MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY

The Sustainability of the producer group concept to the empowerment of smallholder farmers in Chivi district of Masvingo province

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Arts in Developmental Studies of the Midlands State University

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November 2015

APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have supervised the student **Jacob Marangwanda** dissertation entitled: **The Sustainability of the producer group concept to the empowerment of smallholder farmers in Chivi District** submitted in Partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Masters of Arts in Development Studies (MADS) at Midlands State University.

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DECLARATION

I, Jacob Marangwanda declare that the thesis hereby submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (MA) at the Midlands State University is my work and has not been previously submitted to another University.

Signature….....

Date……

Place: Midlands State University

DEDICATION

To Evelyn my love

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe many debts and gratitude to all those who contribute to the completion of this study. Special mention goes to my supervisor, Mr C. Munhande for his incisive comments, technical guidance, unfailing assistance and unconcealedpassionin going over many drafts that culminated into this dissertation. Sincere gratitude also goes to my wife and children for all the encouragement, financial and moral support they rendered during the production of this work. Otherswho have contributed with criticism, advice and information are too numerous to acknowledge. I am grateful to them all.

ACCRONYMS

ADB.....Africa Development Bank

APMS.....Agricultural Produce Market Committees

CSC.....Cold Storage Commission

COTTCO.....Cotton Marketing Company

DA……District Administrator

DFID.....Development Fund for International Development

ENSURE.....Enhancing Nutrition Stepping-Up Resiliency and Enterprises

FaaB..... Farming as a Business

FAO.....Food Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

FDGs).....Focus Group Discussions

GDP.....Gross Domestic Product

GMB.....Grain Marketing Board

GMOs.....Genetically Modified Foods

ICRISAT.....Institute of Crop Research in Southern Africa Technologies

IFAD.....International Fund for Agricultural Development

KNCU..... Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union

KUWA..... Kasese United Women Association

LPD..... Livestock Production Department

MDGs.....Millennium Development Goals

NGOs.....Non Governmental Organisations

PPA..... Participatory Poverty Assessment

PRA.....Participatory Rural Appraisal

SACCO..... Savings and Credit Cooperative

SAFIRE.....Southern Africa for Indigenous Resources

SAPs.....Structural Adjustment Programs

SDC.....Swedish Development Commission

SFBPG.....Smallholder Farmers Based Producer Groups

SLF.....Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

SNV.....Netherlands Development Organisation

USAID……United States Agency for International Development

VS&L.....Village Savings and Lending

ABSTRACT

Smallholder farmers grappled with challenges of abject poverty, they have been vulnerable to shocks of droughts/floods due to environmental climatic change, lack of agricultural inputs and markets; contributing to untold food insecurity and suffering among producer groups. Chivi has become a donor dependent district for relief and development programs. The producer group model has been employed by development agencies to amalgamate smallholder farmer in Chivi district and ameliorate their livelihoods. The model was implemented as a development vehicle so thatfarmers couldutilise their capabilities, and available assets; interacting with institutions so as to access inputs, knowledge and markets which in turn boosted production of value chains. The livelihoods outcomes realised included income increase and improve food security: the overall goal of the model. Although the model celebrated some level of achievements,other variables like global warming and climate change acted as major hurdle to ultimate food security.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Background to the study

The development and impoverishment of smallholder farmers can be traced back to colonialism when the colonial regime confiscated fertile land from the blacks creating commercial farms and relegating blacks to the reserves which were situated in semi arid regions; of ecological region 4, 5 and 6. The regions have poor soil unfit for supporting human livelihoods. The 1893 and 1897 wars of dispossession saw the creation of the popularly known reserves in the history of Zimbabwe among them; Gwaai and Shangani in Matebeleland and the Chivi communal lands came into existence during this period. The white regime created reserves as a strategy to open up fertile virgin land for the white degradados and ensured that black communities grappled with poverty so that they could move from communal lands to urban and newly created commercial farms thereby becoming a large pool of cheap labour, (Mawondo (2009). Those who remained in the communal land were prevented from competing with white settler by making sure that commercial settler farming were heavily subsidised through provision of agricultural inputs at the expense of the black. At the markets, the grading system was discriminating on racial basis thereby creating a class of black smallholder farmers poorly equipped in terms of resources and skills.

The attainment of independents brought a dearth of economic benefits to the communal smallholder farmers. The Lancaster house constitution compelled the government of Zimbabwe to maintain the economic status core and delivered political independence without economic emancipation to the blacks. The Lancaster House Agreement was crafted in such a

way that the redistribution of land could only effectively take place after ten years of independence. Before then land could only be acquired on a willing seller willing buyer principle (Hapanyengwi 2002).

The whites dominated in the agriculture sector despite 75% of the country's population (blacks) relying on agriculture. Black predicament was exacerbated by the implementation of SAPs in Zimbabwe. It over insisted on the need to cut state expenditure on subsidies and service provision. It involved a bias on increasing the Gross National production of the country without a corresponding increase in the livelihoods of the people; people were laid off work while on the other hand the cost of living rose sharply due to the liberalization of markets. In the end the policy did not provide the needed change as the people who were laid off from work, became poorer. The privatization of state companies only yielded an increase in the prices of commodities, Bond (1996). The 1997 worker resistance yielded nothing as the black government failed to sympathise with the plight of poor workers who were evicted from their source of livelihood. The retrenchment of several workers and their eventual mass exodus to communal areas also affected Chivi district, resulting in overcrowded communal areas where people struggled to earn a living.

The situation of smallholder farmers is further worsen by global warming and climate change which saw communal lands hit by droughts and failing to produce quality products which compete at local and regional markets. Most smallholder farmers produced products not even enough for subsistence. While GMB, COTTCO and CSC used to open branches in most growth point for communal farmers to have access to markets, the economic meltdown crippled the operation of these parastatals leaving communal farmers susceptible. The scenario resulted in the swarming of development Agencies in communal land. The major argument being that; communal areas have been neglected for long with most of the

resources being channelled for the development of urban areas. Development models, among them, "the producer group concept" was hoped to be an antidote for challenges grappling with communal communities of which Chivi district is not exceptional. A producer group model (organised production of value chain products by +/-30 smallholder farmers) was adopted to economically empower smallholder farmers through addressing the common challenges of small holder farmers among them; need for capital to procure agricultural inputs in order to engage in farming as a business (FaaB). Smallholder farmers also struggle to accessing markets to sell their produces. Globalisation exposed smallholder farmers to stiff competition from international producer communities where by GMOs products have penetrated the local markets from around the globe. Development Agents quizzed how communal farmers could survive from this stiff competition. The development agents viewed the producer group model as a panacea for economic empowerment of smallholder farmers. Thus the thrust of this research will be to make an assessment of the model's contribution in addressing the challenges of farmers and measure its replicability post project period.

1.2Problem Statement

Smallholder farmers are grappled with challenges of abject poverty. Very poor producers are highly vulnerable to shocks of droughts/floods due to environmental climatic change. Droughts and floods coupled with lack of agricultural inputs have contributed to untold food insecurity and suffering among smallholder farmers. Persistent droughts have resulted in Chivi becoming a donor dependent district for emergency relief and development project. Besides, there are also political shocks which result in policy transformation to the disadvantage of marginalised communal areas. In addition, smallholder farmers experience market shocks such as loss of a job, currency devaluation, sudden decrease in selling price, or

rising food price. These unfavourable circumstances resulted in the wiping away of few productive assets they acquired, as they lacked effective mitigation mechanisms such as skills and savings to deal with unexpected shocks. It is against this background that the producer groups were introduced by CARE International in Zimbabwe from 2013 to 2015 in Chivi district under ENSURE project funded by USAID to ameliorate the plight of the vulnerable smallholder farmers. This research seeks to assess the sustainability of this model in empowering vulnerable smallholder farmers Chivi district in ward 17, 21 and 25 in building resiliency to shocks alluded to above. The research explores the extent to which the model has improved security of productive assets, increased household income and access to agricultural input and markets; and ultimately food security. The findings of the study could then lead to an informed realignment of the model for the benefit of the smallholders of Chivi district in particular. It is hoped that the findings can be generalised for the benefit of other districts in Zimbabwe.

1.3 Justification of the study

A lot researches have been carried out on the effectiveness of producer groups on empowerment of smallholder farmers at global, continental and regional levels. Most of these studies focused on market linkages of small-scale farmers among other things. However, there is limited research on the producer groups in Zimbabwe and Chivi district in particular and a lot of information might not be applicable in Zimbabwe thus the contribution of this research is to assess the sustainability of producer groups in the context of communal farmers in Chivi district and see the replicability of the model in relationship to the economic empowerment of smallholder farmers. The focus of this study is to explore the sustainability of smallholder producer groups on social, financial and natural empowerment. Findings of

the study could then lead to an informed realignment of the model for the benefit of the smallholders of Zimbabwe and Chivi district in particular. The researcher also draw much attention to the contribution of the producer groups to social, natural, physical, financial and human transformation of smallholder farmers in Chivi district. The subject is not only important to policy makers and implementers but also to the locals to augment their standard of life in Chivi rural, learning from their experiences, in order to suit the fast changing climatic and global scenarios. The researcher anticipates that results will enable the present generation to utilise the available resources with future generation in posterity.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The main objective of the study is to explore the sustainability of the producer group model to the empowerment of smallholder farmers using the case study of Chivi district.

1.5 Objectives

- Assess the functionality of the committees and constitution of producer groups.
- Measure the number of market linkages established by producer groups seasonally.
- Assess financial linkages to micro finance institution by producer groups seasonally.
- Assess the level of production
- Measure group maturity.

1.6 Research Questions

The main research question is:

1) How sustainable is the producer group model under the ENSURE project on empowering smallholder farmers in Chivi district of Masvingo province.

Sub- questions are as follows:

a) Explain what you understand by the term "sustainability" in relation to the producer group concept.

b) State five major challenges faced by smallholder farmers in Chivi district.

c) To what extent did the producer groups improve household food security, increased income, access to agricultural inputs and markets on smallholder farmers?

d) In what ways did the producer groups empower smallholder farmers?

e) Outline how the formation of producer groups acted as an antidote to the problems faced by smallholder farmers in Chivi district.

f) What capacity building trainings have been done to empower smallholder farmers and ensure project ownership and continuity post project period?

g) In your own opinion, who are the key stakeholders for the sustainability of the producer groups and what is the level of their engagement in the project?

h) Describe the partnership (if there is any) between CARE international (development agency) and line ministries in the creation and organization of producer groups? Explain its significance.

i) Identify the areas you feel have not been adequately addressed by the producer group strategy and suggest ways to improve the model.

j) What do you consider to be critical for the sustainability of producer groups and empowerment of smallholder farmers in Chivi district?

1.7: Delimitations

The researcher will study 3 producer groups with a total of 100 beneficiaries in ward 17, 21, and 25 in Chivi district. Other producer groups in the district will only be quoted for reference purposes to compare and highlight the sustainability and economic empowerment of the model in other areas. The producer groups were actively involved in the production of groundnuts, sugar beans and tradition chicken value chain products, promoted in the model as a result of their high marketability. Under the producer group model, CARE International in Zimbabwe, World Vision, SAFIRE, ICRISAT and SNV have provided capacity building to ensure that groups have accesses to agricultural inputs, production technical expertise and market information.

1.8: Limitations

The major hurdle which way laid this research is the time constrain. Considering that the working paper had to be presented within 5 months, thorough studies which could have unravelled critical information on the sustainability of the producer group model could not be feasible. However the researcher made frantic efforts to ensure that relevant areas were looked into.

1.9: Theoretical Framework

This research employed the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework by Scoones (1998).According to Scoones any society is likely to fall under what is termed the vulnerability context characterised by shocks and other changes to the social system. Scoones (1998) notes that when people are enmeshed in socio-economic quandary they devise a myriad of livelihood capitals they have to surmount the wrath of their problems. The framework posits that human beings are endowed with various assets such as human, social, physical, natural and financial capital which they mobilise in their endeavour to meet their needs .These capitals shape their livelihood pathways which give them a sense of security and they also use these capitals to circumvent and cope with the challenges they face in life. Thus, Sustainable Livelihood Framework provides an insight on the sustainable economic empowerment of producer group model bedevilling on livelihood of smallholder farmers, in response to challenges faced by communal farmers among them inadequacy of agricultural inputs , limited accesses to markets coupled with global warming and climatic changes which contributes to food insecurity. Smallholder farmers have been organised into producer groups by CARE International in Zimbabwe here in referred to as CARE i.e. in Ward 17, 21 and25 to engage in the production of value chain products such as goats, chicken, sorghum, sugar beans and groundnuts as a panacea to economically empower smallholder farmers and also improve food insecurity. Despite the model promoting a number of value chains, the main thrust in this research focused on the production of groundnuts and traditional chickens as alluded to above. In doing so, people have the capability to transform their livelihood structures. From this perspective, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework by Scoones (1998)is in tandem with Giddens 'Structuration thesis' (1991) ,who argues that structure can constrain human action (macro-economic environment, climatic calamitous and poor

government social welfare policies) , actors as agency they deploy a plethora of strategies to surmount their problems.

In line with Scoones (1998), the macro-economic and political upheavals as a shock bedevilling Zimbabwe have detrimental effects to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in Chivi. From this perspective, the dearth of social safety nets forced development agents to come up with the producer group model as an ideal vehicle for economic empowerment of smallholder farmers. It instils basic democratic values and methods; foster self-reliance organised action; shape relations between institutions and civil society and encourage participant. The model has the potential to promote broad- based economic growth in developing and emerging market economies. Food retailers, wholesalers, and processors have the potential to link smallholder producers to dynamic domestic and regional markets. They can contribute technical and managerial capacity building and investment. Smallholder producers have been relegated to lower value chains. The model therefore seeks to include producer and buyer-driven business model, the development of new market intermediaries, change in mainstream procurement policy, the development of domestic codes of goods. Thus, this conceptual framework is significant in unpacking how smallholder farmers in Chivi district are organised to be partners in new business, using various livelihood capitals to transcend against their quandary. As a result, in this present day smallholder farmers have been organised into producer groups in ward 17, 21 and 25 as an antidote to the challenges haunting them.

In complement, Sustainable Livelihood Framework is significant in this study since it emphasises on the fact that when people are trapped in socio-economic shocks they form social network groups to come up with strategies to circumvent their problems .As a result of

this, there is a mutual reciprocity in terms of social networking between the marginalised small holder farmers of Chivi District. CARE International in Zimbabwe in conjunction with World Vision, ICRISAT, SNV and SAFIRE are the civil societies and brain behind the producer group model under the ENSURE (Enhancing Nutrition Stepping-Up Resiliency and Enterprise) program. The model proved to be a social cement that link smallholder farmers to access financial capital, market, technical production capacities, post-harvest handling and other different kinds to the means of exercising power and so determined the gateways which they pass on the route to positive livelihood adaptation .The Sustainable Livelihood Framework is significant to the study because it analyses a range of formal and informal institutional factors that influence sustainable livelihood outcomes, rural development and environmental management . Also the framework can be applied at a range of different scales from individual, to household, to household cluster, to extended kin grouping to village, region or even nation and has outcome indicators assessed at different levels. It also puts much emphasizes on the capabilities of institutions to transform shocks overtime, employing a plethora of livelihood capitals such as producer group model to handle various livelihoods shocks or stress through well-developed mechanisms. This reveals that the framework seeks to achieve multiple livelihood outcomes to be determined and negotiated by people themselves.

The Sustainable livelihood Framework (SLF) is a holistic and flexible framework for analysing poverty and poverty alleviation. It is against the background of this study that SLF is of paramount significance since it addresses the issue of poverty and offers different livelihood pathways that smallholder farmers can engage in order to move out of poverty. It provide ways of sustainability and engaging in organised value chain production through networking enabling agencies, service provider and the poor to break barriers in market

politics and even the culture of poverty embedded in livelihood assets. Communal farmers in Chivi District have employed the producer group model as a livelihood strategy to fight against poverty. Through deploying these schemes, they have managed to secure the basic necessities since they have gained financial status .Thus, the framework offers strategies which enable people to cope and recover from stress and shocks, maintain and enhance their capabilities and assets which provides sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation.

1.10: Literature Review

The researcher will depend most on studies conducted in other countries like in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda, China and America where a number of such programs have been implemented and documented as mitigation against risks of lack of capital and viable market. Few scholars have developed literature on the concept, considering the fact that the model is relatively a new development. Thus primary and secondary evidence were be used. The researcher also taped from Civil Societies most of which have been Agents of economic and social transformation through advocacy and implementation of the model in Chivi district as alluded to above. Non-government and community-based organizations have played an increasing part in rolling out community development projects and emergency relief programs to alleviating poverty. In this case the ENSURE program within which the producer group model is found was under the implementation of CARE an NGO operating in the district.

However, NGOs have been both praised (UNCHS, 1996a) and challenged (Fisher, 1997) as they bring much needed financial, technical and other resources to dispense development on

one hand, and for palliative 'on-the-ground' development on the other. NGOs are also blamed for their ill-defined but controversial concepts of 'participation', 'empowerment' and 'democracy' and sometimes accused of assuming a 'gate-keeping' role between the government and the donors and thus determining the flow of aid to countries. The donors that fund the NGOs are believed to attach 'strings' to the support they give as well as fostering a fairly elitist development discourse (Napier, 2002)

1.11: Methodology

This inquiry was entirely based on a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is interestingly interpretive paradigm that aims to better understand a phenomenon without authoritative pronouncements characteristic of the quantitative research (Neuman, 1997 and Phillip, 1998). It is a methodology that systematically observes, collects, interviews participants as well as examines documents to intuitively deduct a problem from situation under study (Creswell, 2009 and Neuman, 1997). Creswell (2009) adds that it is a unique approach that combines written text and image data, peculiar steps in data analysis and importantly draws from diverse strategies of inquiry. Burgess (1984) cited in Phillip(1998) views qualitative researches as a vehicle for the researcher to be 'less authorial, authoritative and authoritarian' but uses a variety of research techniques including participation, observation, focus group discussions, group interviews, unstructured and structured interviews and discourse analysis as well as use of visual media. The multiplicity of techniques allows for exposition of many truths, reflecting variable understanding and experiences of different people and phenomenon in different places. Importantly qualitative research gives researcher a chance to shape the abstractions and themes that emerge from the investigation process and in this way most useful to describe and explain challenging

complexities of phenomenon (Creswell, 2009 and Phillip, 1998). For in-depth interviews Boyce and Neale (2006) argues that they are a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive one-on-one interviews with a small sample of respondents to get an understanding of their views on the subject under study.

The researcher was cognisant of the many pitfalls of qualitative research methodology and the use of interviews in particular. Many scholars problematize the possible bias and subjectivity associated with the methodology (Creswell, 2009 and Phillip, 1998). The researcher was aware of that and received secondary information filtered through the views of respondents, who provided information from a designated point and not a natural setting field setting. The researcher endeavoured, however, as much as possible to circumvent some of these shortcomings by being purposively selective of the relevant, knowledgeable and experienced stakeholders and practitioners in Chivi district as well as engaging best practices of research possible. Notwithstanding the limitations of the qualitative research paradigm, the in-depth interviews instrument remains a very appropriate technique to elicit the views and insights of the developers and the stakeholders from government and other agencies involved in the producer group model. Thus the researcher elicited public opinion via face-to-face interviews using semi-structured questions for all groups of respondents. As Bless and Higson (1995) put it, semi-structured questionnaires allow the participants room to express own ideas as well as a discussion to be taken further following up on an issue.

In order to have a more realistic picture of the producer group model, and its economic impact to smallholder farmers, researcher carried out a total of 27 in-depth interviews on purposed samples of different respondents in Chivi district. Schutt (2012) contends that non-

probability sampling techniques where elements are selected on purpose are potentially effective. To determine the sustainability of the producer group model, the researcher carried 27interviews with key stakeholders as follows; 6 from ministry local government at Chivi district, 5 representatives from the department of irrigation and mechanisation, 11 from the department of Agritex and 5 from implementing Agency. Stakeholder were deemed relevant as they will remain monitoring the sustainability of the model post project period when development agencies evacuated the district. Furthermore, these will be important in assessing the model in relationship to other projects which failed to promote sustainable livelihood approach to development. Thus a balanced evaluation of the model will be reached. The researcher contents that the 27 unrushed qualitative interviews allowed an in-depth, interactive and collaborative inductive process that established a comprehensive and fuller insight of the producer group model's sustainability and its economic impact on smallholder farmers.

Survey data obtained from the various stakeholders outlined above was supplemented by questionnaires and numerous site visits to get an on-the-ground reality of the operation levels and organisation of the producer groups in ward 17, 21 and 25 in Chivi district.

1.12: Ethical Considerations

Ethics are an essential part of any research and Neuman (2000) defines ethics as a legitimate and moral way of carrying out a research. For this study, since the researcher conducted interviews on both key stakeholders and smallholder farmers participating in the production of groundnuts, sugar beans and traditional chicken value chains, their unconditional consent was sought. The researcher issued two consent forms to each of the respondents prior to administering an interview which was signed with the respondent retaining one copy. The

informed consent forms were very clear on the right to choose or refuse to participate or withdraw from the interview process even during its progress. The researcher clarified that the objective of the study was purely academic purposes and that confidentiality and anonymity would be strictly maintained. The researcher did not use money, material or non-material promises to entice the interviewees into engaging into the interviews. The researcher also identified himself as a student at the Midlands State University in the Republic of Zimbabwe.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to Machi and McEvoy (2009) a literature review is a synopsis of other research. It is a critical appraisal of other research on a given topic that helps to put that topic in context. Comprehensive literature review provides the reader with a succinct, objective and logical summary of the current knowledge on a particular topic. Machi and McEvoy (2009) argue that literature review is not a series of quotes or lengthy descriptions of other people's work, but provides critical discussions on the topic of interest while pointing out similarities and inconsistencies in existing relevant literature

A literature review is a critical evaluation of extensive research and theories relating to a specific topic. It is a process of analysis and synthesis of previous work in order to produce a summary of the knowledge on that topic. It gives insight into the background and the context of a proposed study and is a logical, coherent argument that arises from a critical analysis of the state of knowledge in a specific topic area.

