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**FACULTY OF ARTS**

**Department of Development Studies**

**THE PERSISTENCE OF EXTREME POVERTY AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE OF THE SAN COMMUNITY IN TSHOLOTSHO DISTRICT, MATABELELAND NORTH.**

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**May 2014**

**Declaration**

I declare, unless specifically indicated, that **“The Persistence of Extreme Poverty among Ethnic Minorities in Zimbabwe. A Case of the San Community in Tsholotsho District, Matabeleland North”** is my original work and has not been submitted anywhere else. I confirm that all the material presented has not been written for me in whole or in part by another person. I also affirm that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished has been duly acknowledged in the work I present for examination.

**MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**

# APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Midlands State University for acceptance, a dissertation entitled “**The Persistence of Extreme Poverty among Ethnic Minorities in Zimbabwe. A Case of the San Community In Tsholotsho District, Matabeleland North”**, submitted to the Faculty of Arts, department of Development Studies by Mangarai Zhou in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Bachelor of Arts in Development Studies Honours Degree.

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**Dedication**

This piece of work is to my family, with a special dedication to my brother Tafara Zhou, my sister in law Sikhangele Zhou and my sister Nornah Zhou with whose support and guidance I now know that I was made to walk on the water too.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to give my utmost gratitude to God Almighty, who reigns even in heaven and with whom all things are possible.

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**List of Acronyms**

ACHPR African Charter on Human and People’s Rights

BEAM Basic Education Assistance Module

CAMPFIRE Communal Area Management for Indigenous Resources

DFID Department for International Development

HIV Human Immune Virus

HDI Human Development Index

IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development

MDG Millennium Development Goals

MSF Medicins Sans’ Frontier

ORAP Organisation of Rural Association for Progress

SAHO South African History Online

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UDHR Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UNDRIP United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

UNIDWIP United Nations Indigenous Day of the World’s Indigenous People

VP Vice President

**Abstract**

*The study focused on the persistence of poverty among ethnic minorities in Zimbabwe using the San Community as a case study. Four objectives guided the research and these were: assessing the extent of poverty levels among the San community, understanding the reasons for the persistence of poverty among the San community, examining the gestures that government has made towards addressing the state of extreme poverty among the San community and examining the gestures that NGOs and other non-state players have made toward addressing the state of extreme poverty among ethnic minorities. To achieve the objectives the researcher used both the qualitative and quantitative research design which entailed the use of interviews, questionnaires and personal observations. The research findings were analyzed using tables and graphs and the results revealed that the San community’s poverty is principally caused by lack of assets and education which stem from their historical background and minority status. Their integration into the mainstream agricultural economy from a hunting and gathering lifestyle was not followed by capitalisation for empowerment. The San people’s grievances mostly go to the government for neglecting and marginalising them in all matters significant to their wellbeing through not ensuring that they have representation in some or all decision making positions such as the chieftaincy, headmen and in other government offices. The study concluded that it would be imperative that the San community is capacitated and empowered through government initiatives such as the Heifer project, BEAM and put in place policies that recognize and allow for the participation of minority groups in decision making. The role of non-state actors was also discussed whereby they can come up with aid or assistance that does not create a dependency syndrome but creates assets and empowers communities. The role of the media in poverty alleviation was also emphasised. The potential in the San community has not been tapped into yet and there is no telling what great things might come out of them if they are given the platform.*

**I. AN OVERVIEW**

The world over development paradigms and policies have been geared towards modernisation and creating a homogeneous society, ignoring cultural and ethnic pluralism and exclusions based on identity. Pradhan (2004) argues that globalisation has not addressed the issue of how small distinct groups can be integrated into the bigger society on an equal basis that does not give room to discrimination and prejudice. He goes further to say that development discourses have indeed attempted to resolve the dilemma of minority groups by advocating for the respect of their rights and identity and freedoms through international human rights discourses, the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), etc, however, the message has not yet reached the grassroots where the majority of minority populations are found.

DFID (2005) reports that over 891 million the world over are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnic background, linguistic and religious identities. Minority status is often accompanied by prejudice and discrimination. Minority groups have long suffered from exclusion which has resulted in discrimination, marginalisation and poverty all due to their distinctness from the mainstream traditions and cultures. With poverty being more of a social phenomenon, the poverty status of minority populations may be better understood in terms of social exclusion. Bird et al (n.d) states that social exclusion is a valuable concept in understanding chronic poverty in most communities because lack of access to information and interactions with the larger society help to better explain why poverty persists.

The JR Foundation in Britain reported that poverty is double (40%) among ethnic minorities than the 20% rate among white British people and the major reason to this is that minority populations are simply overlooked in every sphere that has anything to do with their welfare. The Vietnamese government reported that by 2010, about 90% of the country’s poor will be among ethnic minorities (DFID, 2005). The plight of minority groups is a global problem that needs attention and according to Bird et al (n.d), chronic poverty has become an intergenerational phenomenon among minority groups because attention has not yet focused much on them.

**II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

In the world today, about 1, 2 billion people are living on less than a dollar a day and this situation is considered undesirable under the basic human standards of living (IFAD, 2003). The World Bank (1990) defines such a condition as qualifying extreme poverty. IFAD further notes that 75% of the world’s extreme poor reside in rural areas and a significant number of these are indigenous peoples, who make up about 300 million people in more than 70 countries. This means that if there is to be any progress towards poverty reduction then considerable attention must be given to the plight of rural based populations and consequently, ethnic minorities. It was against this backdrop that the international community devoted itself at the United Nations MDGs September 2000 summit to halve the population of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. A report by DFID (2005) states that it will be difficult for countries to meet the MDGs if they not pay attention to the rising challenge of exclusion in their societies where particular groups of people are locked out of development benefits.

The plight of ethnic minority communities was clearly captured by Deruyttere (1997) when he notes that ethnic minorities constitute a significant percentage of the rural poor (percentage not provided) and they remain the most vulnerable and marginalised group in the rural poor category. In Zimbabwe, very little research has been done on ethnic minority communities and their ways of living and reasons for this have ranged from issues to do with proximity to mere lack of interest among researchers. The problems of ethnic minorities spread from social, economic to political, and this has created an economic and social nightmare for them. Mudzudzo (2001) states that socially ethnic minority communities are a neglected and despised group due to their poverty as well as the ethnocentric perceptions of their distinct cultures by other ethnic and dominant groups whilst national policies have economically marginalised them.

The levels of poverty among ethnic minority communities in Zimbabwe can no longer be ignored. Due to their discrimination and marginalisation in activities that have the capacity to enhance their lives, one of the major characteristics of their poverty has been lack of assets and according to Barrett et al (2007), in Zimbabwe evidence shows that in order to avoid persistent poverty, the acquisition and management of assets is key. Consequently, their poverty has directly interfered with their rights as ethnic groups and somewhat tampered with their dignity. The 1993 World Conference on Human rights urged states to take steps to guarantee that human rights of ethnic minorities are protected and the diversity of their cultures, distinctness of their identities as well as their social organizations respected.

The Zimbabwean government has made considerable strides towards poverty reduction. According to Conversi (1999), these efforts include among other things; the introduction of the department of energy in 1993 which aimed at installing 9000 solar panels for rural households and by 1996 a total 6000 had been set up, the rural electrification programme in 1985, the fuel saving stoves as well as the CAMPFIRE programme. However, it is interesting to note that all these programmes did not reach out to the San except for CAMPFIRE in 1989 which has had rather negative impacts on the San as it affected their source of livelihood among other things. According to DFID (2005), despite the strategies that governments adopt to try and reduce poverty, the success of these is limited because they are not tailor made for the particular groups hence poverty among minority populations persists.

Madzudzo (1995) states that CAMPFIRE sought to give local authorities power over the management and use of wildlife in communal areas. These local authorities, in this case RDCs had thus to be ethnically neutral, however this move failed to acknowledge ethnic pluralism of the communities that were very evident and could not be overlooked, leaving the San powerless and forced to start a sedentary lifestyle without any knowledge about agriculture and no farming implements. This is one of the reasons why one of the major challenges of the San is food availability.

