that they are sustained, protected, strengthened and their farms are blessed. Women also pray seeking God's protection and care in the midst of hunger and illness. Their prayers are an acknowledgement that God is in control and knows their situation of lack of food and poverty. They entrust all their needs to God with hope to meet their needs. Within the context of food insecurity and poverty, women experience God who is present in all circumstances.

As with Vulindlela women, the theological resources of women in Murrupula are reflected through their preaching of God's word within their group prayer meetings. Research findings reveal that out of the ten study participants, eight were preachers in women's group prayer meetings.<sup>305</sup> Although the majority of them are semi-literate, they have a sense of dignity and worth when preaching from the biblical text and sharing their faith experiences with one another. They are devoted in attending women's group prayer meetings on Thursdays.<sup>306</sup> Their commitment to prayer meetings is similar to the women of Vulindlela, who find in their prayer meetings a place of safety where they freely pray, preach and share their faith experiences. Here, they provide spiritual, moral and material support to one another.

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<sup>305</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District.

<sup>306</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District.

As with women in Vulindlela who have developed economic strategies such as fundraising practiced within religious settings,<sup>307</sup> Murrupula women have also developed economic strategies in response to food insecurity, poverty and illness. As a group, these women have the power to raise funds and goods to help other women who are in need (see section 4.4.8). The network support of women not only privileges other women but also contributes to the survival and well-being of men as well. The food obtained and prepared by women is served to all household members, including men. The women's fundraising efforts reflect their agency and unity in resisting oppressive constraints such as food insecurity, economic deprivation, poverty and illness.

Furthermore, Murrupula women sacrifice themselves by generating household food security through their engagement in agricultural work. Women's practice of subsistence agriculture enables them to resist hunger and ensure their households have basic foodstuff such as cassava, groundnuts and beans. Their agricultural work enables the survival of their children, grandchildren, and relatives, and when food is shared with others it also enables the survival of the community. This entire process is sustained by theological resources of Murrupula women. These contextual theological resources, this study suggests, could have an expression in local theologies of *okhala*.

### **5.5 Definition of the term *okhala***

In the *Makhuwa* language the word *okhala* has a range of meanings. *Okhala* is used by *Makhuwa* people in their daily life experiences to describe their living conditions. It means "life," or "to exist," or "to live" as a process and it describes people's daily courage and determination to confront and deal with all forms of oppression such as food insecurity, poverty, poor health, lack access to productive resources, and so forth. When *Makhuwa* people are asked "how do you survive?" Their response is *kokhala* meaning "I am alive" or *nokhala* meaning "we are alive." Traditionally, the word *okhala* is used by *Makhuwa* people to describe their status of "being," as well as their continued existence, despite of lack of food and material deprivation. For example, one can say *kokhala* not necessarily meaning that a person is healthy or is

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<sup>307</sup> Haddad, 'African Women's Theologies of Survival', p. 340-341.

food secure, but rather expresses a person's state of continuous existence. According to Martinez, *Makhuwa* people believe that God is the author of life, who promises them survival resources. They also believe that without God there is no life. They survive because God exists.<sup>308</sup> Religiously, they have an obligation to offer sacrifices to ancestors in celebration of life (birth, puberty, marriage), in the search for health, and during the preparation of the fields for planting and harvest periods.<sup>309</sup> When there is drought, people offer sacrifices to ancestors asking for rain as well as during the planting season as they request help in obtaining a good production that will ensure household food security.<sup>310</sup>

Finally, the word *okhala* also means "well-being." It is related to the word *okhalano* which means "to possess." It describes people's ability to work using the acquired knowledge and skills and through their labour acquire good output.<sup>311</sup> It also describes the ownership of different types of resources that contribute to the household sustenance and resist vulnerabilities. For instance, in *Makhuwa* society, to have many children means *okhalano*. Children not only are viewed as a blessing from God, they are a great source of labour and economic security (see section 3.3.3). Martinez<sup>312</sup> points out some *Makhuwa* proverbs stating the significance of having children in *Makhuwa* society. Some of proverbs include *Oyara wisopola* [to have children is freeing oneself]; *Oyara muhaku* [to have children is wealth].<sup>313</sup> These proverbs indicate that people, particularly women, have human capital. Children function as human labour by helping their mothers with agricultural and domestic work. When children grow up and are employed they provide financial and material assistance for household's subsistence. The use of children for labour has implications on their development and constitutes one of the factors that contribute to the high level of illiteracy in rural areas of Mozambique. There is a need for women to be economically empowered in order to contribute towards reduction of high rates of

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<sup>308</sup> Francisco L. Martinez, *O Povo Macua e a Sua Cultura*, 2ª Edicao (Maputo: Paulina Editorial, 2008), p. 192.