Aveyard (2010) argues that the importance of the literature review cannot be overstated. It is the tool to advancing practice for it can help to inspire and generate new ideas by highlighting inconsistencies in current knowledge. Thus a comprehensive literature review allow the researcher to critically summarise the current knowledge in the area under investigation, identifying any strengths and weaknesses in the previous work, thereby helping to identify them in one's own research and thus eliminating the potential weaknesses, whilst bring to the fore the potential strengths. Also it provides the context within which to place the study. It is important because it provides an up-to-date

understanding of the subject and its significance to practice. It helps to identify the methods used in previous research on the topic, the questions that need to be raised in the research and provides comparison for one's own research findings. Once a literature review has been done, the research proposal will be easy to write. Some of the research questions may be answered in the literature review and so pointed the researcher in the direction of another piece of research related to the area of interest because one would have identified gaps in the literature and may want to examine those.

According to Hart (2010), a good literature review will extract and critically evaluate the pertinent findings and issues that have emerged from previous work, thus provide justification for the proposed research by showing evidence that some imperfections exist in the area which need to be addressed by further investigations. The literature review is also an aid to gathering and synthesising that information. It draws on and critique previous studies in an orderly, precise and analytical manner. The fundamental aim of a literature review is to situate the research in its relevant context or background. Furthermore, exploring existing theoretical conceptual frameworks concerning a given subject becomes feasible through using literature review. It facilitates the development of theoretical or conceptual framework.

2.2: The Concept of Producer Farmer Based Group

Many proposals have been couched in crisis narrative: producer farmers portrayed as vulnerable victims of globalisation, modernising markets or environmental threats, who could be developed as beneficiaries of government, donor and private initiatives. By treating small farmers as victims, these programmes miss producer farmers' role as active economic actors

in their own right. Given the entrepreneurial nature of agriculture, smallholder producers are analysing their options, managing risks and making their own decisions.

The chapter reviews the literature surrounding the modern agribusiness to the promotion of broad-based economic growth in developing and emerging market economies. Focus would be on Global and African perspective on smallholder producer groups citing case examples. The chapter will cover policies and innovations which connected smallholder producer groups within global, African and regional modern markets. It also critically assesses the opportunities and limitations presented by producer group model.

A producer group is a team consists of people, sharing a common interest, working together to achieve a common goal, knowing each other by face and having intimate interaction with each other. Participants are organised to become a team with each playing respective supporting roles. The participants work in groups, interacting with farmer associations and contractors. They also have a shared vision and consult amongst themselves as well as implementing the skills acquired during trainings, (Lopdale, 2011).

Producer Farmer groups offer the following benefits to members; getting access to training in new farming methods and farm business management skills. Usually organisations that facilitate development activities target farmer based groups and other types of groups. It is for the group to access viable markets both locally or outside the country as well as getting discounts on bulk purchase of agricultural inputs. The groups gets guarantee when accessing credit from financial institutions and can gain more voice in production and marketing,(Lopdale, 2011).

The following characteristics can be related to a farmer based group; they work towards a common aim usually to increase production and marketing opportunities so as to increase

their profit. Members join the farmer group freely and they have a constitution which guides their activities. They have committees which lead the group. Members pay some agreed fees for the running of the group. Members meet regularly to report, evaluate and review their activities. They may be represented at a high level by an association. Members are guided by the principle of self-help rather than dependence on external help. The producer group follows sound organisational management principles, regular meetings, and maintenance of accounts, (Lopdale, 2011)

2.3: Global Perspectives on Smallholder Producer Groups

According to Bennett (2002), smallholder producer group is one of a set of concepts around people-centred development that allows people to take action to help them meet their needs, manage risks and make progress towards achieving their aspirations. It refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. Sen, (1985) argues that freedom to choose becomes freedom of opportunities when people have the capacity to act on choices. This depends on their assets and capabilities. The same was reinforced in the Sustainable livelihoods' Framework prompted by DFID (2000). The framework distinguishes five types of 'capital' vis a vis financial, physical, natural, human and social, that provide the capacity to follow a chosen livelihood strategy. The first three capitals are tangible assets, while human and social capital can be thought of as capabilities. A core capability is the ability to make sense out of information in order to generate knowledge, such as determining the viability of new market opportunity, or setting price for farm produce.

Huang et al (2012) notes that smallholder producer groups underpin the capacity of producers to deal effectively with external stresses and opportunities and to manage risk and

vulnerability including adaptation to climate change, under condition of extreme asset constrains. This is seen in the very dynamic responses of households in rural areasin China, where evidence shows the effectiveness of risk management strategies adopted by Chinese rural households, including income diversification and informal social supports. While this concept has its roots in individual self-determination, it can cover both the individual and the collective capacity of people to be agents of their lives and of their development, working with others to achieve collective cultural, political and economic goals. This is what Harry Boyte terms 'civic agency' (Biekart and Fowler 2009). Linked to smallholder groups are three formal institutions, i.e. the state, the formal markets and the civil society. Biekart and Fowler (2009) explore how disempowered smallholder producer groups can increase their level of participation in decision making within those formal states institutions through defending and protecting themselves from forces of globalisation and open markets. They maintained the need for smallholder farmers to be included in value chains and empowered in markets as beneficiaries of external initiatives. To this end, little effort is paid on how small-scale farmers can be supported in their capacity to make choices in the face of new opportunities, new power structures and powerful external agendas. Such positions of producer groups is lacking in agency and opportunity continues in government, multilateral organisations donors, NGOs, academics and more recently the private sector. Paradoxically even radical social movements claiming worldwide representation sometimes have a top-down discourse that does not consider smallholder producer groups' capacity to make and act on their own choices (DFID and SDC 2008).

2.3.1 Who are Smallholder Farmers?

Despite rapid urbanisation and increase of large-scale commercial farming, much of agriculture around the globe is still in the hands of small-scale producers, the International Federation of Agricultural Producer, count landholdings of two hectares or less as small farms. By this measure there are at least 450-500 million small farms, representing 85% of the world's farms, (Nagayets 2005). Smallholders' large numbers have helped to draw international attention to their problems and potential. According to Nagayets (2005) definitions of smallholder farmers are based on farm size. Proctor and Lucchesi's review (2012) suggests that the number may be even larger. These farms are thought to support a population of roughly 2.2 billion people, which constitutes one third of humanity, (Singh 2012). Murphy (2010) argues that there is great potential for smallholder producer groups to fill even more of the world's growing appetite, given the gap between maximum possible yields and current yields on small farms. Proctor and Lucchesi (2012), note that the greatest numbers of small producers are rapidly transforming economies where demand for food is likely to boom. In China, India and Indonesia there are some 309 million of less than 2 hectares. China alone has 189 million such farms representing 98% of farms in the country; 82% of India's farms and 89% of Indonesia are less than two hectares. The way that smallholder farmers fit into the development picture goes beyond the size of their field. In some contexts farms far larger than two hectares are considered small; some tiny farms are more lucrative than large ones; and some sectors are dominated by landless tenant farmers.

Murphy (2010) writes that other complementary, metrics are necessary to explain why smallholder producer groups have received so much attention from development agencies. These metrics address marginalisation in terms of geography, assets resources, markets,

information, and technology. Capital and non-land assets. Smallholder producers have different needs, preferences and constrains, and their marginalisation means that these unique characteristics are often overlooked. Many agricultural policies still offer generic solutions that are better suited to large-scale agriculture. But there are also many development programmes focussed on small producers special needs.

Studies have segmented these diverse groups in a number of ways: based on landholding (Hazel et al 2010), access to assets and productive environment (Berdegue and Escobar 2002), orientation to local, domestic or international markets (Torero 2011), livelihood strategy (Dorward et al 2009)and entrepreneurial attitudes (Farmer Focus 2010). Smallholder farmers also differ from one another in their advantages and disadvantages in their markets exposure and in the causes of those advantages and disadvantages. Smallholder farmers have most often been treated as 'poor' and thus subject to social programmes, rather than being recognised as important economic actors. The vast majority of smallholder producers in the developing world are not fully commercialised. A much larger population of smallholder farmers , what Berdegue and Fuentealba (2011) call class B or transitional household farms, and in which Wiggins (2012) calculates as comprising an average of 20% of Latin American rural households, trade in markets, but rarely formerly. The rest of the pyramid of smallholder farmers, as much as 80% do not regularly sell their produce in markets and instead get most of their income from a wide portfolio of economic activities. Inclusive business schemes based on formal value chains benefit mainly a narrow minority of smallholder farmers, (Seville et al 2011). Disadvantages among smallholder farmers also vary socially according to gender, ethnicity and caste (FAO 2010). In addition, most smallholder farmers buy more food than they produce, a fact that is getting more attention

(Wegner and Zwart, 2011). These producers overlap the category of poor rural consumers so that rising food prices can hurt them more than help them.

2.3.2: Globalisation and Smallholder Producer Group Farmers

Murphy (2010) reviews the debate based on views of globalisation and smallholder farmers. He envisioned a bright future for smallholder producers in global markets, advocating market-based recipes that embrace formal, coordinated supply chains as a tool for alleviating poverty among smallholder farmers. New 'inclusion business' models, focus on integrating smallholder farmers in value chains. This depends on farmers forming producer groups or other formal organisations. Wilfred Kamami a smallholder flower exporter in Kenya explains; 'Once you have a market and are certain of business, making the decision to invest in farmers as suppliers becomes a necessity (IIED 2011)

In contrast, advocates of human rights favour rights-based approaches to development which have emerged as a response to the dominance of markets and economics in setting policy, and from the concern that this dominance does not benefit the poor. Rights-based development aligns the interest of smallholder producers with social movements that resist corporate penetration into agriculture, resist globalisation and advocate greater democracy and food sovereighty that is built on human rights. Murphy (2010) notes that, the Via Campesina peasant movement, for example, which claims to represent 200 million smallholder farmers around the world, has been advocating since 2001 at the United Nation Human Rights Council for an International declaration on the peasants' rights protecting rights to land, seeds, traditional agricultural knowledge and freedom to determine prices.

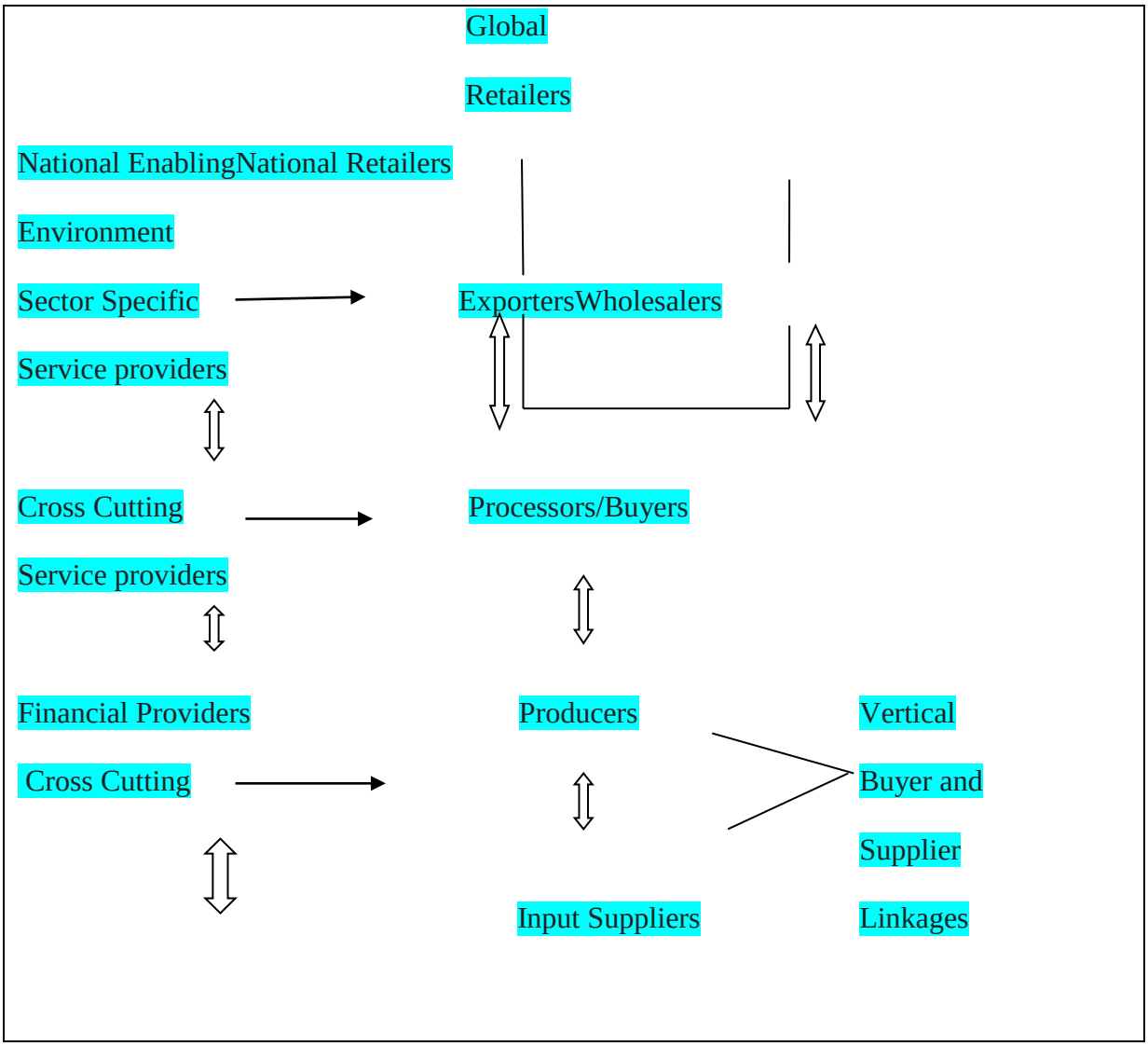
Murphy (2010) notes that the position of many government during recent decades of market liberalisation is that smallholder farmers cannot outperform industrialised agriculture and

have little to contribute to economic growth and development . Another view considers smallholder producer groups as engines for development but then sees most farmers leaving the sector as other jobs appear and agriculture scales up; while still other views argue that a few entrepreneurial smallholder producers will always find room in the shade of their larger competitors, surviving in niche market, (Wiggins 2009)

Smallholder producers are not only facing the effects of globalisation on markets but also experiencing turbulence and change in many aspects of rural society, including demographic transition , urbanisation restructuring of Agri-food and land markets, labour shortage because of migration and evolving patterns of off-farm work that reshuffle the ways rural people make their living . Over the last decade particular concern have been aroused about the feminisation of smallholder farming; changes mentioned have shed lights on the gender dimension of agriculture and employment (FAO 2011) and also pointed to the opportunities and challenges that the development of value chain present for women's income and empowerment as social and economic actors in their own right. At global level, countries with the highest share of producer groups in marketed output, for example, Taiwan, Korea, the Netherlands and France also have a high average yields for staple crops like rice and wheat, as well as substantial cash crop export, (Wanyama 2008).

Below is Fig 1, which shows the producer group buyer- supplier Linkages business model.

Figure: 1: The Producer Group Model



Source: Lopdale (2011)

2.3.3: CARREFOUR'S QUALITY LINE IN CHINA

With the rising consciousness of consumers on food safety, the demand for high quality and safe food has increased. In 1999, Carrefour started to sell the "green food under its own brand with the "Quality Food Carrefour" logo. These lines represented an innovation in purchasing systems within China, where Carrefour integrates management of the entire supply chain,

with full traceability. To date, co-operators of the Carrefour quality line are all larger-scale, rather than smallholder farmers, the later account for more than 90% of the rural population in China, demonstrating the challenge of connecting smallholder farmers with the demand for "safe food", (Dinghuan and Dandan, 2007).

2.3.4: Pakistan

Securing supply is especially important in the current market where global supply is shifting markets from a buyer's market to a seller's market. Retailer buyers and processors may also seek to work around markets where large traders have a hold. This was the situation in Pakistan where a milk processor Haleeb Foods limited, worked around the large and well established milk traders by securing a small- farmer supply base (Tanvir, 2007). Smallholder producers are also sources of produce for niche markets for alternative markets. Both the producer and the buyer usually want to "cut out the middleman" and shift from being depended on traditional wholesale markets to the pursuit of greater value, improved quality and product assurance. Direct procurement is often presented as a win-win for customers, business, and producers. Another reason for business to organise their own supply base is where there is lack of collective producer action, often because of suspicion of cooperatives or laws that insulate producers from the market. Smallholder producers are themselves a new business opportunity.

2.3.5: India

Retailers can buy directly from farmers rather than operating through government-controlled agricultural produce market committee (APMS) markets, new retail models are emerging such as the DCM Hariyali Kisaan Bazaa, which applies a "bottom of the pyramid approach. This is an extension of the approach advocated by Hart (2002), which argues that corporations can make considerable profit by designing new business models and products to target the poorest 4 billion people who make up the base of the economic pyramid

2.3.6: The nexus between Sustainability and next Generation

The farmers expected to feed a growing population tomorrow will come from today's rural youth. But rural areas are going through a major demographic shift, (Proctor and Lucchesi 2012). There are large cohorts of rural youth in much of the developing world. In sub-Saharan Africa, rural youth is projected to peak between 2030 and 2040, while the proportion and absolute number of youth in rural populations are set to fall in all other regions studied. According to surveys and interviews, many young people hope to be leaving agriculture, an aspiration sometimes backed by their families. Informants from India and East Africa reported that youth see farming as a last resort for those with no education and no other option. Smallholder young farmers would quit farming if they had the chance. Satender Arya and Sanjeev Asthana carried out a survey in two Indian states and found that 77-81 % of farmers said they do not want their children to take up farming as an occupation. In Kenya, 64% of 900 household survey preferred wage labour, (Proctor and Lucchesi 2012). In India a national sample survey office cited in Proctor and Lucchesi (2012) found in 2003 that nearly 40% of farming households have options to 'step up' to formal markets. Much analysis of

'inclusive business' does not distinguish between different groups. 'Inclusive business' model and value chain intervention work mainly with the farmers' best equipped to step up.

According to Jaeger (2010), for the poorest smallholder farmers who are net food consumers there are needs far more immediate and these are issues of development, food security, and poverty alleviation rather than commerce. The activities of interventions that seek to include the very smallholder farmers are cost and constraining the very schemes that can bring prosperity to a region. Thus SNV's representative in Nicaragua stated that the poorest of the poor cannot be reached by inclusive business models and must be the object of social programmes. They may start from preconceived ideas of what farmers need and lack rather than from a direct understanding of farmers' own strategies and logic.

In Argentina, Bolivia and Peru smallholder producers capitalised on consumers' growing interest in local cultural heritage, many take the opportunity to market products. In much of the developing world, improvements of roads and a boom in transportation between rural and urban areas are facilitating such circulation from farm to city. As rural marketplace are also growing stronger and more connected to urban markets. Tassi points out that rural urban economic relations are becoming more fluid and the frontiers between these two spaces are blurred, (Learning Network).

2.4: African Perspective on Smallholder Producer Groups

In Africa, smallholder farming account for about75% of agricultural production and over 75% of employment (Salami et al 2010). They are crucial elements of the continental economy, given the heavy concentration of the population in agriculture. There is considerable interest in the integration of smallholder producer farmers into markets, along

with improved seeds, rural roads, and credit facilities. National and regional agricultural policies have often put forward the view that smallholder farmers should be integrated into modern markets in order to increase their overall income. There has been concentration on helping smallholder producer groups to meet the quality and quantity requirement of buyers, mainly through organising them in value chains. However Salami et al (2010) point out that, contribution of smallholder farming to the regions' rapid growth has remained limited. Instead the service sector is driving growth. In Uganda and Kenya, the service sector has developed rapidly, with a growth rate of about 9.5 % and has outpaced agriculture's contribution to GDP. Despite the above assertion, agriculture still supports the livelihoods of 80% of the African population (ADB 2010)

African studies were based on field interviews with farmer groups, individual farmers, and traders, key stakeholders in various value chain and analysis of secondary data in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia. Through this lens the studies found that most smallholder farmers are not organised or are organised under structures that are more informal. With a developed agenda focused on formally organised markets, policies and private intervention therefore benefit only a minority of smallholder farmers, often those with better assets. The majority of smallholder producer groups are excluded from getting involved in formal structures, operating mainly in informal markets which may be well structured and may work better for them. The findings concurs with Dinghuan and Dandan, (2007)'s research findings in China as alluded to above.

2.4.1 The changing context of Africa in farming

Two decades ago, a series of agricultural reforms in Africa were designed to remove inefficiencies of the state led agricultural and marketing system through the cooperative

system. In their heyday however, farmers' cooperatives performed well to improve production and collective marketing but generally suffered political interference, which brought their downfall. In Tanzania, after the Arusha declaration in 1967, cooperatives begun to be perceived as vehicles for furtherance of socialist policies, (TFC 2006). Kilimanjaro Native Cooperative Union (KNCU), based in Moshi, was one of the most successful cooperative union in the region during the 1960s and 1970s but was undermined by the government's disruptive policy measure and interference (Maghimbi, 2010).

Similarly in Uganda, around the same time, the cooperative movement survived but in weakness due to mismanagement and political interference. The political turmoil following the overthrow of president Amin in 1979 further aggravated the situation. Today long standing cooperatives are struggling to cope with economic realities and are from being models of member self-empowerment. The new wave of farmer cooperatives under the new cooperative societies Act are Independent, member controlled and governed by democratic principles. However, a small percentage of farmers belong to these organisations, became the support mechanism and it was hoped they would make agriculture the engine for growth are exclusionary for the majority, (TFC, 2006).

In Sub- Saharan Africa smallholder farmers are the key players in the food supplies as they contribute up to 90% of the food consumed (Salami et al, 2010). However, conventional knowledge is limited on how this majority (non-formally organised) navigate outside the formal realms and confront the debilitating effects of globalised markets on their own terms.

2.4.2: Smallholder producer groups and the markets in Africa.