**III. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

According to Murphree (1988), the attitude that has been adopted by the San is one of silence. This silence has been a result of their marginalisation and inferior treatment by their neighbours because of their perceived “primitive ways of living”. If the silence is not broken, the San will continue to wallow in poverty with no help. There is a great need for one to give them a voice so that they can speak out about their challenges to a listening audience. Ethnic minority communities generally live on the outskirts or margins of the economic, socio-political systems of the country and this is just one of the foundations of their poverty situation. Their status nationwide is characterised by a lack of access to basic human needs, lack of education, and without intervention there is no hope for a better future for them. Literally their lives are dependent on the more superior ethnic groups surrounding them.

**IV. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

The need to understand the characteristics of the world’ poor as a way to understanding why their state of lack persists is a prerequisite when formulating policies that will successfully address their needs and improve their standards of living (Akhter et al, 2007). Zimbabwe is a Third World developing country and issues of poverty, particularly among ethnic minorities remain one of the burning issues that need immediate attention if the country is to achieve any progress in poverty reduction. Past development efforts have failed to better the lives of rural dwellers and Chikwanha and Dzenga (1999) have deemed rural folks as the forgotten and neglected lot by government and policy makers. The duty to develop rural areas has been unofficially left in the hands of NGOs but even these have failed to penetrate into the areas residing ethnic minority groups. With all the efforts that have been made since independence to date, the unbearable circumstances that rural ethnic minorities survive under need to be investigated for answers and solutions to transform their status quo.

Basing on the concept of social exclusion as a cause and driver of poverty, this study shifts attention to the new and rising challenge of exclusion that has long been viewed as only applicable in developed economies. Not much research has been carried out among ethnic minority communities in Zimbabwe. The shortage of information ethnic minorities and their conditions also serves to explain why they are living in extreme poverty. The study provided baseline information on the state of affairs among ethnic minorities in the country and it is an eye opener to government, policy makers and development oriented organisations that there are neglected communities among us that need urgent help. It was critical to look into the state of affairs among ethnic minority communities so as to make progress in the rural development sector by finding means to help these communities out of poverty.

Furthermore, the study served as a voice to the silent ethnic minorities of this country and addressed their rights and significance in society because they are a significant part of our diversity as a nation.

**V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is hinged upon the theoretical concept of Social Inclusion made popular by the works of such scholars as Silver and Haan. The theory puts emphasis on the need for participation and inclusion in all processes that support human standard of life. The concept is based on the two paradigms of social cohesion and integration whereby social cohesion is achieved without forcing the marginalized groups to conform to the norms and values of the dominant groups which they otherwise do not subscribe to. Social inclusion is best suited to give solutions to problems of discrimination and marginalisation which consequently lead to extreme poverty because of its multidimensional approach to poverty eradication as it considers the economic, social, political and cultural aspects of a person’s life (Pradhan, 2006).

Social Inclusion is a task that aims to find means of including the excluded (Loury 1999; Jackson 1999 cited in Pradhan 2006). While some scholars decide to define social exclusion in simple terms of social inclusion as the opposite of social exclusion (European Foundation 1995), this research operationalised the DFID/World Bank (2005:5) definition which states that social inclusion is more than just the opposite of exclusion, rather it is the “the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to development opportunities”.

**VI. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

**Poverty extremism**

Narayan et al (2000) explains poverty as a multidimensional phenomenon that highlights powerlessness and lack of voice by the poor as a result of lack. This definition considers that issues of capabilities, basic needs and human development approach in consideration of the UNDP HDI are essential for a human’s well being. Such a definition goes in line with the two methodological approaches that have been chosen for this research, which are qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Extreme poverty is a condition that entails a severe deprivation of basic human needs and goes beyond income to include access to social services (Gordon et al, n.d). Even without putting it in relative terms, such a condition by itself entails extreme poverty. To have a clear understanding of extreme poverty, not only income measures should be used in defining the phenomena but also social measures that include access to services and social networks. This condition defeats the whole notion of improved standards of living and human wellbeing.

**Ethnic minorities**

Ethnic minorities are people who differ from the dominant group in which they live. This distinction may be due to race, religion, beliefs, origin or culture. Ethnic minorities may be identified by their distinct practises, way of dressing, language, beliefs and customs among other things (Baumann, 2004). In almost every society ethnic minority groups are recognized, however the relationship that will exist between them and other dominant groups is what determines their assimilation into the mainstream cultures or their self-segregation.

**Social Exclusion**

According to DFID (2005; 5), “social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live”. Loury (1999) states that theorists of social exclusion conclude that tackling the challenge of exclusion will require the dissolution of social bonds, extension of rights and protections and an understanding of the problem of inequality.

**VII. OVERALL OBJECTIVE**

To assess the severity of poverty among ethnic minority groups and examine the factors which influence the persistence of their poverty.

**VIII. Research objectives**

1. To assess the extent of poverty levels among the San community
2. To understand the reasons for the persistence of poverty among the San community
3. To examine the gestures that government has made towards addressing the state of extreme poverty among the San community
4. To examine the gestures that NGOs and other non-state players have made toward addressing the state of extreme poverty among the San community

**IX. Research questions**

In the quest to find out why extreme poverty is persisting among ethnic minority communities in Zimbabwe, the research answered the following questions basing on information obtained through the study of the San community in Tsholotsho:

1. What are the poverty challenges facing the San community
2. Why have these challenges not been addressed yet
3. What strategies have been adopted by the San community to cope with the poverty they are facing
4. What efforts have been made to address the state of affairs among the San community in Zimbabwe

**X. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In simpler terms, research methodology refers to the methods used to obtain data for a specific research task (Bell, 1993). Methodology sets the path to be taken by the research in the course of gathering and presenting data for analysis. Basically the commonly used methodologies in most research are qualitative, quantitative and the triangulation methodology.

**XI. RESEARCH DESIGN**

For this particular study, the researcher utilized both the qualitative and the quantitative methodological approaches (triangulation). This strengthened the study as the two methodologies complimented each other’s weaknesses and helped the researcher in compiling a well documented paper. The facts presented through the quantitative methodology were further explained by the qualitative methodology as Denzin (2005) explains that qualitative research aims to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the resources that govern it. Thus, there was a bias towards the qualitative methodology because the study was rooted in discovering the underlying causes of extreme poverty thus the need for an elaborate description and explanation of situations. This methodology influenced the subjective data collection methods of interviews and observations for substantive and pertinent data whilst quantitative research was more influential in data gathered through questionnaires.

As poverty is a relative term, the study also made use of the cross sectional approach which included the administration of the same questionnaire (in part) to both the San households, and the Ndebele/Kalanga households. This was done in order to compare the findings from the San households with those from the Ndebele/Kalanga households and find out how different groups in one community can experience poverty at different levels.

**XII. DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

Interviews

The study made use of interviews as a data collection technique. An interview schedule was drawn up to make the process easier and focused. Both open and closed questions were used however; most of the questions were open. The reason behind more focus on open questions was because they were able to bring forth more than one answer and presented a lot of ideas that worked for an elaborate understanding of people’s thinking and feelings as well as allowing for the clarification of difficult questions. To obtain the information during the interviews, the researcher took down notes. To avoid losing valuable information during note taking, the interviews were also tapped for accuracy.

Questionnaires

According to Ranjit 2005, in a questionnaire, questions are laid down to respondents for them to answer. The questionnaire comprised of both open- ended and closed- ended questions. The questionnaires were designed in the English language but researcher administered in the Ndebele language due to the very low literacy rates among the population under study.

With information so readily available particularly on the internet, this study also made use of such sources of information as books published electronic journals, journals and newspapers. Desk research can defined as a secondary source of information which includes looking into already existing information from previous researches and documentations. The information obtained through desk research may render itself to a process of clarification whereby primary sources may reveal a completely different picture altogether, or it may work to support the researcher’s ideas and line of research.