<sup>309</sup> Martinez, *O Povo Macua e a Sua Cultura*, p. 215.

<sup>310</sup> Martinez, *O Povo Macua e a Sua Cultura*, p. 222.

<sup>311</sup> Tvedten, "'Opitanha": Social Relations of Rural Poverty in Northern Mozambique', p. 57.

<sup>312</sup> Martinez, *O Povo Macua e a Sua Cultura*.

<sup>313</sup> Martinez, *O Povo Macua e a Sua Cultura*, p. 80-81.

child labour, break the cycle of poverty through investing children in education and enhance their lives and livelihoods.<sup>314</sup>

## 5.6 Towards theologies of *okhala*

As discussed above, the term *okhala* describes people's continuous existence and their struggle to pursue a quality life. In this study, *okhala* is used to describe the daily living conditions of women and their attempt to enhance their lives and livelihoods within the context of food insecurity and poverty. Women in relation to men are more vulnerable in their attempt to generate household food security. In *Makhuwa* society some men do not play their role as the head of the family in ensuring household food security. This responsibility is fulfilled largely by women. For instance, some men use the term *okhala* to describe their status of existence and well-being in a different way that women use it. According to my observations and experiences, some men claim that to have a wife is a way of *okhala*. They believe that a wife is a great source of survival as she looks for means to provide food on a daily basis,<sup>315</sup> whereas for women, faith in God is the source for coping with food insecurity and poverty.

In their struggle to generate household food security and attempts to ensure the household well-being, Murrupula women employ survival resources that are rooted in their faith in God. However, their theological resources are not easily recognized as they take place within women's groups that lie at the level of infrapolitics (between the public and hidden transcripts), away from male dominated structures. Women's voices in relation to their faith experiences in response to food crisis and poverty appear to be silent in the public realm. This study seeks to recover subjugated theological resources of Murrupula women and contribute to a contextual theology for

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<sup>314</sup> For further discussion on child labour, see Sinenhlanhla Sithulisiwe Ngwenya, 'From Womb to Work: A Theological Reflection of "Child Labour" in Zimbabwe', Unpublished Masters Dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2009.

<sup>315</sup> The major responsibility for the survival of the household falls on women as they are more concerned with the household's survival and well-being. In matrilineal *Makhuwa* society, some men particularly some husbands have a view that children belong to their wives' family line (see section 3.3.3). As a result the husbands are less preoccupied in finding ways to sustain their families. This ideology has negative impacts on the household food security and women's well-being. Women become vulnerable due to the many household responsibilities they have to fulfil such as household food producers, food providers, caring for children and all domestic work. (Information Data Collected during Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District).

social transformation. The study findings presented in chapter four revealed that Murrupula women are able to resist hunger and survive through the use of theological resources. The indigenous notion of *okhala* has a great significance to the survival of the women interviewed in the study.

According to Murrupula women, the term *okhala* describes their status of existence and livelihoods under God's care and intervention. They and their household survive because they have God, the author of life, who is involved in every stage of their lives and in their daily activities. They believe that their agricultural work is very important for their survival and well-being and that of their household. They also believe that the principle of work has been created by God who commanded people to work and survive from the fruits of their own labour.

*Makhalelo o wi hiyo niphathuwakaru makholo ahu yanlela wi olima tori etthu etokwene. Muluku onipathunxe wi nivareke muteko, n'lyeke eyolya yawihuenexa, nihinaiya, nihinavekaveka etthu yowuliha muru. Nto ninniroromela wi atthu yavaraka muteko enapwanya eyolyaya, etthu yorera mukumini watthu.*

[Since we were created our forefathers told us that tilling the soil is a great thing. God had created it so that we must work, eat our own food, we must not still and we must not rely on asking from others because it is a disgraceful thing. We believe that if people work and get their own food, it contributes to their well-being].<sup>316</sup>

The women interviewed believe that God helps them and their households survive through the work of their hands, namely, farming.<sup>317</sup> They believe that God created them to be agents of their own survival and well-being by working. This is despite the factors that hinder women's role in achieving household food security (see section 3.3) and even without the help of their husbands. But with God's help women continue to be committed to sustain their families through agricultural work. Their ability and commitment to work the land indicates their understanding that their agricultural work contributes to the well-being of their families and preserves the life of the present and future generations.

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<sup>316</sup> Interview with Henriqueta, on 16 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>317</sup> Information Data Collected During Interview From 8<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> January, 2009 in Murrupula District.

Women's agricultural work is connected with their daily reliance on God through prayer. They pray while working and believing that God will bless the work of their hands. They acknowledge God as the source of their spiritual and physical life. God is the assurance of the continuity of life.<sup>318</sup> The following are some of examples of the interconnectedness of women's prayers and their work.