Modern markets are seen as the best opportunities to link smallholder producer groups to customer effectively, given the growing share of food sales in supermarkets, (Fukunishi, 2010). Much of their stringent requirements such as uniform quality, high standard of hygiene and timeliness of supply, can be difficult for smallholder producer groups to meet. The thinking can be that these challenges can be counteracted with good extension services and collective action to allow small-scale farmers to enter modern markets. This is presented as making markets work for the poor' but in reality the majority are deciding which markets work for them by weighing their opportunities, costs and risks in trading in high value and traditional markets and deciding what form of organisation they need, and when they need them to succeed in markets. Statistics from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics revealed that informal exports of agricultural commodities continue to grow and new regulations designed to increase trade through formal means. Rapid urbanisation is opening market changes. Higher incomes and emergent middle classes with a more diversified diet are opening new and more opportunities for smallholder producers to supply this demand with the preferred flexibility and products .In Kenya, Mugoya (2011) found that 42% of all marketed milk is sold informally from the farm to the consumers and this channel is sustained for several reasons. The milk is perceived as high quality (fresh, creamy, rich and tasty) by consumers, and conveniently delivered to the consumers' door. Further milk sold by this channel is of flexible quantities, determined by the consumers' preferences, (Mugoya, 2011). Smallholder producer groups in Kampala in Uganda have influenced other urbanites to believe that the paste from northern Uganda is superior because it is known to be whole and natural. This development has created a huge market opportunity for groundnut and simsim paste from

northern Uganda. In South-western Uganda smallholder producer groups have made other urbanites prefer south-western ghee for its long tradition, thereby creating a big market for ghee producers' sand harnessing social networks to trade. By recognising the high demand for green fresh maize for roasting in urban centres, smallholder producer groups sell their maize green without having to wait for it to dry and sell as grain as would usually be required in a formal marketing system. Therefore markets that actually work for smallholder farmers are not necessarily formally organised markets, as a lot of producer groups' bypasses these formal means as small farmers weigh up their choices on how to trade gainfully and take advantage of the growing domestic market, (Bihunirwa and Mohammed, 2011).

A case study of smallholder farmers in Kasenda sub-country in Kabarole district in Uganda gives an insight into market participation based on informality and social network for success in markets. Better roads, communication technologies and decentralised government policies contributed to linking rural-to-urban development in terms of markets. However the bargaining power of banana smallholder producer groups in Kabarole has been compromised by the high perishable nature of bananas, lack of social capacity to process or store the commodity, and their low replacement in the value chain, (Embrechts, et al (1996).

However, Bagamba, (1994) notes that smallholder farmers have managed to establish links with buyers, and have attracted a better price that has boosted their household income. This proves that, it is not only enough through formal associations that collective action can be organised to get better prices. Studies by Rwakakamba, (2011) commonly observed that producer organisations reflect a form of agency for smallholder farmers; working together to fulfil socioeconomic needs. In Ethiopia, Mugoya (2011), note that traditional cooperatives existed centuries ago in the form of iqub and idir. Emana (2009), describe iqub as an

association of people having a common objective of mobilising resources, especially finance, and distribute these to members on a rotating basis. The association provides social and economic insurance for the members in the event of death, accident, damages to property, among others.

Equally, in Uganda, Bihunirwa and Mohammed (2011) found that cooperatives have a long history of providing smallholder farmers with a platform to produce and collectively market in order to get better deals. These formal structures are however being contested and the fact that the majority of smallholder farmers remain outside these formal structure should inform reflections on where the majority of farmers are. Nonetheless, given good practices, economic producer organisations like groups and market associations have shown that they can strengthen small-producer agency.

In another study, Mugoya (2011) found that the success of Muki cooperative society of Kenya was based on competent management and enlightened leadership, underscoring the point that good laws and regulations associated with cooperatives are not enough. More importantly, the management should be able to continually address members' needs if the cooperative is to maintain its relevance for members. As with Muki cooperative society, the establishment of a Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) came after the need to provide financial services was identified. Low quality of milk product was addressed through training dairy technologists and establishing a dairy processing plant, (Bihunirwa and Mohammed 2011). While good leadership, entrepreneurial capacities and transparency are overarching, other innovative mechanisms to support and better integrate farmers should be explored.

2.4.3 Financing production through Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOs)

Savings and Credit Cooperatives is a good practice which unlocked finances for smallholder producer groups. According to Bihunirwa ibid in their study, Bukonzo cooperative society, improved its member position in coffee production and marketing through the savings and credit scheme. The manner in which the scheme is designed supports both the farmers with the credit they need for production and the group with the capital for collective marketing, while ensuring that farmers are paid cash on delivery of their produce at the stores. In the same light, Mugoya, (2011) found that SACCOs have greatly supported market participation of smallholder producer groups at Karagwe district in Kagera region of Tanzania. After harvesting their crop, SACCO members transport them to a warehouse. Thereafter the farmer was given a voucher indicating the quantity and quality of the crop deposited, and its value. The farmers could choose both to take the voucher to the SACCO and receive up to 75% of the total value or use it as collateral to attain a loan from the SACCO. Once the commodities have been sold, the farmer got paid the remaining balance, minus the operational cost of warehousing. With this the farmers could avoid other intermediaries and thus receive significantly higher prices.

2.4.4: Marketing groups and support from external organisations

Because markets need volumes of goods, one important mechanism for competing is the creation of associations with the key function of produce bulking for collective marketing. A typical model involves smallholder farmers coming together in producer groups and agreeing on an enterprise through a cost-benefit analysis. Once they reach agreement on the enterprise, they embarked on production. In this way, they are able to produce more than they would

individually produce and get their money all at once, especially when they sell to a single buyer.

A study by Bihunirwa and Mohammed (2011) found that Kasese United Women Association (KUWA) which also doubles as a SACCO and a producer group, agreed to focus on eggplants as group enterprise. The association reported that this decision was based on their analysis of enterprise in comparison with others. They decided on eggplants because they are usually resistant to dry conditions, have quick maturation and do not need spray. Beside the market was readily available. They managed to harvest 600kg of eggplants and confirmed that this was above what each person would produce individually. KUWA was supported by other institutions, such as Kabarole Research and Resource Centre, and National Agricultural Advisory Services, which provided technical and organisational skills. Kabarole Research and Resource Centre‘s method of work encourages farmers’ groups to carry out an analysis of any proposed enterprises, noting the potential benefits and risks.

2.5 Producer Group’s Structure and their role in food security

The generic structure of a producer groups is as follows: Leaders, Members and Complementarity of group roles. It should be noted that there are clearly defined duties for leaderships and membership of the group. All group activities are guided by the group constitution, which prescribes rewards and punishment for compliance and breaching the by-laws of the constitution.

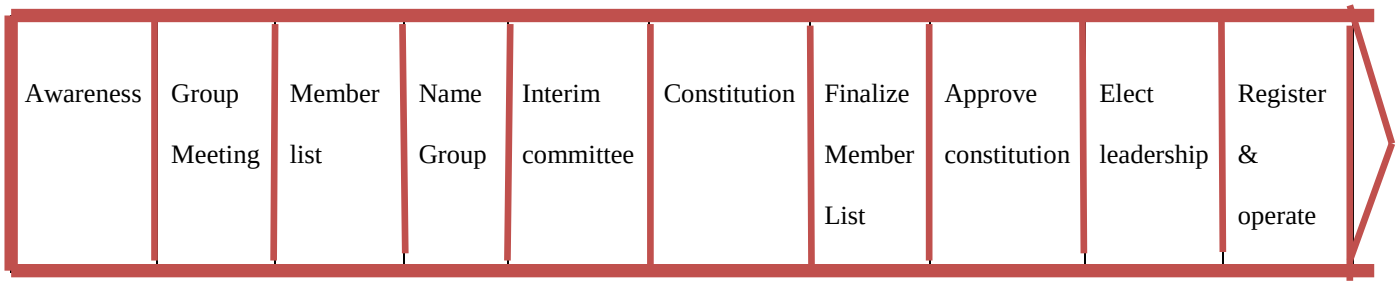
2.5.1How are Smallholder Farmer Based Groups Formed (SFBPG)

The principle of self-help is key to the formation of strong smallholder farmer based producer groups. (SFBPG) Under this principle, it is group members who are responsible for the formation of strong SFBPG as opposed to external agents. Prerequisite to the formation of SFBPG are; total commitment to the goals of the group, full ownership of the group successes and failures; and strengthening their commitment to the goals and objectives of the group. Facilitators like government ministries and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) can only assist in consolidating these groups.

2.5.2Steps involved in Formation of SFBPG

Fig 2 below shows the main stages involved in the development of a SFBPG.

Fig 2: Development of SFBPG



Source: Lopdale (2011)

The group should be taken through the 10 step model. This gives the group an opportunity to reflect on issues that are relevant to group formation.

2.5.3 Role of producer groups in agricultural development and food security

SFBPG have the primary purpose to increase their member producers 'production and incomes by helping better link with finance, agricultural inputs, information, and output markets. (Agriculture Transformation Agency) Agricultural Cooperatives Sector Development Strategy, (2012). The large scale introduction of cooperatives which are closely linked to producer groups in the 1970s and 1980s with compulsory membership was associated with declining agricultural output per capita. In Ethiopia, when farmers were allowed to join or leave cooperatives at will in 1991, cooperative membership fell drastically and yields rose.

Certainly, there have been cooperatives success stories in the region for instance, the dairy sector in Kenya, coffee in Ethiopia and cotton in Mali. Also the examples of Taiwan, India, and Vietnam also show that producer groups can be instrumental in sector transformation. Unfortunately, to date, no African country has achieved a sustained and large scale increase in staple crop yields as a result of producer groups' activities and many of the producer groups have failed to achieve their objectives or have even been counterproductive,(Lopdale, 2012).

The purpose of producer groups is to help farmers to increase their yield and income by pooling their resources to support collective service provision and economic empowerment. Given their primary remit to contribute to smallholder farmer production, producer groups are seen as critical in achieving the government's development targets in the growth and transformation plan. However the main categories of agriculture producer groups fall into

mainstream activities of agricultural undertaking including supplying of agricultural inputs, joint production and agricultural marketing. Inputs supply includes the distribution of seeds and fertilizers to farmers. SFBPG in joint agricultural production assume that members operate the group on jointly owned agricultural plots. The third category consists of joint agricultural marketing of producer crops where farmers pool resources for the transformation, packaging, distribution and marketing of an identified agricultural commodity.

In Africa however, the most popular agricultural SFBPG mode has historically been the marketing of agricultural produce after smallholder farmers have individually completed their farm production operations. But in some cases these groups have combined both inputs distribution and crop marketing. SFBPG facilitate access to natural resources such as land and water, information, knowledge and extension services, markets, food, and assets such as seeds and tools. SFBPG development in many countries has shown that farmers who are effectively organised can benefit from aggregated links to markets and services, from accessing centralised services that can help them achieve higher yields and higher income, and from speaking with a collective voice to advocate for their needs. In Ethiopia, farmers who are members of producer groups tend to achieve higher yields, and staple crops that are marketed through producer groups a price premium of around 7-8%. The 2008World Development Report reviewed the evidence and concluded that “Producer organizations are essential to achieve competitiveness for small-scale producers.” (Wanyama, 2008).

SFBPGs help farmers solve collective action problems, i.e. how to procure inputs most efficiently and market their outputs on more favourable terms than they could achieve by themselves. Accordingly, Ethiopia’s Growth and Transformation Plan foresees a central role

for producer groups in increasing productivity and household income of smallholder farmers. Producer groups are used by the government and NGOs to extend training and other capacity building initiatives. Many stakeholders use producer groups' structures to build capacity in most post-harvest handling techniques as well as commodity (maize and beans) quality. To date not only has post-harvest losses reduced significantly, also become one which has improved market opportunities for smallholder farmers. "Some producer groups offer services to members as a way of building their capacity. Farmers can receive training on production techniques and post-harvest, as well as literacy training, or business and marketing workshops. With access to markets being one of the most difficult challenges, the role of producer groups in helping them to exercise economies of scale is increasingly important. Through producer groups, smallholder farmers can attract traders and institutional buyers, and increase their negotiating power. The concept has also been adopted in other sectors such as transport or commodity transformation, with people buying trucks and milling machines and starting their own enterprises. These new activities benefit the communities through employment creation as well as service provision. This creates more income within the communities and enhances food security, (Wanyama 2008).

2.5.4 Challenges of smallholder producer's markets

According to Proctor and Digal (2008) China and India were the two most populous transforming countries with 43% to 60% of the workforce engaged in agriculture. The number of people demands that Agri-food investors in developing and transforming economies explore inclusive business structures and models. The challenge is to make inclusive development markets work for mainstream business and contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Proctor and Digal (2008) argue that, any business

model within the Agri-food sector is generally built upon a set of assumption. These align to consumer assurance, standards of food safety and quality, low prices and reliability of supply. Smallholder producers can have comparative advantage in terms of quality, innovation, costs and farm management. Where there is scarcity of alternative suppliers due to seasonality, shortage of land or where demand is called for in remote areas away from main distribution channel, there can be a specific business case for linking with smallholder producers. The above finding by Proctor and Digal (2008) seem to contrast with research finding by Norell and Brand, (2013). They argued that very poor producers, major challenge is in acquiring agricultural inputs hence lack comparative advantages. Smallholder producer groups buy inputs in small quantities and so infrequently that it is not worthwhile for inputs supply firms to make an effort to sell to them. They also produce in such small quantities that it is not worthwhile for buyers to make an effort to buy from them**.** The above challenges faced by smallholder farmers were also identified by the (FAO. 2010), It argues that some of the problems faced by SFBPG have been among others, poor management, lack of capital resources, inadequate training , extension and education programmes, lack of communication and participation among members, feudalistic characteristics of society, unclear and inadequate government policies on development of agricultural producer groups, high fragmentation of land holds and weak linkages among activities of the groups e.g. production, credit and marketing. Birchall (2003) looked at measures which can be taken to overcome such problems; among them improvement of farm policies, human resource development through formal and informal training of members, development of commercial partnership and joint venture with private enterprises, development of marketing and agro-processing, implementation of self reliance projects, diversification of agricultural products including the role of producer groups in agriculture in development of export-oriented crops through

contract farming, promotion of universal membership, and strengthening of legal framework of such groups.

Table 1 below shows features of the business for or against smallholder producers' market inclusion.

Table 1: The business case for and against procuring from smallholder producers

	For	**Against**
1	Smallholders' comparative advantages (premium quality, access to land, household labour)	Costs and risks in organising supply from dispersed and smallholder producers.
2	Securing supply in dynamic and rapidly changing markets through spreading supplier base, reducing risk of undersupplying	Quantity and quality
3	New business, clients for other products and services (base of pyramid)	Consistency and safety
4	Indirect access to subsidised inputs (donor assistance)	Negotiation time, Costs and Traceability.
5	Corporate responsibility	Compliance with rising standards and packaging
6	Community goodwill	Loyalty and fulfilment of commitment
7	Political capital	Policy environment counter to smallholder production

Source: Lopdale :(2011)

2.5.4.1: Organizing supply

The biggest challenge for modern Agri-food business to work with smallholder farmers is organising supply. According to Proctor and Digal, (2008), there are perceived to be high transaction costs and higher risks associated with purchasing from large numbers of fragmented smallholder farmers. Modern food processors and retailers are positioned in the market with high standards for safety. Assuring standards of quality and food safety is built on principles of traceability and bookkeeping. Demands for consistent quantity and continuity of supply, packaging and bar coding are all elements of meeting modern Agri-food requirements. Standards may extent to labour and environment, with certification costs proportionately much higher for smallholder producers. Such farmers are also perceived to be less reliable in honouring trading agreements. Given these demands, it is not surprising that buyers seek out large suppliers and also seek out areas which are already favoured by agribusiness, for example those already engaged in export production. This is easier in countries with dualistic structures such as South Africa.

Producers also faces competition from high quality, low-price import, ushered in by structural adjustment and the demands of World Trade Organisation membership there is a close link between chain modernization and liberalization. Supermarket chain, in particular the multinationals, are important importers of foods. However Norell and Brand 2013 notes that very poor producer are linked to a range of micro, small and medium enterprises that buy from them and sell to each other, including wholesalers, retailers, exporters and traders, middlemen, input dealers, suppliers and service providers.

2.5.4.2 Lack of money:

Basic activities and operation performed by producer groups require money for travelling to get market information and organizing meetings, lack of capital has often resulted in downfall of producer groups. They are excluded from big dealings and Memorandum of Understanding contracts which they could have signed had they travelled far and wide in search of information and opportunities but that ill-preparedness in term of money to run the affairs of the group normally shoot down operations of producer groups.

2.5.4.3 Lack of clear objectives.

Through research findings it was discovered that sometimes group objectives are not clear. Members often join with their own objectives in mind. When they realized later on that their objectives were not addressed and remain unmet group conflict become rampant and eventually leads to group failure. Group objectives should be clear from the onset so that the recruitment of membership is based on common interests other than subtle egocentric tendencies.

2.5.4.4 Poor group leadership

Particularly one that lack transparency with funds.

2.5.4.5 Poor communication.

Leadership must always ensure that group members are well informed about what is going on in the group. This will enhance trust and togetherness.

2.5.4.6 Poor service delivery.

Smallholder farmers must continue to get the services they demand, be it from the government, line ministries and development agencies for them to continue supporting the group's efforts.

2.6: Empowerment

Kabeer**,** 2001:19**,** defines empowerment as "a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability." She argues that there is a wide gap between this understanding of empowerment and the more instrumentalist definition attached to efforts to measure and quantifies empowerment. In her analysis the ability to exercise choice incorporates three inter-related dimensions: resources (defined broadly to include not only access, but also future claims, to both material and human and social resources); agency (including process of decision making as well as less measurable manifestations of agency such as negotiation, deception and manipulation); and achievements (well-being outcomes). Three dimensions of choices are indivisible in determining the meaning of an indicator and hence its validity as a measure of empowerment. This concurs with Malhotra, 2002's definition of empowerment which stresses the ability of people to make strategic choices in areas that affect their lives. Two key factors in the process of empowerment are identified vis a vis control over resources (the conditions for empowerment) and agency (the ability to formulate choices). CARE, Global Research Framework (2006:4) describes empowerment as; the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives. According to the framework, impact on women empowerment is reflected in three inter-connecting aspects of social change. The first driven by the actor-centred notion of Agency is in the aspirations, resources, capabilities, attitudes, and achievements of women themselves. For each sub-dimension, a possible method or information sources are also suggested. It is stressed that the appropriateness of each sub-dimension and method will vary according to social context and the concrete indicators that would show improvement along one of the sub-dimension may well differ from place to

place, era to era in the same place, or even from group to group in the same place and time. From the look of things empowerment is variously conceptualised as a process, an end-state and a capacity. However efforts to measure empowerment need to consider different levels in terms of micro/macro, individual/collective and also consider different spheres such as economic, political and social spheres. Besides there is also need to consider different temporal scales; often beyond the lifetime of a single programme and must be sensitive to social context.

2.7: The Regorvening markets program

The re-governing markets approach set out to address three questions vis a vis 1) Can smallholders producers and their organisations be partners in new business? 2) Can the new Agri-food drivers be partners in development, and 3) can anticipatory policy make any difference. Berdegue et al., (2008) notes that case examples with global coverage were documented on policies and innovations which connected smallholder producers with modern markets. On the other hand researchers attempted to explore innovations which sought to provide insight into the technical, organisational, managerial and financial changes deemed necessary for smallholder producers to implement in order to be included in dynamic markets. Major thrust was also on the implications of interventions which address the sustainability and potential for up-scaling and replication.

The approach undertook empirical country-based research addressing the features of change in market channels, the determinants of farmer participation on different channels and the household impact (Huang and Reardon, 2008).

2.8: Best practices of producer groups in Africa

The IFAD programme in Morocco which targets women and youths into agriculture has created more than20, 000 jobs enabling the groups to become more integrated into the communities. Young farmers have become role models in contributing to the wealth and stability and making the place where agricultural business can thrive.

In the Niger Delta, IFAD targets disadvantaged youth producer groups through the community Based Natural Resource Managed Programme. By providing financial and technical resources, the programme has helped youth turn catfish and vegetables farms into vibrant, profitable businesses. At the same time it has enhanced community cohesion, reduced violence and increased access to nutritious food. (www.ifad.org/.../africa)

The Githunguri coffee and daily agricultural producer groups are making lives of many Kenyans flourish. Currently the groups have grown tremendously and have an annual turnover of Ksh 3 billion and an average of 170.000 litres of milk per day. This growth has emanated from proactive responses to be successful in pursuit of significant growth in a rapidly changing economic, social and political environment. In July 2004 the society commissioned its own milk processing plant and was able to access wide market through value addition and wide range of dairy products. The investment resulted from members contributing Ksh 1 for every kg of milk sold. Fresh has revolutionised the Dairy industry in Kenya, (www.*fresha.co.ke)*

Given the remoteness of hotel, local supply from smallholder producer is much less costly, especially during the rainy season when the road transport from outside the area is not always possible. Such local supply also has a promotional value in tourist trade: a support to local communities coupled with the encouragement of environmentally sound production, (Marufu et al 2008).

In contrast to the centralised fresh produce procurement system of South Africa retailers which rely on preferred commercial suppliers, there is also innovation in procurement schemes. Two rural based supermarkets chain stores in the Limpopo Province sources fresh vegetables locally from smallholder farmers. By 2004, Thohoyandou SPAR was procuring approximately 30% of its vegetables from about 27 smallholder farmers. These farmers are supported by interest-free loans, a guaranteed market, farm visits and training on required quality standards. The remoteness of the supermarket from the central distribution centres, the stores operate in rural areas, reduced transport costs, and meeting freshness requirements as well as contributing to community development; is the drivers for supporting the development of this local procurement scheme from smallholder producer groups (Bienabe and Vermeulen, 2007).

2.9: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) emerged in the 1990s as an alternative path to address grassroots problems, empowering local people through more opportunities. The SLF was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on environment, and development expanded the concept, advocating for the achievement of sustainable livelihoods as a broad objective for mitigation against poverty.

Sustainability; a livelihood can be classified as sustainable, if it is resilient in the face of external shocks and stresses, if it is independent from external support, if it is able to maintain the long term productivity of natural resources an if it does not undermine the livelihood options of others, (Kollmair et al 2002.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has developed a sustainable Livelihood Framework which is the most widely used livelihoods frameworks in development. Chamber and Conway (1992) define the term livelihoods as capabilities, assets, and activities required for a means of living. The above concurs with Ellis (2000)'s conceptualisation of livelihoods as a means of living which people in households obtain their living.