Personal observations

As observations involve recording events as they are, the researcher utilized this technique and personally noted some of the things that were of value to better understanding of the conditions that the group in context live under using unstructured observations. These observations were recorded as accurately as possible to avoid bias.

**XIII. SAMPLING METHOD**

A sample is the statistical population selected to represent a whole, and from which a generalization is made from the study results (Webster, 1985). Sampling is a process that is done mainly because it is convenient and saves a lot of time and resources as it creates a focus. There are various types of sampling which range from the convenient sample; judgement sample to the random sample and for the purpose of this study, the purposive sampling technique was used for the administration of both questionnaires and interviews.

**XIII.I. Target population**

The research was carried out in ward 7 which has the highest population of San households (80 households). The sample population was made up of 25% of the total number of San households in ward 7. Out of the 80 San households, 20 households were chosen using purposive sampling. In the same ward, 20 Ndebele/Kalanga households were also chosen purposively. For both the San and the Ndebele/Kalanga households, households were chosen basing on their outward appearance. For each group, 10 better-off looking households were selected and the remaining 10 were selected on the basis that they appeared worse off. In addition to the above sample, the researcher further interviewed four village heads from the San community. The village heads were better suited to give accurate information about the status quo in their respective villages.

**XIV. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Ethics make the basis of any research project and a research that does not consider the how a situation will directly or indirectly affect an individual is unethical and unacceptable. These are the principles that guided this project, putting ‘the people’ first before anything else. This research took into consideration that participation was voluntary, consent was informed, confidentiality was maintained, the individual’s autonomy in making any decision related to their willingness to participate or not was respected, and honesty.

**XV. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

This research is organised in three chapters. Chapter one gave a brief background of who the San people are today and their origins. Chapter two presented an analysis of the poverty status of the San community. Chapter three gave a critique of the role that government and other actors are playing to tackle the challenge of extreme poverty. Chapter three is followed by a conclusion which gives a brief summary of the research findings.

**XVI. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Understanding extreme/absolute poverty**

A world of literature exists concerning absolute poverty, its measures and its causes. The assessment of the growth developing economies is better highlighted by progress being made in the fight against extreme poverty basing on the number one goal of the MDGs that is to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015.

The definitions of extreme poverty vary according to culture according to Spicker et al (2007). A number of scholars have expounded on the topic of extreme poverty and they have come up with a number of definitions. According to Gordon (2006), absolute poverty is a condition that explains or is defined by severe deprivation of basic human needs and these consist of food, shelter, health and sanitation, safe drinking water, education and access to information. Mehrotra et al, (2000) explains that absolute poverty particularly in rural areas is a result of a lack of investment in social services, while the international community states that living on less than a $1 a day constitutes absolute poverty. This definition by the international community and World Bank strictly measures absolute poverty in terms of household per capita expenditure on income.

However, absolute poverty cannot be defined and measured in terms of income only because then it will not be representative of the youngest victims of poverty, neither can it be measured only in terms of social inequalities. Attention must not only be given to income measures of poverty although these are crucial, focus must also be given to the effects of low income and inadequate access to social services (Vandermoortele, 2000). It would be wise to define absolute poverty in a manner that is sensitive to a wide range of issues such as the consideration of nonmarket variables that affect human welfare. Such a definition captures both the economic and social dimensions of poverty.

Hence for this study absolute poverty is defined as a condition of extreme lack that places one under economic and social limitations that threaten an enhanced welfare and greatly undermine one’s capabilities to better themselves.

A number of scholars concur that the major characteristics of extreme are the absence of or lack of access to basic human needs which are food, shelter, clothing and clean drinking water. The researcher however found it fit to include other aspects that make human existence difficult when they are not available and these include the availability of proper sanitation facilities like toilets as well as access to education and roads for communication, information and transportation. Without education in a world that is becoming more and more dependent on innovation and creativity, one’s life cannot advance thus they will lead a life of extreme poverty.

According to Gordon et al (2006), over 1,4 billion of the world’s population is absolutely poor. The importance that lies in addressing issues of absolute poverty is highlighted by Pogge et al (2006) when he points out that absolute poverty is killing more than a third of all deaths in the world annually.

The causes of absolute poverty are many and according to Moellendorf (2006), absolute poverty is a result of global and national inequalities that exist and attention must focus on addressing these through a revision in resource and wealth distribution. The injustices are a result of discrimination based on ethnicity among other things and absolute poverty defies the whole notion of social justice.

Figueroa (1999) writes that contributing factors to poverty include lack of access to education, lack of access to markets, lack of innovations and cultural limitations. Absolute poverty is a result of many factors that influence one’s status in society. These factors include global and national inequalities as noted by Moellendorf 2006, social exclusion which may come in the form of discrimination and marginalisation, lack of education, unemployment, among many other factors.

This research was guided by nine needs that constitute chronic poverty when they are in absence and these are: food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, roads, education, information and access to services (Gordon et al, 2006). According to Ravallion (2007), the number of people living on less than a dollar a day fell just below one billion by 2004. However this could not call for celebration as China accounted for the most percentage with a record 200 million people having been raised from living on less than a dollar a day. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only one percentage point of the extremely poor population was bettered since 1999 to 2004. The situation in Sub-Saharan Africa has not been promising with a recorded 31% of the world’s extremely poor living in the region in 2004, a percentage higher than the 16% of 1984 (Ravallion, 2007). It is estimated that by 2015, Sub-Saharan Africa will subscribe to over 40% of the world’s poorest people. Absolute poverty is not a rare phenomenon in Zimbabwe and according to the MDG Midterm Progress Report of 2007, absolutely poor households in Zimbabwe increased from 45% in 1995 to 61% in 2003 and this just goes to show how this is a crucial issue that needs urgent attention.

**Poverty among ethnic minorities**

Definite patterns of disadvantage and vulnerability exist among ethnic minorities and they deserve a chance to be explored and addressed. Barnard (2011) acknowledges that poverty among ethnic minorities is not a result of chance but can be traced back to issues of inequalities in society that create vulnerabilities among minority groups. Poverty rates are double among ethnic minorities than in ethnic majorities and their plight is far from over as they are simply overlooked. Castles and Miller (1993) reiterate that ethnic minorities are made to adjust, that is they are forced to adjust and adopt new ways of living for them to fit into society and this consequently compromises on their livelihoods and social identity. The plight of ethnic minorities should be of global concern given the issues of the rights and inherent dignity and respect of all persons as articulated in the both the UDHR of 1948 and the ACHPR of 1986 among many other international conventions.

According to Kabeer (n.d), one of the major disadvantages of ethnic minorities lies in the non-recognition of their culture. This then transfers to social, economic and political disadvantage and deprivation. Thus culturally disadvantaged minorities must first get recognition to enhance identity and participation and the rest will follow.

The cultural notion of the causes of poverty among ethnic minorities is further highlighted by Mudzudzo (2001) when he records that socially ethnic minority communities are a neglected and despised group due to their poverty as well as the ethnocentric perceptions of their distinct cultures by other ethnic and generally superior groups whilst national policies have economically marginalised them.

Noyoo (2000) blames the plight of ethnic minorities in sub- Saharan Africa on the governments on the basis that they are the prime mobilizers and distributors of resources to their people. He further stresses the point that development must be inclusive and not be representative of only those ethnic groups that are in government; rather it must be blind to the whole concept of identity and go on to serve the people.

It has been established that the poverty problems faced by the San have been mainly a result of CAMPFIRE. Davison and Hitchcock, (1977) and (1999) respectively, concur that government policies both during the colonial and post colonial era have been detrimental to the normal survival of the San because of such policies as the 1929 Game and Fish Preservation Act and the CAMPFIRE in 1989 programme. More than any other ethnic group, the San depended on nature for their livelihood and thus their livelihoods were compromised and never compensated for.