*Kininveka Muluku wi arelihe vavo kanlakavo mmiso aka. Muluku akhaliherye ekhalevo wi kinaikhaliheryano okhala mmwilini mwaka ni mmwilini mwa athu.*

[God please bless the field where I have planted my products. God bless it to be more productive to enable my sustenance and that of other people].<sup>319</sup>

*Kalima vale kinninkeka Muluku wi akikhaliherye wi mmiso ola kinalaka mmatta mu owerye winnuwa, okhumemo ethu yokikhaliherya miva ni emusi aka.*

[After I have ploughed the land I pray that God help me with this seed that I am planting in this field, make it to grow and produce enough to sustain me and my family].<sup>320</sup>

The relationship of women with God through prayer is a deep recognition that God is the source of their life and this life can be maintained through human labour. This reflection of women upon their faith is a way of engaging in the task of theology. It illustrates their yet unrecovered incipient theologies. On a daily basis, the women interviewed, reflect on their faith as they engage in strategies that enable them and their households survive. Women's survival is basically rooted in their faith in God through prayer and agricultural work. This indicates that women totally depend on God for their survival. With the help of God, the women are able to produce food for their household consumption. The sacrifice that women engage in working on the farm with the view to ensure the survival of their families reflects their role as agents in exploiting both spiritual and practical resources. It is the reflection of their assets expressed in human and social capital.

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<sup>318</sup> Martinez, *O Povo Macua e a Sua Cultura*, p. 191.

<sup>319</sup> Interview with Filomena, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

<sup>320</sup> Interview with Ermelinda, on 11 January 2009, Murrupula District.

These women are not passive but active in their commitment to work as a way of resisting hunger and therefore choosing to live (*okhala*). They rely on God and work rather than focusing on the problem of food insecurity. Women do not accept the problem of food insecurity and poverty by sitting and waiting for God to provide for their needs. They do work by using the available local resources in response to the problems that affect them. The little food that women produce and obtain from other sources are used for household consumption and also shared with the needy within their communities with the view of ensuring human beings existence. Women's lives and their agricultural activities are in connection to their faith in God. In other words, God is the source of both their spiritual and physical life. God provides them with the resources to survive. Women recognize that without God's help their agricultural work would become unproductive.

In both *Makhuwa* society and within Christianity, particularly in this study, the term *okhala* is used to describe women's reliance on God, and their courage and determination to deal with food crisis in their attempt, through agricultural work, to ensure household food security. They entrust their daily lives and living conditions to God's care and intervention. God enables them to exploit the available resources in the search of quality life. Furthermore, the significance of the indigenous notion of *okhala* is more than literal survival faith. The women interviewed not only literally survive, but they have a desire to live a full quality life despite poverty and food insecurity. The indigenous notion of *okhala* reinforces the celebration of life and well-being. For the women interviewed, it is their theological resources that enable them to live within the Murrupula context of poverty, food insecurity and poor health services. They survive because they have God who meets their needs by providing them with survival resources. The findings confirm the existing interconnectedness between the material and spiritual realities that are the basis of "theologies of *okhala*."

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the notion of faith practices of survival theologies and it was used to analyse theological resources of Murrupula women. When engaging with Haddad's work, the study has found that both poor women in Murrupula and women in Vulindlela have similar theological resources in the form of human capital and

social capital. Both groups of women have faith and networks of support that constitute an important source of survival. They both rely on God to provide for their needs. Their faith in God is expressed through prayer and commitment to women's prayer meetings. The networks of support of women, such as prayer meetings, function as a safe social site where women share their faith experiences and encourage one another. This site also serves to support other women in need.

The findings from the study also revealed that the study participants not only literally survive, but they have a desire to live a full quality life despite poverty and food insecurity. They do so through their use of agricultural work as a survival strategy which is not simply about producing food, but it is about the process of well-being. This chapter has suggested that the theological resources of Murrupula women indicate that they live by theologies of *okhala*. They are theologies that seek to preserve people's life (*okhala*) and their well-being. The following chapter provides the summary of the study and reflections for future research.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion**

#### **6.1 Summary**

The first chapter introduced the study with focus on practical and theological resources that Murrupula women of Union Baptist Church have and utilize in their struggle to survive.

Chapter two of the study examined the role of women in food security. The literature review showed that women in developing countries, particularly in rural Mozambique, play a crucial role in household food production and provision. It was noted that factors such as poverty, the gendered division of labour and the lack of access to productive resources contribute to women's bad performance and low productivity and thus constraining their role in achieving household food security. Furthermore, illiteracy was seen as being the major hindrance to women's lack of access to information about their rights of access to resources and to seize opportunities in search for a quality life.