De Hann and Zoomer, (2003), maintain that livelihood encompasses adequate stocks and flows of food and cash to meet basic needs. A household may be able to gain sustainable livelihood security in many ways through ownership of livestock, trees, and rights to grazing land, fishing, hunting or gathering, through stable employment with adequate remuneration or varied supply or pool of activities. To this far, Wallmann, (1998) posits that livelihood is never just a matter of searching shelter, money and food, it is equally a matter of ownership and circulation of information, the management of skills and relationships and affirmation of personal significance and group identity.

The concept of livelihoods can extent to cover social and cultural means the command an individual, family or other social group has over an income and bundles of resources that can be utilised to satisfy its needs. This may involve numerous things to include cultural knowledge, social networking, legal rights, as well as tools, land and other physical resources, IFAD, (Hobley and Shields 2000).

Capabilities refer to the ability of an individual to realise their potential as human beings both in beings and doings. In a nut shell capabilities entails a set of alternatives of being and doing that a person can achieve with his/her socio-economic personal flexibility.

Chambers and Conway, (1992) note that assets are the starting point of a livelihood built. They are the building blocks upon which household can engage in labour markets and participate in exchanges with other crossroads. The fundamental characteristics of assets is that they either exist as stalks which gives flow of output or they are brought into being when surplus is generated between production and consumption.

A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base" (DFID, 2000). DFID's biggest aim is the elimination of poverty in poorer countries thus it underscored a couple of core principles in the Framework.

2.9.1: People-centred

People rather than the resources they use are the priority concern in the livelihoods approach**,** since problems associated with development often in adverse institutional structures are impossible to be overcome through simple asset creation.

2.9.2: Holistic

A holistic view is aspired in understanding the stakeholders' livelihoods as a whole, with all its facets, by a manageable model that helps to identify the most pressing constraints people have to face.

2.9.3: Dynamic

Just as people's livelihoods and the institutions that shape their lives are highly dynamic, so is the approach in order to learn from changes and help mitigate negative impacts, whilst supporting positive effects.

2.9.4: Building strength

A central issue of the approach is the recognition of everyone's inherent potential for his/her removal of constraints and realisation of potentials. Identifying these strength rather than the needs and problems is the starting point of this approach, in order to contribute to the stakeholders' robustness and ability to achieve their objectives

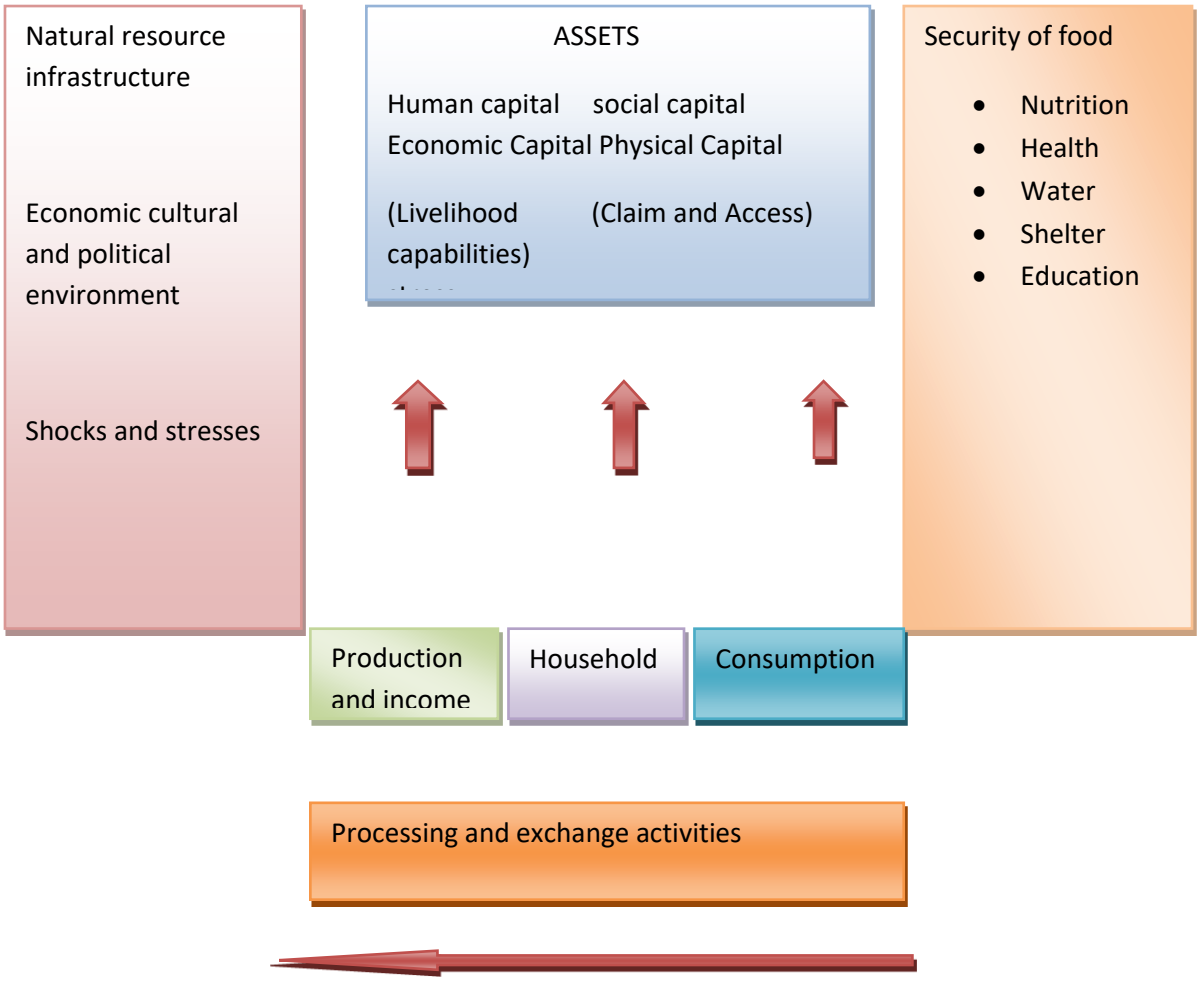
2.9.5: Macro-micro links

Development activity tends to focus at either the macro or the micro level, whereas the SLF tries to bridge this gap in stressing the link between the two levels. As people are often affected by decisions at the macro policy level and vice versa, this relation needs to be considered in order to achieve sustainable development.

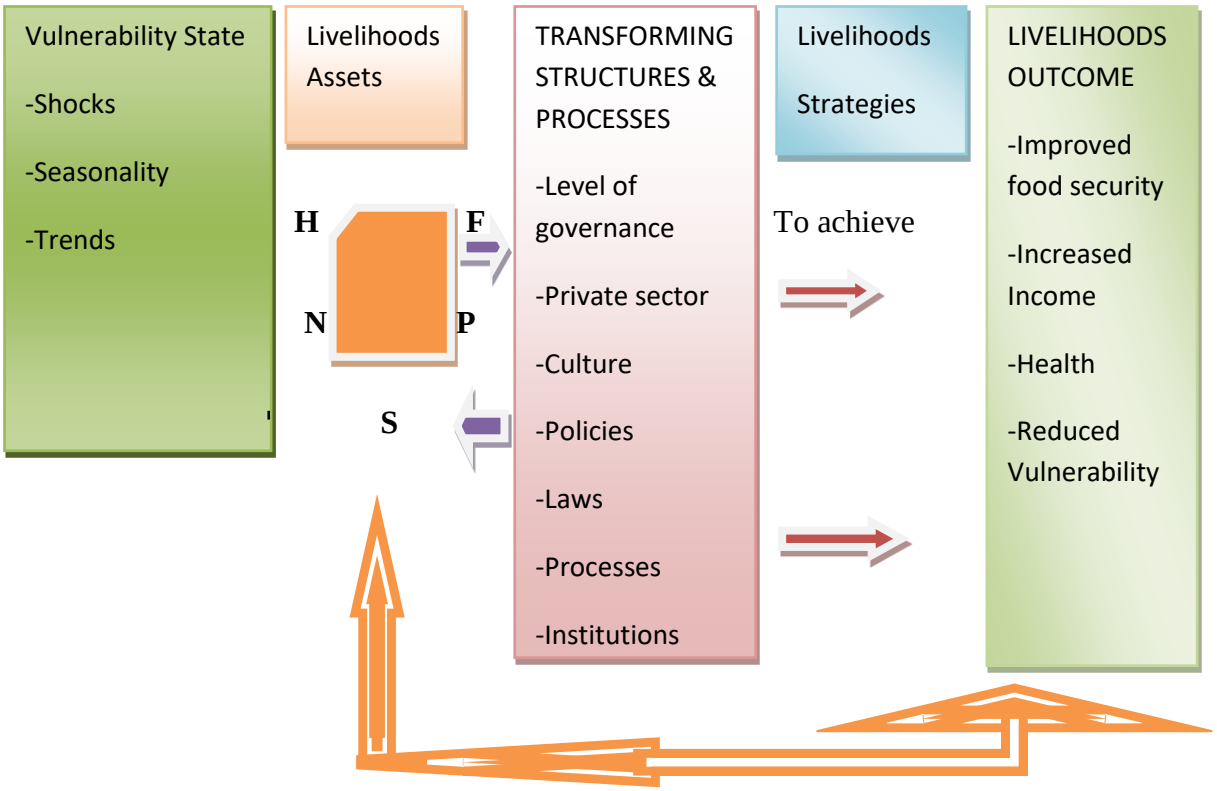
The first step in SLF is to understand the livelihoods of the poor, namely conducting livelihoods analysis as the basis for planning, prioritising and eventual monitoring.

The framework can be understood as a tool to understand poverty in responding to poor people's views and their own understanding of poverty. The framework sets out to conceptualise; how people operate within a vulnerability context that is shaped by different factors, shifting seasonal constraints and opportunities, economic shocks, and long term trends; how they draw on different types of livelihoods assets or capitals in different combinations which are influenced by, a) the vulnerability context, b) a range of institutions and processes, c) how they use their asset base to develop a range of strategies to achieve desired livelihood outcomes (De Stage et al 2002)

2.9.6: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework



2.9.7: The DFID Livelihood Framework



Source: (Kollmair et al. 2002)

KEY

H- Human capital, knowledge and skills to labour and good health important to the ability to pursue different livelihood strategies.

P- Physical capital, the basic infrastructure (shelter and water) and the production equipment and means to enable people to pursue livelihoods.

S- Social capital, the social resources (method relationship of trust and access to wider institutions of society) in pursuit of livelihoods.

F- Financial capital, whether savings, regular remittances or pensions provide them with different livelihoods options.

N- Natural capital, the natural resources stock from which resources flow, useful for livelihoods are derived e.g. the land, water, wildlife biodiversity, environmental resources.

In a nutshell, the main elements of the SLF can be summarised as follows: "…The framework depicts stakeholders as operating in a context of vulnerability, within which they have access to certain assets. Assets gain weight and value through the prevailing social, institutional and organisational environment (policies, institutions and processes). This context decisively shapes the livelihoods strategies that are open to people in pursuit of their self-defined beneficial livelihoods outcomes. (Kollmair et al. 2002)

2.10: Elements of the Framework

2.10.1: Vulnerability context

This frames the external environment in which people exist, critical trends as well as shocks and seasonality, over which people have limited or no control, have a great influence on people's livelihoods and on the wider availability of assets. Vulnerability emerges when human beings have to face harmful threats or shocks with inadequate capacity to respond effectively. The difference between risk and vulnerability is of crucial relevance for assessing causes of poverty. Risk is defined as the likelihood of occurrence of external shocks and stresses plus their potential severity, whereas vulnerability is the degree of exposure to risk (hazard, shock) and uncertainty, and the capacity of households or individuals to prevent, mitigate with risk

2.10.2: Livelihoods assets

The approach is concerned first and foremost with people; it seeks to gain an accurate and realistic understanding of people's strength (assets or capital). It is crucial to analyse how people endeavour to convert these strength into positive livelihood outcomes. The approach is founded on a belief that people require a range of assets to achieve positive livelihood outcomes. Therefore the SLF identifies five types of assets/capitals upon which livelihoods are built, namely human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital and financial capital.

2.10.3: Policies, Institutions and Processes

The importance of policies, institutions and processes cannot be overemphasised, because they operate at all levels, from the household to the international arena, and in all spheres, from the most private to the most public. They effectively determine access (to various types of capital, to livelihood strategies and to decision-making bodies and sources of influence), terms of exchange between different types of capital, and return to any given livelihood strategy (DFID, 2000). Policies, institutions and processes have a direct impact upon weather people are able to achieve a feeling of inclusion and well-being. Because culture is included in this area they also count for other unexplained differences in the way things are done in different societies, (DFID, 2000).

2.10.4: Livelihood Strategies

Livelihood strategies comprise the range and combination of activities and choices that people make/undertake in order to achieve livelihood goals. It should be understood as a

dynamic process in which people combine activities to meet their various needs at different times. Different members of a household might live and work at different places, temporarily or permanently, (DFID 2000). Livelihood strategies are direct dependent on assets status and policies, institutions and processes. Hence, that poor people compete and that the livelihood strategy of one household might have a positive or negative impact on the livelihood strategy of another.

2.10.5: Livelihoods Outcomes

Livelihoods outcomes are the achievements or outputs of livelihood strategies, such as more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and a more sustainable use of natural resources. When thinking about livelihood outcomes the aims of a particular group as well as the extent to which these are already being achieved has to be understood.

2.10.6: Application of SLF

A detailed investigation of the living conditions of the target population is the starting point of a development project based on the SLF. A second step is to identify limiting factors, which hinder the adaptation of sustainable livelihood strategies on the one hand and recognise the factors that reduce vulnerability on the other hand. The project outlined takes the limiting factors .into account and tries to eliminate them by relying on the available assets and strength on the target group.

This group will participate in the project planning from the very beginning. Before the planning gets implemented the framework should be used to anticipate the effects of the project activities, including possible side effects on other population groups, (Kollmair et al

2002). DFID is operationalizing livelihoods approaches in many different contexts. Broadly speaking, it aims to promote sustainable livelihoods through; direct support of assets, (providing poor people with better access to the assets that act as a foundation to their livelihoods); support the more effective functioning of the structures and processes (e.g. policies, public and private sector organisations, markets and social relations) that influence not only access to assets but also which livelihoods are open to poor people. If people have access to assets, they will have more ability to influence structures and processes so that these become more responsive to their needs, (Carney, 2000).

2.11: Strength and Limitations of the SLF

2.11.1: Strengths

Its flexible design and openness to changes make the sustainable livelihoods approach adaptable to diverse local contexts. The SLF might serve as an analytic tool in order to identify development priorities and new activities prior to any development activity. Further the SLF can be used as a checklist/ means of structuring ideas or can be applied in the form of livelihood analysis to assess how development activities fit in the livelihood of the poor, (Kollmair et al, 2002). The core concept of the framework represents its strength at the same time. Above all, it places the main focus on the poor people themselves by involving them in all the planning processes and by respecting their opinions. The poor people themselves define their strength, potentials and goals. This is done by adapting a holistic view to encompass all the aspects of poor people's livelihoods, and by considering that they are dynamic. It focuses explicitly on short and long term changes and allows pointing out the various processes that permanently influence one another. By directly linking problem causes, like for example political programs at a government level, with their effects on

individuals, the SLF tries to connect the macro and micro level. Furthermore it does not contradict to other current development approaches, rather it tries to combine and take advantage of their strength. It relies on participation and pays special attention to gender specific issues. A livelihood analysis therefore applies a broad range of conventional methods and instruments, as for example from Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and Good Governance Assessment techniques (Kollmair et al, 2002). Thus, the SLF provides a clear practical perspective on how to reduce poverty and if used effectively, it can generate a good way of integrating the four pillars of development (economic, social, institutional, and environmental).

2.11.2: Limitations

However, there are some limitations within the SLF. A differentiated livelihood analysis needs time, financial and human resources. Development projects often lack these conditions. The claim of being holistic inevitably delivers a flood of information hardly possible to copy with. Additionally by improving the livelihoods of a specific group, a negative effect may occur on livelihoods of others. This may lead to a normative dilemma on the decision about what to consider with priority. Reducing the livelihood perspective to a methodological tool contains the risk to look at the two things interchangeably. The SLF still is a simplification of the multidimensional reality of livelihoods.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0: Introduction

This chapter focused on the overview of various approaches to the disposal of the researcher; paying special attention to the research methodology used in this study to collect data and analyze it on the sustainability of smallholder producer groups and its impact on their empowerment in Chivi district. According to Cohen and Manion (1994) any research study requires an approach which will guide the researcher to infer and interpret the information gathered from the respondents. Thus methodology and methods are approaches used in research to gather data. In this study, more than one method was used by the researcher to ensure validity of collected data as depicted in the following discussion.

3.1: Research Philosophy

Social science researches use two main research paradigms referred to as phenomenological and positivist. In phenomenological paradigm, researcher is seen as part of the research process hence is the instrument rather than being independent of the research. The phenomenological approach can be divided into two, namely hermeneutic and transcendental phenomenology. According to (Veal 2009) phenomenological approach is referred to as hermeneutic, qualitative, interpretive, reflective, inductive ethnographic or action research. Positivist paradigm view researchers as independent of the research they are conducting. Reality is seen as objective and measurable. The assumption is that human beings are rational and emphasizes facts and predictions to explain causal-effect relationship in research. The positivist is also referred to as scientific, empiricist, quantitative or deductive. This research

depended on phenomenological approach because of its comparative advantages as discussed below.

3.2: Research Methodology

Research methodology is a technique for data collection. Although the researcher was aware of quantitative approach to data collection, resolution was made by the researcher to use qualitative exploration and descriptive research method considering that it seeks to explain social phenomenon from client centred perspectives. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) pointed out that, a qualitative research is an inquiry in which researchers collect data in face to face situations by interacting with selected persons in their settings. It is concerned with non-numerical data. Instead qualitative research describes and analyses individual and collective social action, belief, thought and perceptions. The approach is relevant when exploration of implementability is the main thrust, thus this research sought to explore the replicability of the producer group model, hence suitability of the qualitative method.

The researcher opted for qualitative research because of its comparative advantages. According to Best and Khan (1993), qualitative research gives a detailed description and explanation of complex situations which further guide future researches on the same concept. The researcher can interpret phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them as it shows relationship between events and meaning as perceived by the participants. A lot of data was collected from smallholder producer groups, in terms of how sustainable the producer group model is to their livelihoods.

Qualitative research is also enriched by in-depth, detailed descriptions of events and interviews. Besides, the approach is flexible as it allows for adjustment of direction of the

inquiry based on on-going experience of collecting data. This allows the researcher to investigate and deal with issues as they arise in their area of study. However, despite the criticism levelled against qualitative research that, the results of the study cannot be generalised to a larger population because the sample group is small and the participants are chosen randomly, the researcher validated data from questionnaires through cross-examination with evidence from key informants. The researcher found phenomenological approach suitable because of the nature of the research question which looked into the sustainability of the producer groups in relationship to the empowerment of smallholder farmers. This was rather a specific subgroup, thereby making the general population who did not subscribe, less relevant and the small sample appropriate.

3.3: Research Design

Burns and Groves (2012) define research design as a formal, objective, systematic process in which numerical data are used to obtain information about a subject. It is a blue print for conducting a study with minimum control over factors that may interfere with the validity of the findings. This study explored the sustainability of smallholder producer group, investigating the effectiveness of the concept in promoting issues of food security, household income and productive assets through livelihoods improvements and market linkages in ward, 17, 21, and 25 of Chivi district. Since research design is a detailed plan that describes how, when and where data is to be collected and analysed, as pointed out by Salkind (2006), the researcher employed exploratory approach.

According to Cohen (1994), explorative research is research conducted for a problem that has not been clearly defined. The researcher selected this approach because of the data collection instruments it uses vis a vis field surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, structure and

non-structured and observational learning in soliciting data. The approach demand less money to conduct while yielding excellent results as research can be done by one researcher alone, without the need to mobilize, train and pay large research apparatus.

Explorative research often relies on secondary research such as reviewing available literature, or data, or qualitative approaches such as informal discussions with participants and more formal approaches through in-depth interviews, focus group, projective methods, case studies or pilot studies, (Huberty 1991).The approach was appropriate because the researcher gained familiarity and acquired new insight into the topic, hence formulate a more precise problem. Also results of the exploratory research provide significant insight into a topic. The approach sought to explore how people get along in the setting under question, what meaning they give to their actions. The goal was to learn what is going on and to investigate social phenomena without explicit expectations. The method is at times referred as grounded theory as it attempts to unearth a theory from the data itself rather than from a predisposed hypothesis. The researcher used exploratory rather than other approaches because of its merits. The approach is ideal when the topic is new and when data is difficult to collect. The producer group concept is relatively new in Zimbabwe and was first introduced in Chivi district by CARE International in 2013. The exploratory research is also flexible and can address research questions of all types (what, why, how) of which this is what the research sought to explore; why produce groups were introduced and how are they empowered smallholder farmer.

In a nut-shell, the researcher was thrilled by the approach's ability to diagnose a situation, screen alternatives and discover new ideas. It relies on experience surveys; taping from

knowledgeable individuals (most quite willing) about a particular topic. It also reveals nothing conclusive by lay the bases for future investigations.

3.4: Target Population

According to Prahoo (2007), population refers to the total number of units from which data can be collected, such as individuals, artefacts, events or organisations. The definition concurs with Burns and Grove (2003)'s conceptualisation of population; as all elements that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study. This research targeted 100 people from Chivi district in the three wards namely; ward 17, 21 and 25. These include key stakeholders e.g. the District Administrator, 15 from line ministries, like Agritex and Livestock Production Department (LPD), 5 from Implementing Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), 3 ward councillors, 3 agro-dealers and 73 smallholder farmer producer group members (3 producer groups).