The introduction of CAMPFIRE even in areas where the San reside was welcomed by many who were of the opinion that San’s hunting was a threat to wildlife in the country and had to be stopped. However, Davidson (1977) argues that the San’s hunting had never in any manner interfered with the conservation of wildlife as their hunting was based on need any not extravagance.

The origins of poverty among ethnic minorities differ according to different scholars. A lot of literature acknowledges three main issues as the major contributors to the poverty among ethnic minorities and these are exclusionary national policies, superiority of dominant groups which limits social interaction which is necessary for growth and the blame also goes to governments for failing to address problems of their populace.

The subject of whether ethnic minorities want to be assimilated and adopt mainstream economic activities has not received much attention from scholars. Having looked at other reasons that help to explain the status of ethnic minorities, there is need to recognize that ethnic minorities originally have their own ways of living which probably just need support and cultivation in order to improve their standards of living. Thus further investigation is required to find out from ethnic minorities themselves whether they want cultural transformation or what they need is an enabling environment for them to flourish in their own ways of living because this research believes that the other underlying reason why ethnic minorities are so poor is because they are being forced to adopt new ways of living which are not in line with their origins and identity.

**The linkage between social exclusion and poverty**

The general consensus is that the term social exclusion first came into origin in France in the 1970s describing various minority groups who were excluded from the employment based social security system (Pradhan, 2006). With time the concept grew and new definitions emerged to incorporate new problems and new social groups. In the 1980s the term was understood to be a consequent of destroyed social bonds between individuals and society as well as the failure of the state (Pradhan 2006; Silver 1994). According to the exclusion theory, poor people are poor because they are not taking part in the economic, social, political and cultural processes that govern their existence and wellbeing. Social exclusion talks of issues to do with poverty and deprivation, cultural, social and political disadvantages (Pradhan, 2006).

Loury (2000) writes a lot on the inequalities that exist among different ethnic minorities and blame such inequalities on issues to do with social exclusion. He states that exclusion ardently and directly breeds poverty because when people are excluded from benefiting from resources that determine their destiny then poverty cannot be avoided. He talks about absolute poverty that is bred through exclusion from the major means for productivity. This means that if an economy is largely dependent on agriculture for example, and certain groups of people are excluded from land redistribution programme then that population is most likely to experience a life of extreme poverty.

Definitions of social exclusion have a lot in common although variations exist in terms of emphasis on a particular aspect by scholars. Emphasis has ranged from issues of economic deprivation to citizenship and cultural rights (Room et al,1992). The European Foundation (1995) defines social exclusion as partial or complete exclusion/non- participation of groups or individuals from societal activities in which they live.

The subject of social rights and access to social services is emphasized by Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) when they concur that social exclusion is when people are disadvantaged because of their race, gender, religion or ethnicity and are unable to secure their social rights.

Social exclusion is rooted in three paradigms which explain disadvantage and these are discussed below as explained by Silver (1994):

The solidarity paradigm: this paradigm deals with the cultural and moral side of disadvantage whereby bonds between individuals or groups and society are ruptured. The paradigm has nothing to do with economical exclusion but believes that exclusion is a result of the failure of ties or bonds which foster great relationships. This then creates a dualistic society where the poor become outcasts thus there is need to integrate the groups to the dominant culture and create solidarity.

The specialisation paradigm: here exclusion is the form of discrimination based on the distinctions amongst groups who deny others from enjoying full access to social services by creating barriers. However, this paradigm is about the discrimination of individuals and not groups.

The monopoly paradigm: embedded in the works of Weber, the paradigm explains the use of force or coercion as a result of hierarchical power relations. Here powerful groups in society create circles which restrict weaker groups from taking part in any worthy activity in the society so as to keep them in the same position.

As noted by DFID (2005),

“*Social exclusion matters because it denies some people the same opportunities that are afforded to others in their society. Simply because of who they are, certain groups cannot fulfil their potential, nor can they participate equally in society. An estimated 891 million people in the world experience discrimination on the basis of their ethnic, linguistic or religious identities alone*.”

This explanation of social exclusion fully explains why other people are poorer than others even if they live in the same environment and guided by the same principles. The subject of exclusion is one of the main reasons why ethnic minorities have remained extremely poor because they are discriminated against and undermined by other “better” groups in society on the basis of their different ways of living or doing things.

DFID (2005) also points out that the fight against absolute poverty among ethnic minorities can only be won through strategies that target issues of social exclusion and inequality through policies and legal regulations that allow for the socially excluded and discriminated against groups to equally benefit from social public expenditure and equal access to economic resources while equally taking part in the politics of the country.

Sylvain (2002) observed that the San were the most disempowered, poor and discriminated ethnic group in Southern Africa. Various reasons have contributed to this state of affairs and they include the fact that other ethnic groups who are superior to the San generally discriminate against the San and find the San as primitive and a people that underestimate the value of money and the concept of savings. There have also been accusations of low acceptance to modernity among the San.

However, such an accusation is analytically misleading and unfair given that ethnic minorities such as the San have a distinct way living that is purely traditional and indigenous. Accusing them of failing to accept modernisation is denying them their right to practise their culture which according to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous peoples is their birthright and they should be given the space to lead life the way they know how to without interference from either the government or other ethnic groups. Betterment of the lives of ethnic minorities must acknowledge the distinctness of these people and work on improving their lives without interfering with their culture and beliefs.

Wiggins (2005) reiterates that focusing on strategies that enhance rural poverty and agricultural development will fight absolute poverty only when these strategies acknowledge the existence of different groups of people in society.

**CHAPTER I**

**ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE SAN PEOPLE**

**1.0 Historical origins of the San people**

The San were commonly known as Bushmen; today the use of the word Bushmen is considered an affront. They were widely known as Bushmen because of their nomadic and non-sedentary lifestyle. The San are believed to be the first and original occupants of Southern Africa having been the first group of people to inhabit the land since time immemorial with archaeological evidence showing evidence of their remains from as far back 120,000 B.C (Hitchcock, 2006). They were also the first Bantu people to inhabit modern day Zimbabwe. Due to the lack of written records it is complex to fully establish where exactly the San came from. However, much of the information about the San lies in oral history which tells of their stories from generation to generation, as well as in their paintings as they were very artistic people. According to Potenza (1992), although their routes cannot be definite, the San people are believed to have come to Southern Africa from North and Central Africa thousands of years before the Europeans arrived.

As most societies in early history, the San survived on hunting and gathering. They used stone tools even to cut the animals that they hunted as iron tools had not yet been invented. As South African History Online records (SAHO), it is justified for one to say that the history of the Stone Age is the history of the San people because they are the perfect example of the Stone Age people and they lived longest in this ancient way of life before civilisation. The ‘clicks’ language of the San people has had its roots traced back to the middle Stone Age period.

**1.1 Archaeological evidence**

There is evidence to back the journey of the San people through history. Fragments of human bones and art artefacts such as rock art and beadwork as well as the assessment of the places they used to occupy give clues to their historical journey. In South Africa paintings and engravings that date back to the late Stone Age show evidence of rock art that was done by the San people. At least 20 000 to 30 000 sites and more than a million individual images have been found (SAHO). However, it must be noted that there are unrecorded sites which mean that there are more unrecorded history sites of the San. Namibia is home to the oldest rock paintings of the San and they are dated back to 26 000 years ago (SAHO). The San’s beliefs and cultural practises are enshrined in the archaeological evidence and it gives a rich understanding of who they are. Some of the glories of African history are mirrored in San rock art which is representative of the spirit of Africa Renaissance. Gradually the San stopped painting as they grew less in numbers as a result of forced and voluntary movement and their cultural performance also reduced. During the time of Christ, some of the San adopted the rearing of goats, sheep and cattle whilst some of them became what is widely known in history as Hottentots (Khoi), (Schapera 1930).

**1.2 Journey of the San people in Zimbabwe**

The history of the San people in Zimbabwe was obtained through oral interviews with San elders who could still remember their journey through the country. Not much has been written concerning the journey of the San people through Zimbabwe.