Chapter three examined the vulnerability context of Murrupula women using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework. The researcher pointed out that Murrupula women live within a context of vulnerability. Shocks such as poor health, irregularity of rains, plant and livestock disease and price variation had negative impact on household food security. Illness is the major factor among others that contributes to women's vulnerability and persistent household food insecurity. Women are unable to work on their farms due to their responsibilities to take care of the ill household members. It was noted that irregularity of rains, plant and livestock diseases contribute to low productivity, thus contributing to household food insecurity. Furthermore, it was discovered that the exclusion of women from the community leadership and development process contributed to their vulnerability and marginalisation, thus limiting them from accessing resources that would enable them generate sufficient food. It was found that Murrupula women have limited access to social basic infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, transport and communication and clean water. It was argued that the lack of access to these resources put the well-

being of women at risk. In addition, religious and cultural teachings and practices were found to be contributing to women's vulnerability and as a result the majority of women were semi-literate and economically dependent on men. It was argued that the lack of access to education contribute to women's vulnerability because they lack access to information about their rights in society, and are unable to benefit both from government programmes aimed to reduce their vulnerability, as well as food subsidies.

Chapter four outlined the responses of the ten women interviewed. The study findings affirmed the arguments from the literature review (chapter 2) stating the crucial role that women, in developing countries, particularly women in Mozambique, play as household food producers and providers. The study findings revealed that women have both practical and theological resources they utilize to cope with food crisis and poverty. Their main practical strategy is agricultural work characterized by low productivity. It was found that factors contributing to low productivity include health issues affecting women and their household members, and lack of access to productive resources. It was also found that faith and faith practices are important theological resources that women use to cope with food insecurity, poverty and illness.

Chapter five analysed the theological resources of Murrupula women using Haddad's notion of "survival theologies." In an attempt to recover the subjugated theological knowledge, this chapter explored the theological voice of the poor women that is found in between the public and hidden realms, known as the infrapolitics. It was argued that Murrupula women have theological resources that they utilize in their struggle to survive food insecurity and poverty. It was discovered that Murrupula women do not only literally survive, but they have a desire to live a quality life. It was discussed that in the search of quality life women engage in agricultural work. It was noted that women entrust their agricultural work to God who is the source of life, to give them health and strength to work, bless and make their farms productive. Their faith is expressed in their connection with their daily practical strategies of survival, which leads to their well-being, locally known as *okhala*. It was discussed that the indigenous term *okhala* describes people, particularly women's, status of existence

and livelihoods under God's care and intervention. The study concluded by suggesting that Murrupula women live by theologies of *okhala*.

## **6.2 Reflections for future research**

From the study findings, it is clear that semi-literate and theologically untrained Mozambican women, particularly Murrupula women, have theological resources that can contribute to a contextual theology for social transformation. Their engagement in both faith and practical strategies for survival, with an emphasis on well-being, indicates that they live by theologies of *okhala*. The significance of the indigenous notion of *okhala* is more than literal survival faith. Murrupula women do not only literally survive but they have a desire to live a quality life, despite poverty and food insecurity, through their agricultural work, as their main livelihood strategy. Furthermore, the indigenous notion of *okhala* reinforces the celebration of life and well-being. However, this notion of *okhala* has not yet been fully examined. Further research needs to be carried out in order to better understand and fully recover the notion of *okhala* and its theological significance in the context of the *Makhuwa* Christian community.

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## **Appendix 1: Interview schedule**

### **Personal details of the interviewee**

What is your name?

How old are you?

Are you married?

Do you have children? How many?

What is your husband's occupation?

And what is your occupation?

### **Educational level**

Have you ever attended school?

If yes, what was your last level of attendance?

### **Economy**

What is your annual income?

How do you obtain money?

Do you save money? If so how and for what purpose?

Who decides money matters within your household?

How does money get allocated in your household?

What is your extra work that generates income besides agriculture?

### **Land**

Do you own your own land?

How many farming fields does your family have?

Who produces food for household consumption?

In the last 6 months, has there been enough food produced to feed your family? If not, why?

### **Health**

In what way do you think the production of food is related to the health of your family?

When your family is sick, who do you turn to for help?

**Faith**

Do you attend church services?

What is your position in the church?

How many times in a week do you go to church?

When you have food crisis, what does the church do?

When you do not have enough food to feed your family,

- What role does God play in your life?
- What role does prayer play in your life?
- How would you describe God in your daily struggle to survive? Please give an example of how you would pray.

When there is a food crisis, what role does the church play in the community?

Thank you for your time and for the information.

## Appendix 2: Consent form

### Declaration

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

.....  
Signature of participant

.....  
Date

.....  
Name of researcher

.....  
Date