3.5: Sampling Procedure

According to Webster (1985), a sample is a finite part of a statistical population whose properties are studied to gain information about the whole. When dealing with people it can be defined as a set of respondents selected from a large population for the purpose of a survey. Thus sampling is the act, process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameter or characteristics of the whole population. Six main reasons for sampling have been identified namely economic, timeliness, the large size of many populations, inaccessibility, of some of the

population, destructiveness of the observation. The economic advantage of a sample in research is that taking a sample requires fewer resources than a census. In terms of time, a sample may provide needed information quickly.

According to Merriam (1997) purposive sampling occurs when a certain sample is selected because researchers believe that the most important information can be gathered by interviewing or observing the particular group. The above concurs with Nachmias and Nachmias (1995), they argued that under purposive sampling, the researcher selects sample units subjectively in an attempt to obtain a sample that appear to be representative of the whole population. It was against this background that samples were selected on their relevance to the study. The researcher selected members of the implementing partners, agro-dealers and line ministries as key informants considering their central roles in the capacity building of smallholder producer groups to measure the effectiveness of the model and lifespan post project period. This helped the researcher to target the people who were capable of supplying relevant information pertaining sustainability of smallholder producer groups. The researcher used two types of purposive sampling for interviews, that is; critical case and convenience sampling. The critical case sampling is one in which researchers chooses cases that they believe to be important because of the position they hold or because they are able to articulate a view like a spokesperson of a produce group or committee members. On the other hand; convenience sampling occurs when researchers select specific sample for ease availability. Probability sampling was also used to collect data through questionnaires. Tichapondwa (2013) notes that, probability sampling allows every element a chance of being included in the sample. Thus the technique was adopted considering the merits derived among them; addressing financial and time constrains.

3.5.1: Sample Frame

Tichapondwa (2013) defines a sample as a small target population, selected for the study in order to yield information that could be generalized to the target population from which it is drawn. A sample is a representative subset of the population which reflects characteristics of the population that are significant to the researcher. It would be impractical for the researcher to survey the entire population due to time and budget constrains among other factors, (Saunders et al, 2003). Thus through a sample, the researcher was able to assess the results quickly from all the collected data.

This research targeted 100 participants from Chivi district in three wards. The participants involved government officials, implementing agency of the producer group, agro-dealers, line ministries, and community members participating in the producer group model. The researcher decided to use this sample having been informed by Holloway and Wheeler (2002)'s finding that sample size does not influence the importance of the study, in phenomenological research; the depth is what is important rather than the breadth. Thus interview were conducted to the District Administrator, all 15 from line ministries like: Agritex and Livestock Production Department (LPD), 5 from Implementing

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), 3 ward councillors, 3 agro-dealers. Purposive sampling was done to73 smallholder farmers in the producer group model in ward 17, 21 and 25.

3.6: Research Instruments

The US Census Bureau (2010) explains research instrument as a device/tool used to collect data such as a questionnaire or computer assisted interviewing system. It involves methodologies used to identify information sources and collect information during an evaluation. Examples given include informal or formal surveys, interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) and literature research. The above research tools were adopted in this study to collect data.

3.6.1: Key Informant Interviews

Huberman (2002) defines an interview as a planned and guided conversation in which the interviewer draws information out of respondents but never divulges his or her views by direct or indirect statements or challenge. Interview involves a personal exchange of information between an interviewer and one or more interviewees. The interview seeks to obtain specific information that could not be observed on a topic with the cooperation of the interviewees. Key informant interview permitted and delineate the investigator initial knowledge about the research topic under investigation, (Bryman, 2008). The researcher noted that the key informant interviews were significant since in every part of social life, exists think-tankers of knowledge through which social researchers must pass through to gain entry into a specific social field. For the purpose of this study 15 respondents were interviewed under the key informants from CARE International and SNV which were the implementing partners of the producer group model in Chivi district; and Agritex (line ministries) which work with smallholder farmer groups to explore the effectiveness of the producer group model and issues of sustainability.

Key informants interviews helped the researcher to substantiate data collected from questionnaires and document analysis. The data collection instrument was rather appropriate particularly for this study because it led to information in-richness pertaining to how the producer group model empowered smallholder livelihood activities for self-reliance. The researcher used semi structured interviews because of its flexibility, it allowed the researcher to probe and elicit more data from the respondents especially when the questionnaires failed to articulate issues on the producer group model's contribution to their livelihoods in terms of sustainable and productive assets creation. Answers were clarified and questions were rephrased in order to meet the intellectual capacities of the respondents. Semi-structure interviews gave the researcher an opportunity to penetrate in depth into the experiences, challenges, actions, personal opinions and feelings of the Key informants about the concept of the producer group and its impact on livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

The researcher used short hand notes to capture data from key informants as they felt uncomfortable with audio tapes. However, respondents' consent was granted before interviews in tandem with the Nuremberg code of 1948. The interview covered the department, level of engagement, the profiling of livelihood activities, governance issues, capacity building given, and sustainability and empowerment issues among smallholder farmers in Chivi district in the designated wards.

3.6.2: Questionnaire

The researcher also used questionnaires to collect data from the field. A questionnaire is an instrument which comprises of a series of questions that were to be completed by the respondents, (Best and Khan 1993). It is a document containing questions designed to solicit appropriate information for analysis. Questionnaires are used to gather the opinions of a

larger group of people than would be reached by interviews or focus group alone. The researcher selected this method because of its cost effectiveness. The researcher personally administered questionnaire to the respondents by way of delivering them and later collected them from ward 17, 21 and 25. A total of 67 out of 73 questionnaires were returned. While Tuckman (1994) criticized the use of questionnaire as failing to probe hence losing relevant information in the process, the researcher circumvented this weakness by making sure that simple and clear language was used to ensure that respondents understood hence provided accurate data. Furthermore, the researcher applied both close and open ended questions to obtain comprehensive data at the same time allowing participants to give answers at liberty.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections on demographic data of household, household livelihoods activities, benefits derived from membership of the producer groups and personal opinions and feelings about sustainability of the model**.**

3.6.3: Document Analysis

The researcher gathered a lot of data from documentation analysis on issues surrounding the producer group model, sustainability of this theory of change and its contribution to the empowerment of smallholder communal farmers. The method enabled the researcher to get an appreciation of the challenges of smallholder farmers in accessing agricultural inputs from retailers, stressing factors discouraging retailers to deal with smallholder farmers and opportunities that can be exploited by producer groups in establishing market linkages.

The researcher got a lot of information from the implementing agency CARE International in Zimbabwe, which provided documents and “manuals on the producer group formation” and “Guides on integrating very poor producers into value chains”. The documents were relevant to the study as they provided valuable information of what the researcher learned directly by

reading them. They also provided an insight on other questions which were raised for investigation. Another advantage derived from documentation analysis was that, the data provided is reliable and valid because it can be revisited where the researcher felt there was need to use it prior to and after the study.

3.6.4: Focus Group discussions

Focus group discussions involve interviewing a group of people in a form of discussion, whereby the interviewer is the indicator of the discussion who direct the focus group discussion. According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1995) the purpose of the focus group discussions is to obtain in-depth information in concepts, perceptions and ideas of a respective group. The researcher adopted this method because it permitted him to extract more information about the contribution of the producer group model to the empowerment of smallholder farmers and observe from the participants issues of sustainability. Through focus groups, the researcher explored how groups were created and governed through to all the tenets critical in sustainability and empowerment of smallholder farmers. The researcher conducted 3 focus group discussions which comprised 21 individuals in ward 17, 21 and ward 25, which included 10 married women, 3 widows, 2 single mothers and 6 men. Focus group discussions allowed the researcher access to participants who find face to face "scary" and intimidating. This technique was of paramount important in trying to explore the sustainability of smallholder farmers based producer group and its contribution to their empowerment. The researcher was aware that some participants if left unchecked they can dominate others, thus the researcher ensured that everyone in the focus group had an opportunity to participate. The focus was divided into 3 sections, the questionnaire targeted agro-dealers, Agritex field staff and producer group members.

3.6.5: Transit Walks

In complementing focus group discussions and unstructured interviews, the researcher also employed transit walks in order to acquire more information concerning the concept of producer group, its sustainability and empowerment of smallholder farmers. According to Creswell (2003) transit walks allows the researcher to gain the first hand information through observation. This was significant to the study since it allowed the researcher to observe how the producer groups work together in their livelihood activities. It was more appropriate to the study since the researcher observed the findings in their natural settings which were different compared to unstructured interviews and self-administered interviews.

3.7: Pilot Study

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) argue that a questionnaire should be pilot pre-tested before it is actually administered to collect data so as to refine the questionnaire; and check for the compatibility of the instrument to the respondents and assess the questions' validity. A pretest exercise was done to orient the researcher to the research project and provide the researcher with insight into the phenomenon. Pilot study ensures that errors can be rectified. The pilot study was conducted with one producer group; stakeholders and key informants found in ward 12.

During the exercise, attention was given to body language and non-verbal responses as well as manner of asking questions. This promoted the level of confidence, experience of interviewing, interpersonal skills of the researcher and the opportunity to probe relevant responses from participants. The researcher learnt to approach with sensitivity, open mindedness, laying aside preconceived ideas and ensure reflexivity. It also identified shot

comings of the study regarding environmental set up. Two survey questionnaires were piloted to one randomly selected producer group in ward 12 and one focus group discussion was conducted to a randomly selected committee of the producer group.

3.8: Validity and Reliability

According to Best and Khan (1993) validity refers to that quality data gathering instrument that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure. Reliability is defined as the consistency of such measures, when the testing procedure is repeated on a population of individuals or group, (The American Educational Research Association, 1991). Reliability implies the degree of consistency that the instruments demonstrate over the same data. If given to different people the instrument will extract information approximating to or identical to that already in possession.

Validity and reliability govern the acquisition of data and the skillfulness with which the researcher designs the research structure and create the instruments of measurement and as an integral part of it. Leedy (1997) notes that, the integrity of a research may stand or fall on the basis of how well one understands the meaning of validity and reliability and how careful one obeys their demands. At the same note, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that credibility, conformability, consistency and transferability are one criterion for quality. According to Berg (2001), Inquiry audit is also encouraged as a measure of dependability of qualitative research as this can be used to examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency. The consistency of data will be realized when the steps of research are verified through examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products and process notes. Validity and reliability is ensured through member checking principles. After consulting a

number of informants, the researcher cross examined their views so as to check consistency in the manner they responded. Similarly the key to check validity in content analysis is through ascertaining the authenticity of documents that would have been vigorously subjected to both academic and scholarly analysis. In this regard the researcher made use of documents from Agritex and implementing partners.

Mixed research which calls for the use of more than one data gathering procedure was employed to ensure reliability, (Cohen and Manion 1994). Triangulation helps to eliminate research problems by relying on any one method and helps to enhance validity. Three different methods were employed in this research namely interviews, questionnaires and transit walk. Jacobsen (1995) points that triangulation allows the advantages of different methods to be fused and complement each other so that research findings will be more valid and reliable

3.9: Ethical Considerations

Ethics has become the cornerstone for conducting effective and meaningful research. According to Trimble and Fisher, (2006) ethics are rules of behavior based on ideas about what is morale acceptable. Neuman (2000), points out the boundary or limits of ethics, as a legitimate and moral way of carrying out a research. It follows that, any concerns regarding ethical practices will negatively influence attitudes about science and the abuses committed by a few often receive widespread publicity, (Mauther, Birch, Jessop and Miller, 2003). It is in this context that before conducting a research, ethical considerations be noted and have formal consent from participants to ensuring no harm comes to participants, confidentiality and anonymity.

It was also important that proper channels were followed for permission to carry out the study. For this research, there were government officials, community leadership and community to be interviewed on the sustainability of the smallholder producer group and its contribution to the empowerment of smallholder farmers. The researcher obtained clearance at the district level from the DA, thus the permission had been granted for the district key stakeholders and communities in the selected wards to participate willingly. Unconditional consent was granted.

The researcher made clear to the participants the objectives of the research that it was purely academic and that perhaps result could be useful to inform future development project. Participants for both interviews and questionnaires were also informed about issues of confidentiality, the time required and any other areas of concern of the study. This was done in tandem with moral and ethical considerations guiding the researcher's behavior in relation with the rights of respondents and other participants.

The researcher did not harm the respondents, consent was voluntary, privacy and confidentiality was highly upheld. Pseudo names were used to represent the contributions of the respondents so as to protect them from stigmatization and publicity. The researcher did not use money, material or nonmaterial promises to attract or tempt research participants into charming and attractive into the interviews. The researcher also identified self as a student at the Midlands State University.

3.10: Data Presentation and Analysis

It should be pointed out that, this research used qualitative research methodology, thus the data analysis technique had to be qualitative in nature. Bogdan and Biklen (2006) defined data analysis as a process of systematic searching and arranging the interview transcripts and other materials that the researcher accumulates to increase the understanding of them and enable the researcher to present what s/he has discovered from them. From the look of things, qualitative data from interviews and questionnaire was analyzed through identifying emerging themes or recurring themes, (Chisaka and Vakalisa, 2000).

Fossey et al (2002) argue that thematic analysis is a category of qualitative data analysis whereby the researcher carries out the processes of reviewing, synthesizing and interpreting data to describe and explain the phenomena or social world being studied. It was beyond the emerging themes that other substantiating data from both primary and secondary documents was given as reinforcement. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for entry and analysis of qualitative surveys data to generate descriptive statistics such as contribution of producer group model in empowering smallholder livelihoods activities as well as challenges affecting the operation of producer groups in Chivi ward 17, 21 and 25, where the research was conducted. The information was summarized in tables, pie charts, and graphs. Qualitative analysis using frequent tables were used to describe people's perceptions about the ENSURE's producer group theory of change in empowering smallholder farmers in the district of Chivi.

3.11: Summary

This chapter covered the methodology used, the research design, population sampling techniques and the sample size. Attempt was made to describe the methods used on data collection on the Sustainability of the producer group model to the empowerment of smallholder farmers. The researcher also looked at how data was validated to promote reliability as well as data collection procedures, sources of information, data presentation and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION

4.0 Introduction

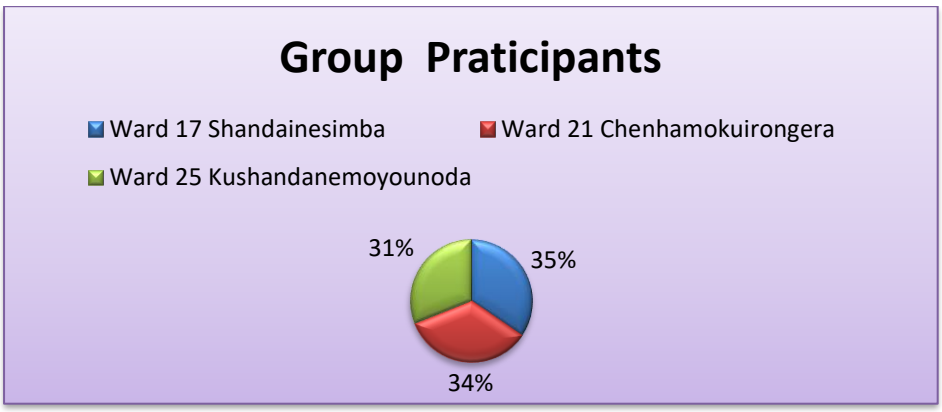
This chapter presents the data gathered during the empirical phase of the study on the sustainability of the producer groups to the empowerment of smallholder farmers in Chivi district in ward 17, 21 and 25. This was guided by 8 semi-structured in-depth interviews performed with major stakeholders linked to the smallholder producer groups as well as the questionnaire responses by producer groups' members. The aim is to establish whether the producer group model has managed to address the challenges of smallholder farmers. The chapter examines whether the producer groups resulted in significant food security, sustainability of livelihoods for smallholder farmers and increase in household income. Tables, figures graphs and photographs have been widely used to present results from the various interviewees, and key informants working with smallholder farmers producer groups in the sampled wards; i.e. ward 17, 21 and 25. Each research objective, as represented by the research questions is answered by presenting findings that relate to it with all sub-questions under the research question exhausted. Patterns and trend of responses to questions emerged which leads to discussions of the research findings in the next Chapter. The researched data is also presented in narrative form apart from tables, figures and photographs. Some qualitative data will be presented directly as respondents' text while some presented as the researcher analyses the text. The responses in this study were obtained through focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews.

4.1 Demographic information of the respondents

4.1.1 Gender and the age group of the respondents

Out of 100 respondents 61 were females and 39 males, with their age ranging from 23 to 70. Producer groups are dominated by women; this is mainly because women are the major actors in issues to do with household livelihood activities especially in rural areas. In terms of marital status; from the analysis results; 6% of the respondents were single mothers, 39% widowed, 12% divorced and 43% married. The sample is composed of more married people. The household head are mostly men except for few being headed by divorced, widowed or single mothers. Thus from the look of things married women joined the producer groups independently and not on behalf of their husbands. On the other hand, married men sometimes leave home to look for off-farm livelihood activities which is one major copying mechanism, rural communities depend on to build resiliency against shocks such as drought. This leaves women in the position of household head hence registered in development projects; among them; producer groups model. In this research 3 groups in ward 17, 21 and 25 with a total of 73 respondents participated as shown on the pie chart in Fig 3.

Fig 3: Producer groups Participants



Source: Data Analysis

4.2: Resources

Findings from the key informants show that smallholder farmers experience shortages of agricultural inputs particularly for groundnuts seed and gypsum. 95% respondents concurred that seed houses e.g. SEEDCO, PANA, PIONEER and others does not have the type of seed needed by farmers like natal common, nyanda to mention a few. Farmers ended up planting retained seed or buying from informal traders which affects issues of sustainability since this compromises production and quality of produce. Also agro-dealers who were part of the value chain were consulted in order to explain why they could not supply the required inputs by farmers. 100% responses from the interviewees were that; agro-dealers were facing stiff competition from globalization and open markets from external business players. They did not have adequate capital to boost their stocks. Where they have stocked, farmers by-passed them and dealt with manufacturers directly to reduce mark-up cost which inflated prices of inputs sold by agro-dealers.

4.3: Livelihoods Assets

In terms of sustainability; a livelihood can be classified as sustainable, if it is resilient in the face of external shocks and stresses, if it is independent from external support, if it is able to maintain the long term productivity of natural resources and if it does not undermine the livelihood options of others. The researcher noted from base income tools that smallholder farmers have been operating in a context of vulnerability, within which they have limited access to certain assets. Assets gain weight and value through the prevailing social,

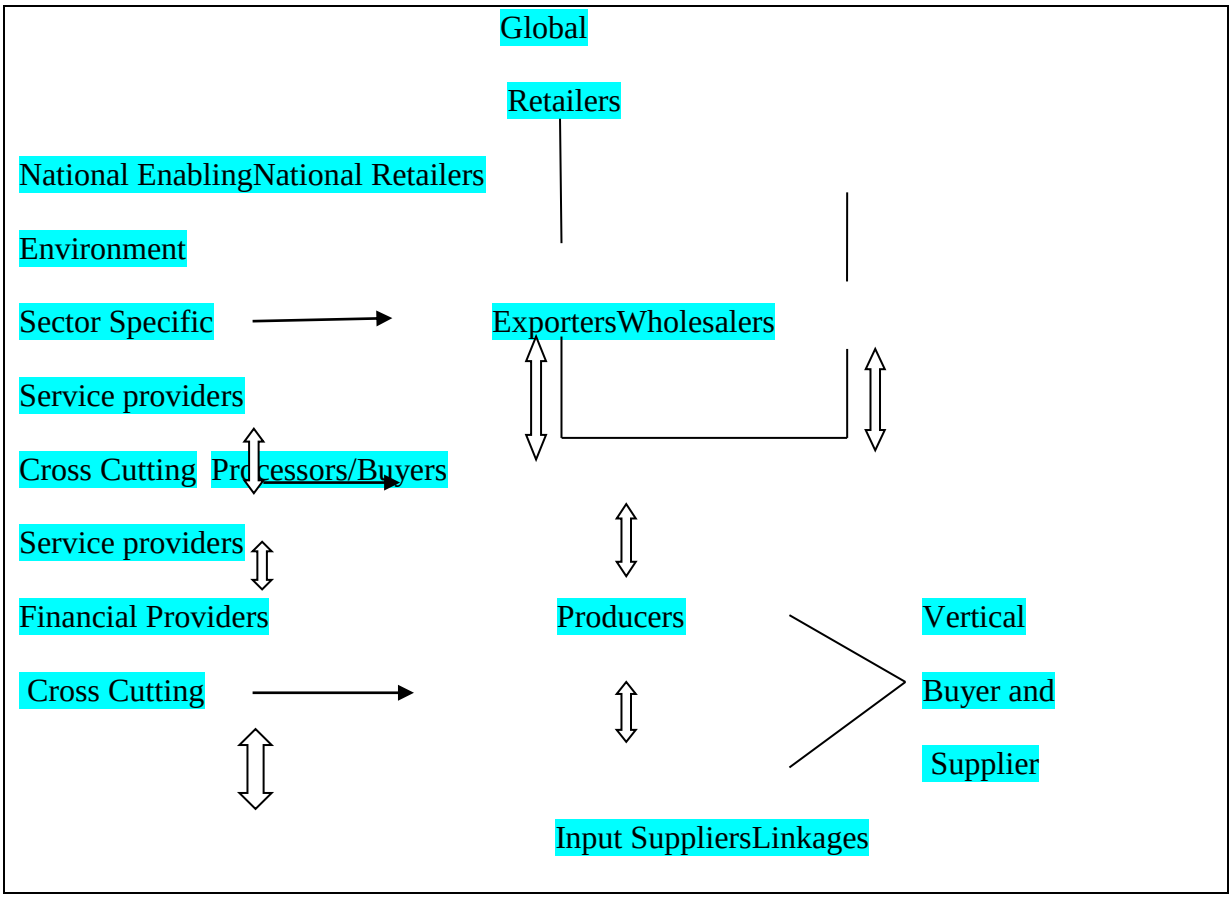
institutional and organizational environment (policies, institutions and processes). This context decisively shapes the livelihoods strategies that opened up like the producer group model to smallholder farmers in pursuit of their self-defined beneficial livelihoods outcomes.