After arriving in modern Zimbabwe back in the 18th century, the San settled in Matopo Hills (which they refer to as *Matojeni*). After a few years in the Matopo, the San were joined by the Kalanga and the Shona people who were pastoralists and cattle herders. Being hunter-gatherers, the San could not live in the same place for too long thus they started moving towards the north travelling along Khami River doing their hunting and gathering. They moved from Matopo to Bulawayo, from Bulawayo to Nyamandlovu and from Nyamandlovu to Tsholotsho. Since the Kalanga needed pastures for their cattle, they were slowly following in the footsteps of the San as they knew that where the San were, there was most likely to be good pastures for their cattle. Upon the arrival of the Kalanga, the San would shift further north for new places and eventually they arrived in Tsholotsho.

It was almost at the same time when the San arrived in Tsholotsho that Mzilikazi arrived in Matabeleland. With the wars that followed between that Shona and the Ndebele over land and also the coming of the whites into the country, the San decided to run away from Tsholotsho to seek other areas that were more peaceful. Thus they moved again until they reached Hwange which was very rich with wild animals and caves which they could use for shelter. After the war between Mzilikazi and the white colonialists ended, the colonialists started surveying the whole country for areas of interest to them and consequently they came to Hwange.

Hwange seemed of much interest to them because of its animals and they lured the San into showing them the area and the water sources form which the animals drank. After seeing the vast resources that Hwange possessed, they decided to drive out the San and make Hwange a game reserve. In 1928, the San were moved out of Hwange and they moved back to Tsholotsho where they were the first inhabitants until 1952 when the Kalanga and the Ndebele people from Filabusi and Matopo came to also settle in Tsholotsho. The new Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1929 did not allow for humans to live in areas designated for wildlife hence they had to move to other areas which were meant for human settlement and agricultural production. According to Madzudzo (2001), Tsholotsho was the nearest place for the San to settle after being driven out of Hwange. As a result of the San’s non-capitalist way of life, they had no assets thus the Kalanga and the Ndebele became dominant as they had better resources in terms of wealth (cattle) such that they took over the leadership in the area and destroyed the existing leadership of the San.

In 1955, hunting and gathering stopped among the San. When they were found hunting by the Kalanga, they were beaten up and accused of driving wild animals to extinction. The San were thus forced to assimilate into the culture of the Kalanga and the Ndebele as they were the minority and with the end of hunting, their lifestyle changed. The change of lifestyle undermined their capacity and compromised their living conditions. Their poverty has been gradual, with each year their worthy as a people has been undermined by circumstances and with no capital or orientation they have been trapped in a pit of poverty.

“*Kusukela konapho, aBatwa babangabacelayo*”, said an elderly San man. (Ever since then, the San people became beggars).

In 1963, the San joined the Kalanga and the Ndebele in practising agriculture. However, with no farming implements whatsoever the San used their hands to farm their land and even today, the majority of them do not own ploughs and they continue to use their hands.

**1.3 San’s** **population distribution in Zimbabwe and beyond**

At one point in history the San were widely dispersed in the Congo-Zambezi watershed numbering up to 300, 000 before they moved in their small groups occupying six countries to date (Lee, 1976). Today the San can be found in South Africa, Botswana, Angola, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe with Botswana being home to the largest group of San people in Southern Africa.

***Figure 1: showing the estimated populations of the San in Southern Africa per country***:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Country** | **Population estimate** |
| Angola | 1,200 |
| Botswana | 47,675 |
| Namibia | 32, 000 |
| South Africa | 4, 350 |
| Zambia | 300 |
| Zimbabwe | 2,500 |

*Source: the above data was obtained from James Suzman’s* ***An Introduction to the Regional Assessment of the Status of the San in Southern Africa***, 2001.

In Zimbabwe the San contribute to the estimated 14% of minority groups in the country and they make up about 0, 1% of the total national population (IWGIA, 2013). The San people make up a total of 2 500 people nationwide. They are found in the proximate Bulilimamangwe and Tsholotsho Districts of Matabeleland South and North respectively. In these areas, they are commonly called by the names *Batwa, Abatwa, or Amasili (*Hitchcock 1999*).* In Tsholotsho the commonly used term is *Amasili* but the San do not like the term *Amasili* which was coined by the Ndebele to mean ‘*silly people’* thus they call themselves *Abatwa*. Tsholotsho is home to 1 700 according to the Zimbabwe population census of 2012 and the remaining 800 are settled in Bulilimamangwe. In Tsholotsho the San are found in four wards which are ward 1, 7, 8 and 10 with ward 7 and 10 having the majority of the San population. The San constitute 2% of Tsholotsho population where 50% is Kalanga and 48% is Ndebele (Madzudzo 2001).

**1.4 Death of San’s traditional way of life in a modernizing world**

Modernization as a means to development has taken over Africa’s traditional civilization. The traditions and cultures of the San have experienced much hatred and confrontation due to the growing concern for modernization. Out of the 95 000 estimated San population in Africa, only about 3000 still follow the traditional San way of life characterized by non- sedentary, hunting and gathering, and rock painting (www.about.com). These still move from place to place in small groups of 10 to 15 comprising mainly of family members where men are mainly responsible for hunting and women are responsible for gathering.

Maintaining their traditional culture and way of life has been difficult for the San. With rearing of animals becoming more and more rooted in African culture, previous land that had been used by the San for hunting and gathering was turned into grazing land. Also with environmental management and conservation becoming popular, national laws and policies across the continent have turned most areas rich in wildlife and natural resources into parks or other protected zones with any form of human activity prohibited. Examples of such legislation include the 1960s law in Namibia that was passed by the Department of Nature Conservation and saw the !Kung (name for the San people in Namibia) lose 90% of their traditional Nyae Nyae land ([www.saho.com](http://www.saho.com)).

Governments have also created and reserved permanent land and locations for the San to settle. This move has been both to ‘civilize’ and transform the lives of the San for the better as well as to protect natural resources and wildlife. However, evidence from other countries has shown that trying to make the San forego their traditional culture and adopt new ways of living is always unsuccessful.

The San all around the continent have always struggled to prove their ownership to land as they usually do not possess any form of identification documents for title deeds and thus they have often suffered at the hands of dominant groups who accuse them of occupying land which does not belong to them as was the case with the San people in South Africa against local dominant groups ([www.saho.com](http://www.saho.com)). Living alongside non- San people, they have experienced segregation as they are usually called ‘savages’ or ‘animals’ by their neighbours due to their traditional cultural practises and beliefs.

**1.5 Conclusion**

The history of the San people displays a revolutionary journey that has been travelled by this ethnic group until today. The San are an indigenous group which represents a significant part of African history way before written records were kept. The changes they are encountering today are linked to the differences in the way of doing things between their traditional cultures and practises versus those of the modern world where they have been forced to assimilate and adopt a new way of life. They are generally viewed as uncivilised because of their culture and practises which are rooted in the traditional way of doing things. Their culture has therefore died along the way as they were being transformed into sedentary beings.

**CHAPTER II**

**POVERTY AMONGST THE SAN COMMUNITY**

**2.0 Introduction**

This chapter zeroed in on the breadth and dimensions of poverty amongst the San people in Tsholotsho through the interpretation of data obtained during data collection. The chapter is entirely based on information obtained specifically for this research through primary sources using interviews, questionnaires and personal observations. The interviews and questionnaires were administered to respondents within a space of two days and the immediate analysis of the information obtained showed a serious state of lack of basic needs that has become part of the San people’s lives and the disparities that exist between their asset base and that of their neighbours (Kalanga/Ndebele). Interestingly, the research noted that members of the San community share the same challenges and the extent of poverty per household is more or less uniform. A comparison of the Asset Bases of the San versus the Kalanga/Ndebele helped understand the different lifestyles that the two groups lead despite living in the same community.

**2.1 San’s livelihood strategies in Tsholotsho**

The research established that the livelihood strategies of the San people in Tsholotsho are diverse but unsustainable. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach points out that if poverty reduction is to last, the sustainability factor is crucial. According to Scoones (1998),

*“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base”.*

It was important that in the analysis of the livelihoods of the San the researcher use the Brundtland definition of sustainability whereby the San are able to meet needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland Commission (2012). The San have adopted a number of strategies to secure their livelihoods and their families but they have proven insufficient and the needs of the current generation have not been met. A number of factors contribute to the diversity of the San’s livelihoods and these include the fact that the San do not have a defined economic way of life due to lack of assets because of their historical background. They venture into different livelihood strategies in a bid to try and survive. According to one respondent, all the strategies that the San have adopted are meant to provide them directly or indirectly with food for consumption.

*“Konke esikukwenzayo sikwenzela ukuthi sithole ukudya*”, said Respondent #13. (All our efforts are geared towards the purchase of food for consumption).

They have not yet reached the stage of surplus and they are not thinking beyond consumption as food scarcity among them is a perennial reality. The San’s livelihoods are based mainly on agriculture, thatching grass harvesting for sale, *Mopani* worms harvesting for sale, pounding mortar making and labour provision for the Kalanga and the Ndebele. These livelihood strategies have been influenced by their poverty and do not tap into their strengths and capabilities.

For the San, agriculture is unproductive because they do not have farming equipment. Most of their farming is done using their own hands due to lack of ploughs. From time to time when they manage to get ploughs from the Kalanga/Ndebele they are able to plough their fields. However, due to the fact that they would have to work in their employers’ fields first, they are only able to work in their own fields later, sometimes after the farming season has ended. As a result they plant very small portions of their land and within a short space of time after harvest they run out of food and go back to the Kalanga and Ndebele as beggars. In order to help themselves, they have become labourers for their neighbours (Kalanga/Ndebele) whereby they do most of the harvesting, field clearing and cultivation. In return they get food, mostly buckets of grain, of which the amount of grain they get depends on the work done. However, many complained during the interviews pointing to the unfair trade that takes place between the two parties with the San working more for very little.

*“Esikusebenzelayo* *kuncane kakhulu masikhangela umsebenzi esiyabesiwenzile*”, said Respondent #4. (What we are paid for our labour is very little compared to the amount of work we would have accomplished).

Around the month of July the San occupy themselves with the harvesting of grass which is suitable for thatching. This grass is then sold to the Ndebele and the Kalanga for food and sometimes cash for their children’s clothes. In October they are hired by the Kalanga and Ndebele to clear their fields in preparation for the first rains of the farming season. This is another source of income and food. After the farming season which normally starts in November stretching to early December, the San harvest Mopani worms for sale. Women and children camp in the forests where the Mopani worms will be plenty and harvest the worms before drying them. When they are dry, the worms are sold around the community or the San travel by foot to the market at Tsholotsho Centre which is about 200km from ward 7 where they are able to sell the worms for better prices. The San also have a well developed skill of making pounding mortar which they sell for food or cash. The graph below illustrates the strategies that the San have employed to secure their livelihoods and shows the desired contribution of each strategy, its real contribution, as well as the deficiency between desired and real contribution

***Figure 1: Survival Livelihood Strategies employed by the San people in Tsholotsho***

**%**

**Contribution**

**San Livelihood Strategies**

***Source: the above data is an assessment of the first hand information that was obtained through questionnaires and interviews***

The above information shows that the San desire for agriculture to be their main livelihood strategy as it has the potential to better secure their welfare. However, due to the fact that they are not able to fully practice agriculture because of lack of farming implements among others, it is currently contributing only 10% towards their livelihood. The main contributor is labour provision and this can be explained in terms of labour being the only all year-round activity that can bring them income and food. The other three strategies (*Mopani* worms harvesting, thatching grass harvesting and mortar making) are mere coping strategies they employ when their most desired has failed.

**2.2 San people’s Asset Base alongside the Kalanga/Ndebele peoples’**

According to Sen (1995), an objective and progressive definition of poverty tracks progress and compares one area to another. In this context, the study compared a group of people to another, where the common trait is that they live in the same community. The research used asset base to measure just how poor the San people are. In other words, the more assets one has, the better chances there are to lift them out of poverty as they can sell part of their assets in times of need and sustain their livelihoods and they have better chances at obtaining more assets because they managed to do it before. These assets are those items of collateral value that the San people possess and the inclusion of the Kalanga/Ndebele sample made it possible for the research to compare the two groups’ asset base and an attempt was made to explain the difference between the two. According to the research findings 90% of the San do not possess any assets besides land which was automatically obtained the moment they settled in Tsholotsho. Their labour and efforts have not yet managed to make a considerable return to help them buy assets. Besides land, the other item that featured on their asset base was chickens (which were treated as a less valuable asset by this research) with 60% percent of the San owning not more than 7 chickens. Cattle, donkeys and goats only made rare appearances during the research and only about 20% of the total San households own not more than 5 cattle, 5 donkeys and 5 goats. Worth noting was that out of the three assets (cattle, donkeys and goats), not a single household owned all three. Mostly, for those that had donkeys they did not have cattle and for those that had cattle, they did not have donkeys. The illustration below presents the dimensions and dynamics of the Asset Base among the San people obtained using the sample population of 20 households.

Poverty is a relative social phenomenon and it can only be understood fully when in comparison with another relevant group. This research went further to collect the asset base data of the Kalanga and the Ndebele with the sole purpose of unearthing the difference and probably explaining the gap between the two groups. The table below presents a comparison of the Asset Bases for the Kalanga/Ndebele versus the San.

***Figure 3: Comparison of the Asset Bases for the Kalanga/Ndebele and the San***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of Asset | Kalanga\Ndebele Asset Base |  |  | San Asset Base | | |
| **Average Number of Asset/Household** | **Number of Households with Asset** | **Total Ownership %** | **Average Number of Asset/Household** | **Number of Households with Asset** | **Total Ownership %** |
| Land | 1,5 hectares | 20 | 100 | 1,5 hectares | 20 | 100 |
| Cattle | 30 | 18 | 80 | 2 | 2 | 20 |
| Donkeys | 7 | 20 | 100 | 3 | 3 | 30 |
| Goats | 27 | 20 | 100 | 3 | 3 | 30 |
| Chickens | 45 | 20 | 100 | 12 | 6 | 60 |

***Note: the data above is based on the accurate findings obtained by this research through the administration of questionnaires per household***

**2.2.1 Explaining the gap between the two Asset Base variables**

The gap that exists between the asset bases of the two groups is a result of a number of reasons. The research learnt that the major reason for this is the difference in the historical and traditional practices between the two groups. The Kalanga/Ndebele have considered cattle to be the major determination of social and economic status thus since time immemorial they have been cattle herders. Their efforts have always been aimed towards the accumulation of as many cattle/wealth as possible. More so, cattle have been passed down from generation to generation as inheritance in the event of the head of house passing on. It was also interesting to note that male children of the Kalanga/Ndebele own cattle. When a male child is born, they are given a female cow as reward for being a boy and by the time the children grow to the age of marriage, they would be having a considerable herd. With so many cattle which are an essential need for farming purposes, they are able to grow enough food to cater for their consumption needs and surplus which they can sell to buy more assets. Their efforts are not only geared towards food but wealth creation.

The Kalanga/Ndebele are also better educated than the San with most of them having completed education at the ordinary level and recently most of their children are proceeding to A’ level and tertiary institutions. Thus they are able to get employed in the formal sector where they earn a monthly salary that allows them to purchase assets for their livelihoods.

Unlike the Kalanga/Ndebele, the San do not have a capitalist history and their lives were not based on accumulation. They lived for the day and hoped for the best tomorrow. Thus they have never owned cattle nor domesticated animals in their past life. Their lives are geared towards food for consumption as they do not have a secure access to food. They still desire to own cattle and other assets that are essential to the betterment of their lives. The simple truth is that they do not have the resources to acquire assets for their households hence their asset base is very limited and helps to explain why their poverty is persisting.