Empirical research finding from key informants in the implementing Agents (CARE International) shows scepticism in terms of whether the producer group model was sustainable. The point in question was that the model was crafted to address the challenges of smallholder farmers, i.e. improving access to agricultural inputs through linking smallholder farmers to local agro dealers, improving food security through promotion of high value chain such as sugar beans, groundnuts, indigenous chicken and goats' production, linking smallholder farmers to local and external markets to sell their produces and also increasing access to financial resources by linking farmers to microfinance institutions.

99% of data collected from the key informant shows that; in as much as the producer group was ideal for the provision of farmers with agricultural inputs through linking them to agro-dealers, it failed to yield desired results mainly because of economic meltdown. It was hoped that if agro-dealers would be capacitated they could supply inputs for meaningful production to local farmers. However agro-dealers have failed to meet the demand of agric-inputs. Agro-dealers who were part of the value chain as shown in Fig: 4 below; were consulted in order to explain why they could not supply the required inputs to farmers. Responses from the interviewees were that; agro-dealers were facing stiff competition from globalization and open markets from external business players. They did not have adequate capital to boost their stocks. Where they were fully stocked, farmers by-passed them and dealt with manufacturers directly to reduce mark-up cost which inflated prices of inputs sold by agro-dealers. In some instance, seed companies such as SEEDCO where agro dealers purchase

their orders sometimes run out of stock. The current economic meltdown resulted in most if not all agricultural inputs being imported from neighbouring countries like South Africa and Zambia. The dilemma then left smallholder farmers who failed to purchase from the manufacturer and expected to find inputs from the agro-dealer with no option except planting retained seed or buying from informal traders. This affects issues of sustainability since it compromises production and quality of produces. Below is fig 4 which shows the producer group model.

Fig 4: The Producer Group Model



Source: Lopdale (2011)

4.3.1: Financial Capital

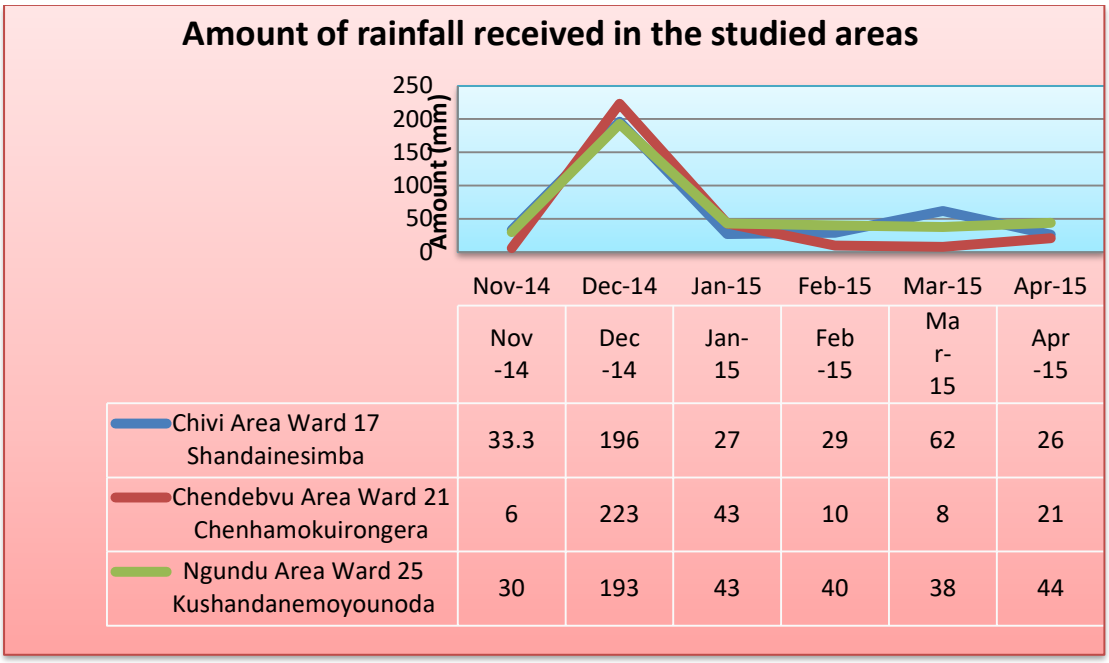
In terms of access to financial resources by smallholder farmers, 49% of key informant responses shows that the producer group model was crafted in such a way that smallholders will be linked to external micro finances in order to have access to finances greatly needed to operate farming as a business (FaaB), however the economic meltdown affected business operation to the verge of collapsing, with some of the financial institutions closing, e.g. Beverly Building Society. Those operating, for example Agri-banks, failed to provide financial support to smallholder farmers citing lack of collateral security by producer groups as an impediment. However, analysed data from the questionnaire was validated by findings from key informant interviews and depicted that the producer groups have been capacitated in Village Savings and Lending (VS&L) methodology. The VS&L methodology capacitated smallholder to mobilize financial resources to support production through creating savings groups within producer groups whereby they have been trained to mobilize their own capital to support themselves in agricultural activities. 69% of smallholder farmers in the studied area have been integrated into VS&L; members have been contributing monthly subscription they afforded; ranging from US$1-00 to US$20-00. The groups issued their savings as loans to members who repaid at an interest rate ranging from 10 to 20% after a month, as prescribed in the group constitutions. Although external service and financial providers failed to provide the much needed financial support, research findings show that the VS&L model has been working for smallholder farmers and increased access to financial capital. However, despite minimum savings contributed by vulnerable members as little as US$1-00, VS&L has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that it increased access to financial services to smallholder farmers. Members borrow in turn during the period when the fund is still small, and with time, the fund sometimes swells with interests and continued monthly subscriptions. There was evidence of continued consistent in savings and lending among all groups across

the whole district as depicted in the VS&L Management Information System as shown in the table 2 below, thus sustainability in terms of increase of income at household level. Probing as to what could be the position of 31% in terms of financial linkages; respondents said that the integration was optional and self-screening.

4.3.2: Natural Capital

Data from the research depicts that Chivi district is a drought prone area which falls under region 5 and receives low rainfall. During the previous season, the studied area received an average amount of 357.4 mm; in Chendebvu (Chenhamokuirongera group ward 21), Ngundu (Kushandanemoyounoda ward 25) and Chivi area (Shandainesimba group ward 17) where the groups are located. Analysis of the data presented shows that there was uneven distribution of the rainfall with the month of December receiving above 190 mm in all the studied areas as shown in Fig 5below (Chivi District Agritex 2015). The erratic rainfall affected groundnuts and sugar beans producer groups. 70% of respondents whose plot sizes range from 0.9 to 3 hectares pointed out that, their plots are situated in dry land, hence their farming solely depends on rainfall. Producer groups had a lot of hope during the beginning of the season as they expected a bumper harvest. Unfortunately their crop failed dismally due to drought which hit the district from the month of January 2015 up to the end of season in April 2015.

Fig: 5 Rainfall pattern in the studied area



	Nov -14	Dec -14	Jan-15	Feb -15	Mar-15	Apr -15
Chivi Area Ward 17 Shandainesimba	33.3	196	27	29	62	26
Chendebvu Area Ward 21 Chenhamokuirongera	6	223	43	10	8	21
Ngundu Area Ward 25 Kushandanemoyounoda	30	193	43	40	38	44

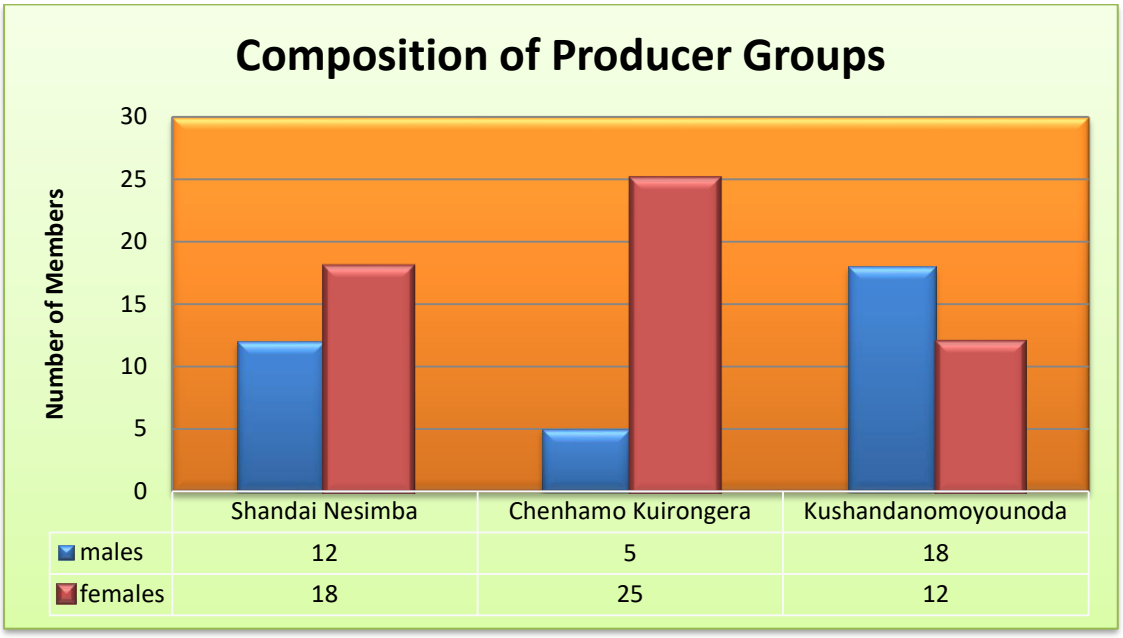
Source: Data collected from Chivi Agritex Office

As for Shandainesimba producer group in ward 17, the production of sugar beans in a 3 hectare irrigated land became a nightmare following poor rainfall which saw Chirogwe dam (the only source of water for the irrigation) completely drying up. From the presented data, low rainfall became a hurdle toward improved food security (major objective of the producer group model). However through sustainable livelihood framework smallholder farmers have diversified into chicken and goats value chain despite being registered under the production of sugar beans. The innovation has enabled farmers to exploit available resources such as livestock to build resiliency against shocks.

4.3.3: Human Capital

This research was conducted to 3 producer groups inward 17, 21 and 25; randomly selected through lottery. Research finding depicts the gendered nature of the participation of women in producer. Women smallholder farmers constitute 64% as shown on Fig 6 below.

Fig 6: Producer Groups Composition



Source: Information from Questionnaires

Findings also denote the gendered perspective in leadership positions. 67% of women have been elected in leadership position in producer groups where they make decision pertaining to the running of the group. This is a positive development toward women empowerment; women freely travel to the markets for the purposes of selling their produces. Previously, they were confined to the home. The producer group model enhanced women access to and control of income and in turn empower them to make decision at group and household level unlike in the past when the husbands were the sole bread winners. Through participating in producer group, they no longer over depend on their husbands. The tables 2 below shows the number of women in leadership position

Table 2: Producer groups leadership

Location	Position	Women	Men	Total
Ward 17	Chairperson	0	1	**1**
	Vice Chairperson	1	0	**1**
	Secretary	1	0	**1**
	Vice Chair	1	0	**1**
	Treasurer	1	0	**1**
	Committee Members	2	1	**3**
Ward 21	Chairperson	0	1	**1**
	Vice Chairperson	1	0	**1**
	Secretary	1	0	**1**
	Vice Chair	0	1	**1**
	Treasurer	1	0	**1**
	Committee Members	2	1	**3**
Ward 25	Chairperson	1	0	**1**
	Vice Chairperson	0	1	**1**
	Secretary	1	0	**1**
	Vice Chair	0	1	**1**
	Treasurer	1	0	**1**
	Committee Members	2	1	**3**
Total		**16**	**8**	**24**

Source: Data Analysis

100 % of responded concurred that groups have functional constitutions and committees which organized the activities of the groups. Respondents could articulate the importance of

the constitution to the group during focus group discussions with committees. They pointed that the constitution is a document that spells out the rules and regulations for the group. It underscores the vision, and mission of the group and how the group attains efficiency in its operations. The document spells the dos and don'ts and outline how membership are rewarded and punished for complying or breaching them respectively. 75% could explain how the constitution is critical in conflict resolution hence act as a unification device for group cohesion, keeping order and maintaining discipline. It was the constitution which granted the group a form of identity where members ratified it through endorsed their signatures. The availability of the constitution by all groups studied is a good indicator that producer groups' life span is sustainable. Members showed the highest degree of commitment to come together for a common goal of fighting poverty in groups through mobilizing their capabilities in line with the Sustainable livelihood framework. Producer groups realized the social capital within them. That there is strength in coming together and working as groups of smallholder farmers in order to derive comparative advantages such as mobilizing labour from human capital and resources like financial capital for the purchasing of inputs from agro-dealers.

> *"Constitution ndiwo musana wegroup, kana pasina constitution hapana upenyu hwegroup""The Constitution is the backbone of the group without which the group ceases to exist"* said one respondent.

4.3.3.1: Functionality of committees

Through focus group discussion the researcher managed to have direct conduct with the committees of Chenhamokuirongera in ward 21, Shandainesimba in ward 17 and Kushandanemoyounoda in ward 25. There was an 85% turn up of committee members during

the discussions. The researcher enquired the where about of the other 15%. Responses showed that 10% have gone to the markets during that day while the other 5% have travelled for personal and social reasons. The researcher was impressed by the level of understanding concerning the roles of committees by the respondents. Participants articulated the responsibility of the chairperson as the custodian of the constitution who enforces the group regulations to group members. The group chairperson had the mandate to call group members for meetings and make deliberations on the agenda; leading and guiding the group through all discussions by maintaining order and discipline in tandem with the constitution. They also unravelled that the office of the chair distributed tasks to other subcommittees in line with the goals of the group, ensure achievement of desired results and that conflicts are managed and transformed for the benefit of the group. They could identify that it was the responsibility of the chair to share information from outside with the group and map the strategic plan for the group and procedures. The researcher learnt that there are subcommittees for agronomy; marketing; and asset management committee in the case of Chirogwe irrigation.

Respondents outlined the responsibility of the secretary as the data capture for group minutes and all group records. The secretary compares records with treasurer, record important events. S/he is also responsible for reporting the group minutes of previous meetings. There was evidence of empowerment of smallholder farmers through trainings to ensure that they operate livelihoods activities, displaying knowledge about the potential inherent in them without depending on external influence. This brings to light the sustainability of the model from the functionality of the committees (the engine that pulls the tailor) and the constitutions (unifying force) for group cohesion.

Respondents explained the responsibilities of the treasurer that s/he is in charge of the financial capital of the group which concurs with Ian Scones' Sustainable livelihood Framework. Treasurer is the custodian of the group funds who collects membership fees, savings contributions, keep and produce financial, expenses statement records upon request by the group. The treasurer advices group, using the resources of its future needs. The treasurer also secures group funds at all the time and is also the signatory to the bank account

4.3.3.2 Agronomy Committee

From focus group discussions, this committee is responsible for the production of value chains. It is the organ of the group which designs the production calendar and liaises with other producers within the same catchment area to ensure that produces do not reach the point of glut on the market. Agronomy committee also mobilizes the produce from other producer to ensure that they meet supply required on the market if the group cannot meet the demand. Through the work of this organ Chenhamokuirongera group managed to work with other 4 producer groups within their ward to ensure that indigenous chicken are constantly supplied to the buyers in right quantities demanded on the market. The committees formed a cluster with other poultry producer groups pending failure to meet high demand on the market. This resulted in the mobilization of more than 500 indigenous chickens for the market in Masvingo (Vantoss buyers). Asked whether the marketing had been done, the lead farmer of Chenhamokuirongera stated that the deal was still underway.

4.3.3.3: Marketing Committees

100 % of Key informant confirmed findings from the data collected that marketing committees were actively participating in engaging buyers through searching for viable

markets both locally and externally. Groundnuts producer have engaged with Pea nana in Masvingo, Lyons in Harare. Indigenous Chicken producer groups have engaged with Vantoss a Masvingo famous buyer, MaZimbabwe restaurant in Masvingo operating in the industrial sight. Sugar bean producer have been working with E-Mkambo marketers where sugar bean value chain fetched the most price ranging from $1, 63 to $1, 80/kg. Marketing committees articulated the buyers they are working with but expressed that they failed to enter into contract farming and signing Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) with them for fear of failure to meet the terms since the Zimbabwean economy is unstable.

There is clear evidence of the functionality of the committees as depicted by the responses whereby each and every committee articulated their roles and responsibilities within the groups indicating their contribution to the group.

4.3.3.4: Asset management committees

From the 3 studied groups there is one asset management committee at Chirogwe irrigation responsible for maintaining the irrigation canal and fence. Shandainesimba producer group members have been contributing $1, 00/month toward maintenance of the asset. If the asset is maintained this is a step toward sustainability. This links well with SLF where communities have physical assets such as irrigations and dams which work together with other capabilities such as social, human, natural and financial assets to build resiliency toward future shocks. These resources are intertwined for balanced resiliency.

The model increased access to finance by smallholder farmers producer groups. Savings associations opened a large pool of capital as farmers joined hands to circumvent their lack of financial support from banks due to collateral security requirements. Table 3 below shows

cumulative savings, Loans and withdrawals achieved by producer groups integrated into VS&L across Chivi district.

Table 3: Savings, loans and withdrawals trend

Variable	January	Feb	March	Quarterly Total
Cumulative savings	13,263	14,414	29,262	29,262
Loans	15535	16,738	36,212	36,212
Withdrawals	0	0	8,293	8,293

(Source: Chivi CARE ENSURE Report 2015)

However farmers expressed willingness to work with external micro finance institution in order to boost their production VIRL micro finance visited VS&L and producer groups at Chirogwe irrigation to explore financial linkages on bean crop production. 30 Clients (12 M and 18 F) (about 34% of the studied population) indicated that they wanted financial assistants to engage in sugar bean production because their savings were not adequate enough. When the researcher asked about the outcome of the visit, responses show that no business transaction was done (CARE REPORT: 2015). Through data analysis, the researcher discovered the complexity of financial market linkages with micro finances especially when the economy is underperforming.

The producer group managed to mobilize start-up capital and working cost for the previously marginalized rural people. Smallholder farmers used to have limited access and control to cash and agricultural inputs. Women used to over depend upon men which exacerbated their subordination by man. Through the producer group model, women have been roped into productive livelihood activities such as poultry production, groundnuts, Sugar beans and goat value chain production. The program created employment for the economically marginalized smallholder farmers. Also women have been unified through VS&L, a move which created platform for them to lobby for equal opportunities and rights between men and women. Gender mainstreaming has become feasible through the producer groups. Women expressed their sentiments on certain oppressive norms and values that are deeply embedded in patriarchy among them unfair treatment of the girl child compared to her male counterpart in the realms of socially ascribed tasks and duties. (CARE REPORT 2015)

4.4: Group Maturity Index

The producer group model managed to create homogeneity and cohesion of members as evidenced by group operational levels. Group strengthening was done through a profiling exercise that emphasized issues on constitutions and cohesion. All visited groups have constitutions and this was further confirmed by the findings from documentation analysis that 20 groups have constitutions whilst 9 are still working on them across 12 wards participating in ENSURE project.(Chivi ENSURE REPORT March 2015) Using the group maturity index, researched groups have surpassed infant, storming, growth and maturity stages; and were at sustainable stage of development. They have ceased to look for external support for their existence and there is unity of purpose. The model unified the community together and

instead of viewing themselves as vulnerable, the program has built a sense of responsibility among community members and they assumed a new status within their communities and could contribute towards the education of their children. Producer group members have donated exercise book and pens valued at $50.00 to Chirogwe School. Although the figure seems small, the importance of the gesture is that; clients have ceased to perceive themselves as vulnerable but as vehicle for development in their communities.

This donation was done by Shandainesimba producer group. It goes without saying that producer groups created a platform upon which socio-economic challenges could be tackled and issues affecting societies debated with open minds and solutions reached. Chirogwe School authorities applauded the intervention for assisting parents to raise money for school fees. As a result the rate of school fees payment increased by about 65% from below 30%

Evidence of the groups being at sustainable stage is shown in various ways. The groups have become more resilient, more capable of adapting to change and make changes when conditions changes. From focus group discussions, risk management strategies involve diversification into chicken and goats value chain production as mitigation measures against drought which affected groundnuts and beans production in dry and irrigated land. The dam dried up due to low rainfall, particularly at Chirogwe irrigation thereby making production of beans a nightmare. The group developed the means to detect causes of failures, errors and mistakes. There are increasing benefits to the group members and to the community as depicted by the donation done by Shandainesimba producer group.

The groups are not sustained by any external support but entirely standing on their feet. There was evidence of groups graduating to formalised entities as they expanded their

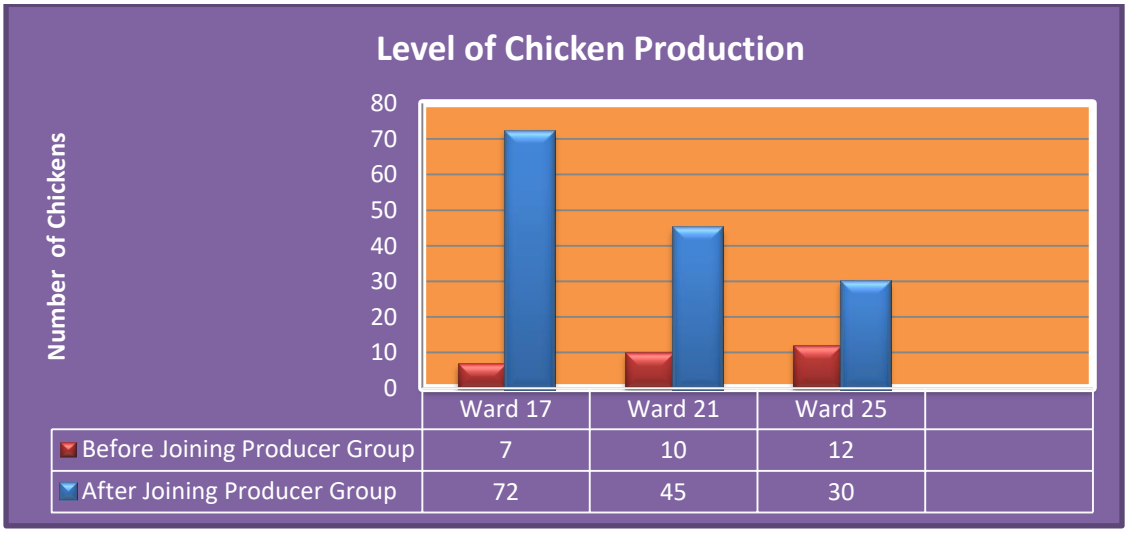
operations within and outside the community environs and attracting local and external partners.

4.5: Livelihoods Strategies

4.5.1: Chicken production

From document analysis, the producer group model has boosted production of chickens in ward 25 of Kushandanemoyounoda group. 95% of respondents indicated that the model stimulated a lot of competition among members. Members benefited from the model because it enhanced relations among farmers. Farmer to farmer learning was promoted as they interacted during observation exchange visit. This had a direct bearing on production. In ward 17, 21 and 25, there was an increase in chicken productions as depicted by fig 7 and 8 below.

Figure 7: Level of Chicken production



Source: Data analysis

Figure 8: Chicken production in ward 17 as diversification

Source: CARE ENSURE Photo Gallery.

There was an improvement in indigenous chicken production by smallholder farmers due to the producer group model. One respondent said

> "*Producer group risati ravepo huku dzedu dzairara mumiti dzimwe dzaibiwa nembavha, dzimwe dzichidyiwa nemakora taisakoshesa huku dzechivanhu tisingazivi kuti kuchengeta idzi huku kuchengeta Mari. Asi takazoti tapinda mumaproducer group aah... apa ndipo patakawana ruzivo rwekubata nhiyo dzedu kuti dzisadyiwa namakondo, zvaita kuti dziwande chaizvo uye dzitipe mari*"
>
> *"Producer group capacitated us on good poultry management practices hence our chicks are now protected from predators unlike before when they used to sleep in trees*

without proper foul run, this boosted chicken production by manifold.

There was an apex in the production of poultry smallholder farmer producer groups with some diversifying into the production of guinea fowl and turkeys. Empirical research shows all the studied wards have successful smallholder farmers in the production of indigenous chickens.

4.5.2: Groundnuts production

Data from the research depicts that training of farmers was made feasible because of producer groups. Producer groups have also mobilized $1000 to procure 833kgs of groundnut seed. From the data presented; access to agricultural inputs in-turn leads to increase in productions. In groundnuts, farmers were producing between 300- 1800 kg unshelled nuts. However following the producer group model, the use of good agronomic practices whereby farmers applied gypsum, tripled production of groundnuts. However smallholder farmers were affected by uneven distribution of rainfall and drought which hit the crops in the fields since their plots are situated in dry land. Producer groups in ward 25 suggested that they can only overcome drought if smallholder farmers will have access to irrigated land.

In ward 25 the continued synergized approach between VS&L and production assisted smallholder farmers to invest $330 to purchase 1500kg of gypsum. Clients have been able to engage in farming as a business where availability of adequate inputs is critical for lucrative return on investments. Clients accessed inputs from a local agro-dealer. The agro-dealer had received training and market linkages from ENSURE. Smallholder farmers have been able to put good agronomic practices into action, a new development which came as a result of the producer group model.

"Isu taifunga kuti kuisa fertilizer munzungu kutambisa tisingazivi kuti ndiko kunonzi kuwana goho rakakura. Parizvino tave kunyatsokohwa mbeu dzembando yakanaka nokuti tave neruzivo rwekurima sebusiness"

"We did not know the importance of good agronomic practices of applying gypsum in groundnuts field in order to get bumper harvest but now we are producing quality products through farming as a business", said one responded during a focus group discussion.

However the dry spell affected some producer group farmers in dry land. Livestock value chains groups were more active this season whilst dry land crops have been hit by the 2014/15 drought. The majority of groundnut producer groups' farmers have highlighted that the 2015 harvests have been much lower averaging 0.050MT per farmer. Fig 9below shows smallholder farmers managing their groundnuts plots after applying gypsum in ward 25.

Figure 9: Good agronomic crop management:

Kushandanomoyounoda producer group members

(Chivi ENSURE Report March 2015)

Premised on the above, the application of gypsum boosted production as well as the quality of the product.

4.5.3: Goats Production

There is an increase of goat production as a result of producer group model. A total of 10 farmers (4 M and 6F) inward 25 managed to sell 30 goats from their pen at an average price of $35-00 and they realized +/-US$1050.The same was replicated in ward 17 where Shandainesimba group invested their share-out into goat value chain and bought 54 goats for production. This brings the total number of goats bought this season to -/+91 goats valued at

$2730-00. The average price per goat was $30-00. Fig 10below shows Shandainesimba members showcasing their goats during a field day.

Figure 10: Diversification through Goats value Chain

(ENSURE CARE Report 2015)

4.6: Post harvest handling

Farmers in the studied area appreciated the use of hermetic bags and metal silos compared to constructed granaries. They highlighted that they did not construct granaries because they always harvest very low yields which then did not warrant the construction of granaries but they stored their grain in 50kg bags. The traditional methods of curing grain like the use of Gum tree leaves, mixing rapoko grain with maize and use of zimbani leaves was highlighted by many farmers as alternatives to using chemicals.

4.7: Livelihoods Outcome

4.7.1: Empowerment

The intervention had assisted clients to acquire productive assets as shown in fig 11 below; a woman showcased ox drawn plough purchase from VS&L dividends. The mould body enabled her to plough a hectare of groundnuts. Although she hoped to get a bumper harvest, she like other farmers in ward 17 and the whole of district were affected by low rainfall. The photograph to the right shows her sharing a smile in her groundnut field. This woman on the photography anticipates a yield of more than 500 KG unshelled nuts from her field despite the effects of the drought.

Fig 11: The Impact of Producer Groups

Source: CARE Chivi ENSURE Photo Gallery; Productive assets through VS&L; and its impact on producer groups. (Field day ward 17):

Women's participation in productive economic activities has escalated as well as their self-esteem, both in the society and at household level. The village headman one of the key informant applauded the producer group as critical in economically empowering the

communities. He argued that women participating in producer groups means a "fortune" to their husbands and therefore demands a lot of societal respect and support. The headman expressed a lot of conviction in the program that it cemented relationships between husbands and wives hence no sensible husband can beat a woman of that calibre.

"*Ungamurova kana kumutuka mukadzi wakadai here?"*

"*Can you beat or scold such a wife?"*

.... asked the headman inquisitively. From the look of things the headman addressed issues of gender equality and mainstreaming when he challenged man to appreciate the role of women in economic development and the need to protect women from gender based violence.

The model contributed immensely in empowering women who participate in producer groups in viable value chain products like chicken. Research findings show that one producer group member in ward 17 had borrowed $20-00 from her group and invested in raising traditional chicken. She bought 200 kg of millet valued at $20-00. A bucket was selling at $2-00 each. She realized the importance of the stock feed for meaningful chicken production. During the interviews she had 40 chickens; at 16 weeks old. The member applauded ENSURE for capacitating them through the producer group theory of change and VS&L that began to show economic and social outputs in her life. She had sold 10 chickens and raised $70-00 the money she used as school fees for her 2 children. Her vision is that; one day she will generate enough income to complete the construction of her 5 roomed modern houses. Smallholder farmers are putting into practice good methods of poultry production as shown by the good foul run on fig 12 below.

Figure 12: Poultry Management in ward 17

(Chivi CARE REPORT 2015)

The producer group managed to create a sense of self esteem among women who now perceive themselves as capable of making economic contribution at household level other than resorting to expressive unpaid roles.

Shandainesimba producer group in ward 17 (beans producer group) started a bakery project as a way of diversification. They started by mobilizing $46-00 from VS&L group and purchased 50 kg flour for $36.00 from Chivi growth point. The cost of other ingredients and transport amounted to $10-00. Schools and communities provide a ready market for their baked banns. After selling all the banns they generate a profit of $54-00 which was ploughed back into the project. The income from the IGA has helped the group members to continue

with their program and addressing household nutritional needs. (ENSURE CARE Report 2015).

4.7.2: Market linkages

Empirical research findings indicated that producer groups in ward 17, 21 and 25 have managed to establish market linkages with both local and external buyers. In ward 25 the groundnuts producer group which diversified in both goat and chicken value chain as a risk management strategy sold 30 goats valued at +/-US$1050 at one single market to AFM in Masvingo, marketing in bulk enables smallholder farmers to have lump-sum cash at one score which allow better planning than when they sell a single produce intermittently. As for Chicken they established good rapport with Vantoss (Masvingo famous buyer) and managed to sell over 800 traditional chickens during the season raising +/-$5000.

Data obtained shows that farmers have teamed up to form clusters of producer groups in their wards to ensure that they are able to supply the market. In ward 21, Chenhamokuirongera producer group for indigenous chicken mobilized other 4 producer groups within the ward to maintain relations with their buyers pending maturation of their produces. In ward 21 one lead farmer who is also a member of the chicken producer group pointed out that new producer groups were sprouting. Newly recruited members were in-cooperated within old groups. Asked whether this would not compromise the strength of old group? The lead farmer said in vernacular:

> *"Kana muchisunga mombe hamusungi itsva dzoga, saka kana vakashanda nevagara vachishanda vanoita zvakanaka, nokuti vave nevanhu voziva. Majon'osi oga haarimi anongomhanya."*

Newly recruited smallholder farmers need to be in-cooperated into old groups where old members impart vast lived experience, unlike if they are left to start on their own, they are bound to fail because they are new oxen tried in the farm and they cannot plough without experienced oxen."

There was great passion from the lead farmers to cascade the model to other community members, thus a good indicator that the program now has roots within the community and they can work alone without external drivers hence the program being sustainable. Cascading was promoted through passing seed chickens to newly vulnerable smallholder farmers on rational terms; that they would return only 2 off-springs. On market linkages smallholder farmers in ward 21 have established inter-district market linkages with the restaurants in Matibi Hospital in Mwenezi district where they sold over 100 chickens during the previous season, for US$700. The key informant confirmed the findings from questionnaires that the group has been linked to Vantoss in Masvingo but however their sell was affected by the outbreak of Newcastle disease which wiped their stock.

Asked why they could not control the disease, respondents indicated that they did not have vaccines and the veterinary confirmed that the vaccine was out of stock due to economic meltdown. Despite farmers being willing to buy chemicals for their chicken, this became very difficult for such vaccines require refrigeration which rural communities cannot have.

The beans producer group in ward 17 confirmed that they have been linked to E Mkambo marketers in Harare. Production of sugar beans has been on the increase since the model has been introduced serve for low rainfall in the area which resulted in the Chirogwe dam drying up, hence impedes production. During the previous season the group produced 3MT tones to

the tune of +/-US$4890. Farmers exhibited good negotiating skills and demonstrated the importance of groups for collective decision making and bargaining power.

4.7.3: Lead Farmers and Cluster Facilitators

For sustainability purposes post project period, the producer group capacitated community based volunteers known as lead farmers and cluster facilitators (CF). These continue to cascade and build savings culture among producer group members. From the key informant interviews 35 (3M; 32F) cluster facilitators and 58 lead farmers have been capacitated in the ENSURE operational wards to work with producer groups (CARE Report 2015). Lead farmers have been working with smallholder farmers' producer groups, promoting good agronomic practices such as conservation agriculture, production technologies, pest control measures and post harvest handling for livelihoods productivity by smallholder farmers. The table 4 below shows the cluster facilitator operating in Chivi district for sustainability.

TABLE 4: Cluster Facilitators

District	***Ward Number***	***Name of Cluster***	***Number of Cluster Facilitators***		***Total***
CHIVI			*M*	*F*	
	12	*Chinembiri*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	12	*Muvhundusi*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	12	*Barure*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	13	*Takavarasha*	*0*	*1*	*1*
	14	*Davira*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	15	*Mapaike*	*1*	*1*	*2*

	15	*Dewe*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	15	*Dzimati*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	17	*Chirogwe Irrigation*	*1*	*1*	*2*
	17	*Kuguta kushanda*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	17	*Fushai Garden*		*2*	*2*
	17	*Chamatutu*	*1*	*1*	*2*
	18	*Gwitima*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	20	*Jaka*	*0*	*1*	*1*
	24	*Shaiko*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	25	*Madzivire*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	25	*Runesu*	*0*	*1*	*2*
	26	*Banga*	*0*	*2*	*2*
	26	*Shindi*	*0*	*2*	*2*
Totals			*3*	*32*	*35*

Source: CARE International Report 2015)

However, it should be pointed out that participation in VS&L had empowered women. Women have been relegated to reproductive roles before participating in the model, but research findings indicates active involvement in productive and community development roles.

From the focus group discussions, producer group model played an important latent function of providing psychosocial support to group members. Chenhamokuirongera group members in ward 21 rallied behind their member during moments of sickness. The members

unanimously agreed to withdraw $10 from the group savings and used it for medication and provision of basic needs for one of their members. The significance of this gesture is that the program has managed to build support groups from community hence social life challenges are addressed in groups. Key informants testified that the intervention has empowered their group so much that they provided funeral assistance to their members. The model increased household income for all the interviewees who participated in the study with some paying school fees for their children enrolled at primary, secondary and even tertiary education.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.0: Introduction

The preceding chapter presented findings on the sustainability of the producer group model and how it empowered smallholder farmers in Chivi district in ward 17, 21 and 25 where the research was conducted. This chapter focuses on synthesizing the main findings and emerging themes from the research. Themes have emerged from the research questions and responses on the sustainability of the producer groups, looking at whether the model had managed to address the challenges of smallholder farmers among them, lack of agricultural inputs which resulted in poor yield, lack of capital which is a major hurdle to the accessibility of required inputs, market linkages issues and the overall food insecurity. Sustainable livelihoods approach framework guided the discussion as well as the empirical data gathered from the informative in-depth interviews. The discussion also taps into the insights from the secondary data discussed in chapter 2. In short, this chapter aims to give a balanced analysis of the findings by especially underscoring the major ideas.

5.1: Producer Groups

A producer group is a team consists of people, sharing a common interest, working together to achieve a common goal, knowing each other by face and having intimate interaction with each other. Participants are organized to become a team with each playing respective supporting roles. The participants work in groups, interacting with farmer associations and contractors. They also have a shared vision and consult amongst themselves as well as

implementing the skills acquired during trainings, (Lopdale, 2011). While the above highlighted the key elements of the producer groups, it fails to give specifications in terms of how big the producer group should be, which this research attempted to address. Although the figure is not cast and still but for good governance and sustainability, empirical evidence from this research shows that a producer group should have from 25 to 30 smallholder farmers.

The advantages for manageable groups entail group cohesion and homogeneity. Farmers with the common vision and from the same geographical location (ranging from 2 to 5 km) can work well together unlike when they are too many and scattered. It is easy to organize such a group's operational activities unlike a very big group. More so, from the study, the bigger group affects common vision and thus high prevalence of conflicts which militates against group sustainability.

5.2: Sustainability of producer groups

Sustainability, which can be measured by the ability of the group to operate beyond the project life span from one generation to another, is hitched on how groups were formed. From the study a group maturity index was used to establish the sustainability of producer groups. In order to eventually reach the sustainable stage, the group has to pass through four stages of development vis a vis; the infant stage.

The infant stage is also referred to as the storming stage. At this level the group lacks a stable environment for its activities which are usually implemented in an 'ad-hoc' fashion and the benefits to members are erratic. The group's goals, objectives and aspirations are not usually focused and the necessary communication hardly takes place. The overall implementation

lacks structures and control and its efficiency depends on individual skills, knowledge, motivation and external support in terms of financial, material and skills resources. From the studied groups in Chivi district, they have all surpassed this storming stage. They do not wait for external financial support anymore. 69% members have operational group savings and loans schemes similar to Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOS) in Tanzania as pointed out by Mugoya (2011).

Research analysis shows that the studied groups have also surpassed the growth stage where group activities are based on the result of the previous projects and the demands of the current one. Meanwhile, activities are based on planning and a lot of calculation.

The groups also surpassed the maturity stage where minimum bench marks include projects being carried out under guidance of project operation standards and an implementation strategy. There is stabilized planning and control based on a clear and shared vision. A governance and management structures is in place and there is improved cohesion, skills and resources in the group. Implementing becomes predictable and the group is able to develop rules and conditions regarding the quality of the products and processes. Deviating behaviour is detected and immediately corrected. Project standard are well documented and shared based on routine monitoring and evaluation. Project implementation at this maturity stage becomes a 'way of life' with external support limited. Benefits of the project start to accrue to group members and to the community.

The researcher confirmed through this research that the studied groups were at sustainable stage of development. The groups have become resilient, more capable of adapting to change and make changes when conditions or assumptions change (risk management) to improve its efforts and sustain itself over time like ability to diversify into other value chains such as

chicken and goats. This auger well with Huang et al (2012)'s findings on how Chinese rural household diversify as a risk management strategy. The groups in Chivi are able to detect causes of failure, error and mistakes e.g. drought causing sugar beans failure for Shandainesimba group and Newcastle disease for chicken production in Chenhamokuirongera. There are increasing and regular benefits to group members and to the community, like when the group ploughed back its benefits through donations to their school Chirogwe in ward 17.

The group at sustainable stage of development will not be sustained by any external support but entirely standing on its feet. However the researcher noted that the group have not yet formalised themselves since they are not registered by the state and have no bank accounts necessary for their operations although they are heading towards that direction. The research was informed by the group maturity index to establish how sustainable the producer groups are and concluded that the studied groups had surpassed all the first three stages and have reached the sustainable stage of development.

5.3: The Gendered nature of Producer groups leadership.

This concept is rather peculiar to this research where women have demonstrated the ability to make decisions in producer groups than men. Sustainability was measured in terms of functionality of the constitutions and women being selected in powerful positions of leadership. The study demonstrated that if women are in leadership positions they execute their duties so perfectly and they are great motivators. Women have been active in chickens' production (small livestock production, a domain for women). They cascaded the concept at churches, community public functions and several social gathering thus recruiting new

members. However, the study shows that there are more men than women in groundnuts producer groups, previously dominated by women. This was attributed to prospects for more income from this value chain product hence men often opt for livelihoods which have potential to increase household income.

5.4: Stakeholder Engagement

The study looked at the line Ministries and key stakeholder critical for the sustainability of the producer group model. CARE International (the implementing Agency) worked closely with the Ministry of Agriculture as the major key stakeholder with all it departments vis a vis departments of livestock production, veterinary, mechanization and Agritex. Mechanization department has been instrumental in the pegging of contours in the irrigations and ensures that assets are maintained through good agronomic practices, hence environmental natural resources protection. Department of livestock production has been providing production technical expertise to producer groups on livestock which resulted in the increase of production in indigenous chickens and goats value chain, while Agritex is responsible for crop production especially in sugar beans and groundnuts value chains. Farmers receive constant monitoring and support from officers. CARE International provided capacity building to Agritex officers in the designated wards since they stayed with the smallholder farmers for long. There was evidence of partnership of NGOs such as SNV which came in with marketing skills, SAFIRE cascading disaster risk management for natural resources with line ministry. The synergy empowered both smallholder farmers and line ministry on how producer groups should operate their livelihoods activities to ensure that resources are used with future generation in posterity.

While the strategy was noble, it goes without saying that, during the inception of the model, Agritex officer had a negative attitude toward this model which they perceived as an additional burden on top of their usual workload. However, the Agency appealed for the change of attitude by the stakeholders since it was only there to complement government efforts. Through dialogue and engagement the ministry of agriculture took full responsibility of the producer group model and the study revealed that farmers were directly connected to the Agritex officers in the studied wards and there is a glove hand relationship between producer groups and Agritex officers thus an indicator of project sustainability.

Producer groups continue to receive monitoring from the Ministry of Agriculture and mechanization, which provided them with technical support on issues to do with production. It is on this basis that the research study confirmed the sustainability of the producer group model in terms of life post project period. To this end, Lopdale (2011), maintains that producer farmer groups offer numerous benefits to members among them are; getting access to training on new farming methods and farm business management skills. Usually organizations that facilitate development activities target farmer based groups and other types of groups. It is for the group to access viable markets both locally or outside the country as well as getting discounts on bulk purchase of agricultural inputs. The groups gets guarantee when accessing credit from financial institutions and can gain more voice in production and marketing.

5.5: Livelihoods Outcomes

5.5.1: Food Security

In Sub- Saharan Africa smallholder farmers are the key players in the food supplies as they contribute up to 90% of the food consumed (Salami et al, 2010). However, conventional knowledge is limited on how these majorities navigate outside the formal realms and confront the debilitating effects of globalised markets on their own terms. The above concurs with a study by Bihunirwa and Mohammed (2011) who found that Kasese United Women Association (KUWA) which also doubles as a SACCO and a producer group, agreed to focus on eggplants as group enterprise. They decided on eggplants because they are usually resistant to dry conditions, have quick maturation and do not need spray. Beside the market was readily available. They managed to harvest 600kg of eggplants and confirmed that this was above what each person would produce individually. KUWA was supported by other institutions, such as Kabarole Research and Resource Centre, (KRC) and National Agricultural Advisory Services, (NAADS), which provided technical and organizational skills. KRC's method of work encourages farmers' groups to carry out an analysis of any proposed enterprises, noting the potential benefits and risks.

This study also confirmed that there is correlation between producer group model and increase in production as shown by the findings. Indigenous chicken production quadrupled in Chenhamokuirongera and Shandainesimba groups with some members producing as much as 72 birds compared to 15 they produced before. Producer group stimulated competition among members who felt challenged by quantities produced for the market by their colleagues. This increased income for the household which can be used to buy food thus enhancing food security. What is unique to producer groups studied was that, smallholder

farmers complete their farm production operations individually instead of working as a group in the production of a value chain product. They then engaged marketing committees to bargain with buyer while mobilizing their produce to market in bulk. Members are organized on the value chain to produce the quality required. Groups offer its members financial support through Village Savings and Loans; and technical support through farmer look and learn visits.

However, in as much as production has increased especially in small livestock value chains, the producer group as a model failed to achieve what it intended to in the realms of food security in the studied area due to a number of other uncontrollable variables such as climate change and uneven rainfall patterns. The amount of rainfall received ranged from 311mm to 388mm during the season with the month of December receiving the highest amount of rainfall, while the planting rainfall in November was the lowest which negatively affected germination, followed by February which also affected the flowering stage of crops in the production cycle. Most of the plots studied are situated in the dry land which heavily relies on natural rainfall. Therefore global warming and climate change has posed a big challenge to smallholder farmers despite efforts to use conservation farming technology to ameliorate the challenges of low rainfall. Economic and climatic factors have been the major stumbling blocks to the enhancement of the objective of food security.