Lack of education is another factor that helps understand the differences between the asset bases. The San are not educated people and the importance of education is just starting to take root in their community with many making attempts to send their children to school. With no formal education, the San are not yet competent enough to get employment in the formal sector which can guarantee them an income and assist in the acquisition of assets. The causes of their poverty are cyclic and they nurture each other. They are not educated because they do not have money to go to school whereas at the same time it is education which can help them get money. Thus the great concern comes in concerning the issue of capitalisation for empowerment.

**2.3 Food availability**

Hunger and starvation seem to have taken root in the San community. All of the interviewed households reported that they had food shortages every year. They indicated that every day of their life they work towards accessing food so they can survive.

“*Thina amaSan siphilela ukudya ngoba siyalamba*”, said Respondent #7. (Us San people we live for food because we are hungry people).

Their efforts are directly and indirectly linked to fulfilling their need for food. The little income that they get from selling grass, Mopani worms and working for the Kalanga/Ndebele goes towards food acquisition.

“*Khonalokho okuncane esikutholayo sidingisa ukudya ngakho”*, said Respondent #17. (The little that we get goes towards the purchase of food).

Newspapers in Bulawayo including the Southern Eye and also the Chronicle have reported deaths of San people who have succumbed to hunger showing the extremity of starvation in the community. Out of the 20 households of the San community, it was discovered that food is a lacking basic need. Adding to their woes is the elephants’ factor where elephants destroy their crops when they are about to harvest. Elephants eat maize, melons, sugarcane and most other farm produce. In the end the San harvest very little from their fields and the harvest only sustains them for about one to two months; after that they go back to their normal routine of food for work. The normal rate of consumption in the community is two meals a day which are tea for breakfast and *sadza* in the evening. Consumption improves during the months of December and half of January when there would be *Mopani* worms which provide good relish and during the harvest period of March to April when there would be water melons, fresh maize cobs and sugarcane among many other foods in the fields.

Also, with the lifestyle shift from hunter-gathers to small-scale farmers the San experienced difficulties of adaptation. They have struggled to adjust to the farming lifestyle and some of them still do not possess adequate farming skills and knowledge. Their farming practices are still poor and this contributes to low productivity. The lack of assets is another factor that contributes to shortages in food because assets like cattle are necessary for farming. About 90% of San households use their hands to farm and this makes them plant small portions of their land leading to insufficient food production.

Border (2009) reiterates that poor people are most likely to eat their seed, keep their children out of school and sell their little assets (if they have any) as a result plunging themselves further into chronic poverty. Due to the high rates of food unavailability, the San sometimes eat the seed that they are given by government to plant and this reduces the amount of seed they plant. To justify this one respondent said,

“*Siswela ukudya ngako ngezinye izikhathi siyacina sesisidya inhlanyelo evela kuHulumende ukuze sisebenze khona emasimini”,* Respondent #11. (We do not have food hence sometimes we end up consuming even the seed that we get from government for us to be able to do any work in our fields).

The late VP Cde John Landa Nkomo used to supply trucks full of grain to the San community every year and this went a long way in saving the San out of starvation. However, with his passing on the food distributions have stopped and there has been no food portions targeting the San community since 2012. The late VP also had a programme which allowed the San people to kill one elephant once in every three months. He appreciated that meat was part of the lives of San people.

*“Inyama yimpilo yethu, ukuswelakala kwayo kuyenza impilo yethu ibenzima”*, said Mr Vundla (Village Head). (Our lives revolve around meat and it becomes difficult when we cannot have it).

However, after his death the San have not been allowed to continue doing this despite the fact that meat remains a significant part of their life.

**2.4 Education**

According to MDG #2, primary education must be universal thus all children are entitled to go to school regardless of their circumstances. For the San community and its children education is more or less a luxury that they cannot afford. The questionnaires obtained that 60% of the respondents have never been to school and 80% of the respondents were between the ages of 40-50 years.

“*Kunzima ukuthi abantwana bahambe esikholo umaabazali babo bangakaze babone ukukholwa kwemfundo”,* (*Respondent* #3). (It is difficult for children to go to school when their parents have never learned the importance of education).

More so, they cannot afford to send their children to school because the fees are too exorbitant for them. Others shared sentiments about the long distances that the children have to travel to go to the respective primary schools. It was noted that the distance that children travel ranges from 6 to 7km and although this is quite normal in most rural setups, some San parents prefer to keep their children out of school as it has never helped them anyway. Ward 7 has a total number of 5 primary schools namely Mpilo, Pelandaba, Thembile, Phelela and Mgomeni; and one secondary school called Khumbula.

About 73% of San children do not complete their primary education because their parents eventually fail to continue paying for their school fees and uniforms. The few who manage to complete primary education do not proceed to secondary school because of two major reasons:

1. Secondary education school is more expensive than primary level school fees and the parents cannot afford the fees
2. Most of the San people who have been to school have stopped school after completing grade 7 thus this has become an acceptable standard among them

From the sample population studied, the highest average educational attainment achieved was form two. The man who has the highest educational attainment is 57 years old and his name is Christopher Dube. He was proud to say that he completed his form 2 when he was in his forties after he had left the country for South Africa where he managed to get piece jobs and worked there for ten years. He saved some of the money he was getting for his schooling out of interest. While he was still there, he was able to come back home time after time to purchase assets for his household’s welfare by the time he would come back home for good. Now he is the richest man among the San people owning 3 cattle, 2 goats, 29 chickens and a plough. As a teenager he was taken in by a Kalanga family after his parents passed on and from a very early age he learnt the importance of wealth accumulation and its benefit towards a household’s wellbeing. Hence he made it his mission to better himself as soon as he was old enough to leave home and look for work. Unlike the rest of the San people, he was the exception and the other San people of his generation never had the opportunity to learn about the importance of wealth creation until he set the example but they are still struggling to make life better for themselves.

**2.4.1 A glimpse of Hope in Education for the San Community**

In 2011 the late Vice President John Landa Nkomo started an initiative to benefit San children in education. He made a pledge to let San children attend school at the John Landa High School which is situated in ward 13 of Tsholotsho District. San children who have passed their grade seven examinations are enrolled at the school and they get assistance which covers their school fees, uniforms, accommodation and food. The initiative caters for San children who excel in school until they have completed their A’ level. At the time this research was carried out, 11 children had been enrolled at the school since 2011 with the first group in form 3, the second group in form 2 and the last group in form 1. The parents praised this noble gesture by the late VP and hoped that the project will not be thwarted now that he is no longer around. Given this new development, there is hope that things will improve for the San community although it will take some time for the rewards to be enjoyed by the families.

**2.5 Water availability**

Water is an essential requirement that is needed for the day to day use by any human being. Access to clean water for drinking is one of the major indicators of whether one is living under extreme poverty or not. Clean drinking water will automatically promote one’s good health and increase their lifespan. For the San community, clean drinking water is a luxury which they have long given up any hope to access any time soon. When someone who is not from their community wishes to visit them, they are urged to bring with them bottles of clean water for drinking as the San people have come to believe that other people cannot survive after drinking the water but themselves.

There used to be boreholes in the ward in almost every village but they no longer function and they have never been repaired since the colonial times when they were drilled.

In Respondent #13’s words “*Sacina ukunatha amanzi avela emugodini ngo2004 lapho imigodi eyayifakwe ngabalungu yafa khona*”. (The last time we had clean water from a borehole was in 2004 before the boreholes which were drilled by white people stopped functioning).

Another challenge hindering the availability of clean drinking water is that the water from the boreholes had become salty in taste and the suspicions are that ward 7 is endowed with salt underground thus even if new boreholes are to be drilled the area must be surveyed for places which do not have salt.