5.5.2: Financial linkages

Although producer group model assisted smallholder farmers in Limpopo province in South Africa to access start-up capital from the buyers, (Thohoyandou SPAR), this development is different from groups in Chivi in the studied areas. Smallholder farmers have failed to strike a deal with external micro financial institution and buyers on contract farming. In South Africa

farmers were supported by interest-free loans, a guaranteed market, farm visits and training on required quality standards. The remoteness of the supermarket from the central distribution centres, the stores operate in rural areas, reduced transport costs, and meeting freshness requirements as well as contributing to community development (Bienabe and Vermeulen, 2007). As alluded to in the findings of this study, the economic meltdown and policy issues explain why micro finance institutions refused to work with smallholder farmers. There are issues of collateral security which smallholder farmers cannot meet. However there is need to explore why buyers in Chivi area such as Chicken Express do not exploit this opportunity to get supplies of both indigenous and broiler chickens since producer groups have demonstrated the capacity to produce and meet the market demand.

However, realizing the financial linkage challenges of smallholder farmers in Chivi district, the model integrated producer groups into Village Savings and Lending (VS&L) methodology which assisted farmers to mobilize their own savings and used them to support their production. The approach shows some similarities with SACCOS in Tanzania and it has worked on well. In Chivi district, producer groups have managed to mobilize +/-US$29 262-00 across the ENSURE operational wards (CARE ENSURE report 2015). The sustainable livelihood framework maintains that a livelihood is sustainable when it can increase the household income. From the look of things, the producer group model managed to increase income for 67% of households under study. On another note it economically empowered smallholder farmers. If statistic is something to go by, then the researcher can concretely assert that women have been economically empowered since they constitute 63% of the studied population sample.

5.5.3: Access to resources

The purpose of producer groups is to help farmers to increase their yield and income by pooling their resources to support collective service provision and economic empowerment. However, agriculture producer groups fall into mainstream activities of agricultural undertaking including supplying of agricultural inputs. Inputs supply includes the distribution of seeds and fertilizers to farmers. Findings from this study show that smallholder farmers experience shortages of agricultural inputs particularly for sugar beans, groundnuts seeds and gypsum. Despite the producer group model being designed as a vehicle for development where smallholder farmers would be linked to agro dealers who in turn were connected to seed houses, the chain failed what it purported to deliver. The major hurdles given included economic meltdown which crippled the general economy and the agriculture sector in particular with inputs being imported from South Africa and Zambia. Beside, globalization and open markets exposed agro dealers to stiff competition from other business players coupled with limited capital to boost their stocks. Farmers ended up planting retained seed or buying from informal traders which affected issues of sustainability since this compromised production and quality of produce. However the producer group model assisted farmers to pool their financial capital through Village Savings and Loan fund to access inputs from informal markets and has worked on well with groundnut groups mobilizing enough money to buy over 800kg groundnut seed. In some instances smallholder farmers denied partnership with agro dealers whom they accused of charging them exorbitant prices compared to other suppliers of agricultural inputs. This presented a big challenge as in the case of ward 25.

5.5.4: Market linkages

Biekart and Fowler (2009) argued that smallholder farmers were finding it difficult to open markets for their benefit with the government, donors, NGOs and more recently the private sector giving them limited support. Because markets need volumes of goods, one important mechanism for competing is the creation of associations with the key function of produce bulking for collective marketing. A typical model involves smallholder farmers coming together in producer groups and agreeing on an enterprise through a cost-benefit analysis. Once they reach agreement on the enterprise, they embarked on production. In this way, they are able to produce more than they would individually produce and get their money all at once, especially when they sell to a single buyer. As alluded to in the research findings, the producer group model has managed to organize smallholder farmers and link them to the markets. The sustainable livelihood framework saw institutions interplaying in order for smallholder farmers to realize their capabilities, without the interaction of these institutions, smallholder farmers' capabilities remain a mirage unattainable. From the study, producer groups for indigenous chicken in ward 21 have managed to form clusters where more than one group joined hands in order maintain their supply to the market. In terms of quality, producer groups have been capacitated on post harvesting and handling where they looked into sorting and grading of their produces before marketing. There was evidence that producer groups are working with buyers directly in most cases marketing committees have been searching for the markets without external influence. They have been able to maintain good relations with old buyers and establish new relation with new ones. The producer group model has managed to address the challenges of markets for smallholder farmers who could sell in bulk as shown on the research findings.

5.6: Empowerment of Smallholder Farmers through producer groups

Kabeer**,** 2001:19**,** defines empowerment as "a process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability." She argues that there is a wide gap between this understanding of empowerment and the more instrumentalist definition attached to efforts to measure and quantifies empowerment. The ability to exercise choice incorporates three inter-related dimensions: resources (defined broadly to include not only access, but also future claims, to both material and human and social resources); agency (including process of decision making as well as less measurable manifestations of agency such as negotiation, deception and manipulation); and achievements (well-being outcomes). Three dimensions of choices are indivisible in determining the meaning of an indicator and hence its validity as a measure of empowerment. This concurs with Malhotra, (2002)'s definition of empowerment which stresses the ability of people to make strategic choices in areas that affect their lives. Two key factors in the process of empowerment are identified as access and control over resources. Thus empowerment refers to the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices. Sen, (1985) argues that freedom to choose becomes freedom of opportunities when people have the capacity to act on choices. This depends on their assets and capabilities. This is reinforced in the Sustainable livelihoods' Framework prompted by DFID 2000. The framework distinguishes five types of 'capital' vis a vis financial, physical, natural, human and social, that provide the capacity to follow a chosen livelihood strategy. The first three capitals are tangible assets, while human and social capital can be thought of as capabilities. A core capability is the ability to make sense out of information in order to generate knowledge, such as determining the viability of new market opportunity, or setting price for farm produce. According to the framework, impact on women empowerment is reflected in three inter-connecting aspects of social

change. The first driven by the actor-centred notion of agency is in the aspirations, resources, capabilities, attitudes, and achievements of women themselves.

From the look of things empowerment is variously conceptualised as a process, an end-state and a capacity. However efforts to measure empowerment need to consider different levels in terms of micro/macro, individual/collective and also consider different spheres such as economic, political and social spheres. Besides there is also need to consider different temporal scales; often beyond the lifetime of a single programme and must be sensitive to social context.

The study therefore shows that Women's participation in productive economic activities has increased as well as their self-esteem enhanced, both in the society and at household level. The model contributed immensely in empowering women who participate in producer groups in viable value chain products like chicken, sugar beans and groundnuts production. Women have realized their capabilities in decision making bodies where they occupied positions of high authority. Women do not only have access to productive asset like ox drawn plough but they also have control and ownership which emanates from access to and control over income from the livelihood activities they participate in. They make economic contribution at household level by actively participating in productive roles other than resorting to expressive unpaid reproductive roles. Women have been exposed to a lot of trainings as lead farmers, cluster facilitators and can participate in community development activities. Their participation saw the increase of income from value chains products and diversification which in turn improved their wellbeing as well as addressing household nutritional needs. Of paramount importance is the fact that the model cultured members to realize their own

capabilities and generate solution using locally available resources. Producer groups empowered members as they are now self sustained

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the research as it gives the final conclusions on the research findings. The research will also give suggestions and recommendations on the sustainability of the producer group model to the empowerment of smallholder farmers in Chivi district of Masvingo province. The main objective of this study was to examine how the model managed to address challenges faced by smallholder farmers, empower them and ultimately enhance food security which is the major goal.

6.1: Livelihoods of Producer groups

When people are enmeshed in socio-economic quandary they devise a myriad of livelihood capitals they have, to surmount the wrath of their problems. The research notes that, human beings are endowed with various assets such as human, social, physical, natural and financial capital which they mobilize in their endeavour to meet their needs. This is in tandem with Sustainable livelihood framework which provides an insight on the sustainability of the producer group concept to the livelihoods of smallholder as they respond to climatic conditions which contribute to food insecurity. Smallholder farmers in ward 17, 21 and 25 where the research was conducted engaged in the intensive production of groundnuts, sugar beans and indigenous chickens' and goats value chain which have a high demand and market value. By so doing producer groups realised their capability to transform their livelihood structures.

Producer groups' livelihoods activities in selected value chains can be classified as sustainable as they have managed to build resiliency of smallholder farmers against drought shocks which are prevalent in Chivi district. Despite Chivi having received the lowest rainfall compared to other district in the province, according to the ZIMVAC results which culminated in very low yields, the producer group model strengthened resiliency of smallholder farmers who managed to pursue their normal life in a state of shock. Smallholder farmers in groundnuts producer groups diversified into chicken and goats value chains with some undertaking cross border trading as mitigation measures against drought.

6.1.1: Livelihoods Assets

Sugar beans producer group, has irrigation as a physical asset in ward 17.There is an asset management committee responsible for maintenance of the asset. The Village Savings and Lending fund pooled income together for the purposes of maintenance of the asset. Rehabilitation of canal was done by the group. There is a dam which supplies the irrigation with water. However the study established that the dam had no water due to drought and this has negatively affected sugar beans production which is at a halt. Indigenous chicken producer groups received training on proper poultry management. The groups built foul run for their chicken which used to stay in trees. The above development resulted in increase in production and income. Members participating in producer groups are now having access to modern shelters. There was evidence of newly constructed structures and this can be credited to accrued benefits due to the producer group model.

The research further unearthed that not only did the producer group promoted access to assets but it improved control over assets and ownership to livelihood assets like livestock; goats, chicken, ox drawn plough and income not only to vulnerable men but to 69% of women in

the studied area. This is most paramount because livelihoods are equally a matter of ownership of assets, the management of skills and relationships and also affirmation of personal significance and group identity.

6.1.2: Sustainability of the producer groups

Groundnuts, sugar beans and chicken value chain producer groups in the researched area; (wards 17, 21 and 25) have demonstrated a lot of knowledge and skills which they acquired from the implementing agency in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. A lot of capacity building on farming as a business, post harvesting and handling, Management of livelihoods activities was received by members. This had a positive bearing on productivity as provided in the research findings. More so, the production of indigenous chicken and goats has improved the health standards of household studied which is good for sustainability of human capital. Although groundnuts and sugar beans were affected by the drought, it can be argued that the groups harvested something which was used for home consumption thus improved nutrition and in turn improved good health.

6.1.3: Access and control to land

Producer groups' members have access to land. They have plots ranging from 0.9 to 3 hectares. In terms of land ownership, plots are located in communal land and ownership is on hereditary basis. Usually women lacked land ownership which is registered under the household head in this cases the husband. However women have access to land; and utility is decided at household sometimes through joint decision making or male dominated. Land access is critical on producer group value chain livelihoods activities. In terms of unmarried women, sole decision is made by the women.

6.1.4: Financial Linkages

Producer groups have managed to build their own Village Savings and Lending funds to support smallholder farmers in production. The fund improved access to income by members to buy inputs, run the group operational activities and transport produces to the market. Savings improved good health through access to nutritional foods hence reduced levels of vulnerability. The increase in income gave smallholder farmers different livelihoods options with some diversified into baking banns as a coping mechanism against drought shocks. Others tried buying and selling which involves cross border trading. Access and control to financial capital opened opportunities in the studied wards to accrue household assets, livestock, and improved living standards. The above in turn empowered members with coping strategies in times of shocks, stress and other calamities in the area.

However, external funds from other micro-finance institutions proved difficult due to economic meltdown and institutional policies which demand collateral security in the name of insured vehicles or properties with title deeds.

6.1.5: Social Relations

Social capital refers to the social resources (method relationship of trust and access to wider institutions of society) in pursuit of livelihoods. The producer group model had cemented social relations among members, Members were unified together and formed cohesive homogeneity groups of people ranging from 25 to 30 members per group for easy management. Groups have been capacitated and formed their constitution stating the vision, mission and operational standards. The study shows that, there is unity of purpose within groups with leadership guided by the group constitution to run the affairs of the groups. A group maturity index confirmed that, studied groups are now at sustainable stage of

development. The groups operate independently of external support. They only engage external support for consultation purposes. Committees are functional and these have been useful in market linkages with the local and external buyers. This shows the interaction of social institutions to enhance smallholder farmers' livelihoods

6.1.6: Empowerment of smallholder farmers through producer group model

It emerged in this study that the producer groups have helped smallholder farmers to move out of abject poverty which they were swamped in. The producer group managed to empower particularly women both married and unmarried to participate in productive and community development activities. Women are now breadwinners and have diversified into other income generating activities such as cross boarder trading with finances they are getting from Village Savings and loans funds to avert the wrath of their conundrum confronting them in their social life. Producer groups have also changed power relations within the household with women having a say in decision making since they make significant contributions to the welfare of the family. Through this ploy, their financial status has been improved. Furthermore the producer group model empowered smallholder farmers in many ways, it increased resource ownership, control and no longer depend on development agencies to sustain their life. Village Savings Loan funds created by producer group helped smallholder farmers to provide safety nets for vulnerable members.

6.1.7: Attaining livelihoods assets through producer group model

The members of Shandainesimba, Chenhamokuirongera and Kushandanemoyounoda producer groups in 17, 21 and 25 respectively, (in Chivi district) have attained livelihoods assets through the model in the form of human, financial, physical, social and natural capital.

6.2: Recommendations

- Local buyers in Chivi district should partner with producer groups and support them with interest-free loans and markets to ensure that producers group market locally and avoid travelling long distances for markets which adversely affect their return on investment.
- Government should work with agro-dealers, identifying their challenges and possible solution in order to promote linkages between producer groups and agro-dealers for smallholder farmers to have supply of agricultural inputs close by.
- Private public partnership is critical for the creation of assets such as dams for irrigation in Chivi district since the district is a drought prone area and crops production cannot be sustainable under natural rainfall.
- Government should provide adequate budgets to the ministry of agriculture in order for it to run its departmental affairs, the likes of veterinary; to be able to vaccinate animals and curb diseases like Newcastle which jeopardized the production of indigenous chickens.

6.3: Suggested area for future studies

While researching, the researcher came across some of the grey areas. The questions from those areas therefore deserve to be answered through independent research investigation. These research areas include those listed below and some which are not part of the list below.

- Explore the challenges that militate against sustainability of producer groups.
- Explore the potential for local buyers to support producer groups with soft loans and produce for them on contract farming basis.

- Gendered nature of the producer groups and its impact on development in Chivi district.
- Investigate challenges for regional markets by producer groups in Chivi.

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List of Interviews

- Key informant interview at Chivi CARE International Offices; 20 August 2015
- Key informant interviews with SNV officer at Chivi CARE offices; 20 August 2015
- Key informant interviews at Veterinary Services, Chivi offices; 20 August 2015
- Key informant interview at Chivi district Agritex Offices; 21 August 2015
- Key informant interview at Livestock production Department in Chivi district Offices; 21 August 2015
- Key informant with ward 17 councilor, Chamatutu ward centre; 24 August 2015
- Key informant interviews with ward 17 Agro-dealer at Chamatutu Town Ship; 24 August 2015
- Key informant interviews with ward traditional leaders at Chamatutu ward centre; 24 August 2015
- Key informant interviews with ward 17 Agritex officer at Chirogwe irrigation; 25 August 2015
- Focus group discussion with Shandainesimba committee members at Chirogwe irrigation; 25 August 2015
- Key informant interviews with ward 21 councilor Chishavakadzi ward centre; 28 August 2015
- Focus group discussion with Chenhamokuirongera committee members at Gutai Garden ward 21; 28 August 2015
- Focus group discussion with Lead farmers and cluster facilitators members at Gutai Garden ward 21; 28 August 2015
- Key informant interviews with ward 21 Agritex Officers at Chomuruvati Township; 28 August 2015

- Key informant interviews with ward 21 Agro-dealer at Chomuruvati Town ship; 28 August 2015
- Key informant interviews with ward 25 councilor at Madzivire ward centre; 02 September 2015
- Key informant interviews with Agro-dealer ward 25, at Ngundu Business Centre; 02 September 2015
- Key informant interviews with ward 25 Agritex officer at Ngundu Agritex offices, 04 September 2015.
- Focus group discussion with Kushandanemoyounoda committee members; Lundi craft centre, ward 25; 04 September 2015

Appendix 1

Midlands State University

Department of Development Studies

Questionnaire: Chivi District

My name is Jacob Marangwanda, a student at Midlands State University doing a research on "The Sustainability of the Producer group Concept to the empowerment of Smallholder farmers: Chivi District."

INFORMED CONSENT

Your group has been randomly selected to participate in this research, and your participation is voluntary. The information that you give will be confidential. This information will be used for the purposes of the research only, which will not include any specific names and there will be no way to identify that you gave this information. The survey usually takes about 15 minutes. However, your honest answers to the questions will be greatly appreciated.

INTERVIEW DETAILS				
1	District	1 = Chivi		
2	Ward			
3	Type of the producer group	1= Sugar beans 2= Groundnuts 3=Chicken 4= Goats		
4	Does the group have a working constitution & a committee	0= No	1= Yes	
5	Sex of registered producer farmer	1= Male	2= Female	Age=
6	Does household have any male/female household members aged 18 years or more?	0 = No	1=Yes	
7	How many members joined the producer group when you started			

8	How many members are currently participating		
9	Were you enrolled in the other ENSURE project activities in the last 12 months?	0=NO	1=YES)
a	VS&L		
b	If yes to 9a, did you borrow money from VS&L within the last 12 months		
c	Environmental Subcommittee		
d	Natural resource Management Committee		
e	Disaster preparedness and response committee		
f	Lead farmer group		
g	Agro dealer association		

LAND OWNERSHIP & FARMING IMPLEMENTS		
10	Crop type/ Animal type	1= Sugar beans 2= Groundnuts 3=Chicken 4= Goats
11	Farming system	1 = Irrigated 2 = Dry land 3= Both dry and irrigated
12	Total Arable land owned and rented by household (Ha) ***2.5 acres = 1 ha***	
13	Total area planted (Ha) [crop] above (Q11)	
14	Do you have crop records	0 = No 1 = Yes

SOURCES OF CROP INPUTS						
1= Informal Markets	**2=GMB**	**3=Agro-dealer**	**4=NGO Voucher**	**5=Presidential Scheme**	**6=Retained Past Harvest**	**7=Friends/ Relatives/Remittances**
	CODE BELOW MORE THAN 1 RESPONSE ALLOWED			Did you access any of the inputs in the last 12 months 1=No	If yes what were your sources?	What was the total area planted for each crop/ fertiliser application

		2=Yes		
15a	Maize			
15b	Sugar beans			
15c	Groundnuts seed			
15d	Basal/ Top dressing fertiliser			

PRODUCTION COSTS (USD)		
Hired Human Labour		**Total Amount Spent (USD)**
16a	Chicken (chemical, feeds)	
16b	Sugar Beans (ploughing, Planting, fertilisers, weeding, harvesting)	
17c	Groundnuts (Planting, fertilisers, weeding, harvesting)	
17d	Goats (chemical, feeds)	
17e	Other draught related costs (Specify)	
Transport		**Total Amount Spent (USD)**
17f	Input costs	
17g	Product movement cost	
17h	Other costs (Specify)	
Producer group fees		**Total Amount Spent (USD)**
18	Membership fees	

Productive assets owned before joining the producer group and after						
ITEMS		A. Before joining	B. After joining	ITEMS	C. Before joining	D. After joining
19a	Ox drawn plough			Wheel barrow		
19b	Ox drawn harrow			cattle		
19c	Cultivators			goats		
19d	Hoes			Chickens		

19e	Scotch cart					

Level of production before joining the producer group and after (Goho renyu musati mave muproducer group uye pamave muproducer group) 20a- 20e

ITEMS		E. Before joining (kg)/ Number	F. After joining (kg)/ Number	**PRODUCE SALES (UNITED STATES DOLLARS)**	
				Before Joining group US$	After Joining group US$
20a	Groundnuts				
20b	Sugar Beans				
20c	Goats				
20d	Chicken				
20e	Maize				

	MARKET LINKAGES			
`	**Crop**	**Who are your Buyers**	**Quantity bought KGs**	**Total amount paid (USD)**
21a	Chicken			
21b	Groundnuts			
21c	Sugar Beans			
21d	Goats			

22. In your own opinion, do you think the producer group is sustainable and why? .....

.....

23. In your own opinion, what do you think must be done to improve the producer group model?

.....

END

Appendix 2

Midlands State University

Department of Development Studies

Questionnaire: Chivi District

My name is Jacob Marangwanda, a student at Midlands State University doing a research on "The Sustainability of the Producer group Concept to the empowerment of Smallholder farmers: Chivi District."

You have been randomly selected as key informants to participate in this research, and your participation is voluntary. The information that you give will be confidential. This information will be used for the purposes of the research only, which will not include any specific names and there will be no way to identify that you gave this information. The survey usually takes about 20 minutes. However, your honest answers to the questions will be greatly appreciated.

a) Explain what you understand by the term "sustainability" in relation to the producer group concept.

b) State five major challenges faced by smallholder farmers in Chivi district.

c) In what ways did the producer groups empower smallholder farmers?

d) Outline how the formation of producer groups acted as an antidote to the problems faced by smallholder farmers in Chivi district.

e) What capacity building trainings have been done to empower smallholder farmers and ensure project ownership and continuity post project period?

f) In your own opinion, who are the key stakeholders for the sustainability of the producer groups and what is the level of their engagement in the project?

g) Describe the partnership (if there is any) between CARE international (development agency) and line ministries in the creation and organisation of producer groups? Explain its significance.

h) To what extent did the producer groups improve household food security, increased income, access to agricultural inputs and markets on smallholder farmers?

Group maturity Index	**1=Infant/ Formation Stage**	**2=Growth Stage**	**3= Maturity Stage**	**4= Sustainable Stage**
Type of Group			At what Level of Maturity is your group (Use the codes above)	
1 Goat				
2 Chicken				
3 Sugar Beans				
4 Groundnuts				

END