The shortage of clean water is however a problem that affects the whole community including the Kalanga/Ndebele households. Out of the 20 Kalanga/Ndebele households where questionnaires were administered, only 9 households had invested in 1000 litre carrying water tanks that capture clean water when there is rain. In these households clean water for drinking is available. The rest of the households join the San people in drinking water which is fetched from dams. The dam is also the source of water for wild animals like elephants as well as domesticated animals that they keep. When the season brings good rains to fill up their dams, the San do not treat the water when they want to drink it because on the eye it appears clean and to them that is good enough. When there is no rain and the dams are low on water, the water turns grey. This is when they treat the water by adding a cupful of ash to a 20 litre bucket of water and it will be ready to drink. Clean water in ward 7 is a rare commodity that is envied and is associated with only those who are considered to be wealthy in the community as they are the ones with the economic power to purchase water tanks.

**2.6 Health and Sanitation**

The general consensus among Zimbabweans who have heard about the San people in Tsholotsho is that they are *Bushmen* who do not believe in laboratory manufactured medicine and therefore do not need hospitals. However, this research established that the San wish they had hospitals where they can get treatment. They have little knowledge left about traditional medicines and most of the trees they used to use for medicine have long been cut down and or disappeared.

*“Imithi eminengi esasiyazi seyaganyulwa, eminengi seyanyamalala”,* said Respondent #1. (Most of the trees we used for medicine have been cut down, and others have long disappeared).

The nearest hospital that the San can go to is 17km away from their community and unlike the Kalanga/Ndebele people who own scotch carts, the San have to go there on foot. In the end the San do not go to the hospital because of the long distance and not because they do not believe in modern medicine as generally assumed.

On the issue of sanitation no single household belonging to a San family has a toilet. Unlike the Kalanga/Ndebele the San have never built toilets and they use bushes when they need to use the toilet. They cited the major reason for this as lack of money to buy cement for the toilets as toilets require cement.

*“Asila matoilet ngoba asikwanisi ukuthenga isamendi”,* said Respondent #9. (We do not own toilets because we cannot afford to buy cement).

The only contribution they are able to provide towards the building of toilets for their households is labour in terms of digging pits. Health and sanitation issues are a real danger that might threaten the San community’s wellbeing. MSF has been carrying out workshops with members of the San community teaching them about health and sanitation issues. The trained members will become facilitators when MSF leaves the community sometime before June 2014 and the facilitators will go around the community spreading the word about health and sanitation issues.

**2.7 Income**

The monthly incomes of the San range from zero to fifty dollars ($0-$50). Their sources of income are very limited and do not pay much. Most of their income is obtained from working in the fields of the Kalanga/Ndebele, selling thatching grass and *Mopani* worms during their season. With no formal employment, sometimes a San household goes for a whole month without earning a single dollar, surviving on handouts from neighbours and friends. Here the income measure of poverty comes into play because the majority of the San population lives on less than a dollar a day.

**2.8 Conclusion**

Absolute poverty is defined in terms of extreme deprivations of basic needs such as food, clean water, and access to social services as such as hospitals and clinics among other things, education as well as the income measure of living on less than a dollar day. Clearly the San fall under this category of people who are in deprivation and require assistance for them to move out of the poverty. The change in lifestyle has affected their wellbeing in great terms and the source of such deprivation among them will be dealt with in the next chapter.

**CHAPTER III**

**THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND OTHER PLAYERS IN POVERTY AMELIORATION AMONG THE SAN**

**3.0 Introduction**

It can be generally agreed upon that almost all development assistance is aimed at attaining the major goal of poverty reduction. Poverty reduction entails a process of promoting economic growth to lift as many people out of poverty as possible (Border, 2009). However, in instances where there are chronically poor people it is morally correct to first focus attention on them before incorporating every other relatively poor person. According to Freire (1972), poverty alleviation is not an event but a process thus it must be treated as so. It aims at improving the status of the poor in a sustainable manner. Korten (1980) states that this can be done through raising the incomes of the poor and creating opportunities for employment for them through which they will consequently increase their consumption, savings and their investments. Due to its multi-dimensional nature, poverty requires more than just one actor in the field to alleviate it and a multi dimensional approach will enhance NGOs and civil society to make their full contribution towards poverty reduction. When different actors connect to attack the poverty phenomenon, each actor offers a different kind of intervention essential for poverty alleviation. This chapter discusses the different but harmonizing roles of government, civil society and NGOs, and the media and critiques the sustainability and capacity of the already implemented interventions.

**3.1 Role of Government**

The alleviation of chronic poverty is an ethical obligation that is fast becoming a rights-based phenomenon due to its recognition by the international community through the MDGs; MDG #1. The government has a legal mandate to protect the rights of its citizens and thus plays a leading role in poverty alleviation. According to Adejumobi (2006), the role of government in poverty alleviation can be best understood in terms of governance issues as these are at the heart of poverty alleviation. Adejumobi goes on to say that a good governed state through decentralization of power and rule of law will consequently affect social service delivery in a positive way. Some of the major interventions that government can undertake include extending educational support to the underprivileged, capacitating and redistributing resources to empower the poor to be more productive.

This study established that the government of Zimbabwe has in the past extended support towards assisting the San community in their plight in the form of giving seed for farming, almost on a yearly basis. The assumption is that if the San get seed then they are able to produce enough to meet their consumption needs. This is also supposed to reduce incidents of starvation in the community. However, this study established that the San do not get most of the seed initially directed at them because distribution is done by community leaders.

“*Uhulumende uyake asinike inhlanyelo kodwa izikhathi ezinengi thina aBatwa asiyitholi*”, said Mr Moyo (village head for Saqinyana Line). (The government sometimes sends seed for us but in most cases us the San people do not get it).

Community leaders redirect the seed to their families and friends who do not need the seed as much as the San people do and because government is not in full communication and interaction with the people on the ground it assumes that assistance has reached its primary beneficiaries.

The lack of physical interaction between government and the poor has negative consequences even on the attempts that government might make towards poverty alleviation. In most cases where the poor do not get aid which is intended for them, the major cause is the lack of physical interaction between the government or donor and its beneficiaries. Assistance is sometimes redirected from the primary beneficiaries and ends up benefiting the better off in society because they have better access to powerful people. This is one of the reasons why the poor remain poor or become even poorer.

Thus so far, the only assistance which the San have received from government is seed for farming. Given the asset base of the San community as illustrated in chapter two, seed only as a farming implement is not sufficient to increase and improve the productivity of the San people. A wholesome approach from government would be more effective and sustainable. There is a need to capacitate the San community in every implement concerning agriculture, but particularly cattle and ploughs. This will enable them to conduct their farming activities in time and utilize more of their land. At the same time the San will be able to harvest their crops in time before elephants come to devour their fields, as such there could be some guarantee of an increased productivity level and an enhanced and sustained livelihood.

At the moment whereby the San do not own cattle which are essential to agricultural production among other things, sometimes they consume the seed that they get from government because they will be hungry. Also, the fact that they use their hands to conduct their farming, the San end up planting only small portions of their land and consuming the rest of the seed.

“*Siswela ukudya ngako ngezinye izikhathi siyacina sesisidya inhlanyelo evela kuHulumende ukuze sisebenze khona emasimini”,* Respondent #11. (We do not have food hence sometimes we end up consuming even the seed that we get from government for us to be able to do any work in our fields).

Thus giving incapacitated and undercapitalised poor people seed is insufficient and unsustainable and a more wholesome intervention is needed. It would be imperative for government to concentrate less on direct aid and focus more on capacitating the poor to become productive. Capitalisation and redistribution of resources to capacitate the poor is a role assignable to government. Government initiatives such as the Heifer project whereby the government gives a herd of cattle to poor families to capacitate them and enhance their productivity are well commended in as far as progress towards poverty alleviation is concerned.

More so, the link between education and poverty alleviation can never be overstressed. The education fund that was initiated by the late VP John Landa Nkomo which covers the educational needs of San children from secondary school to university is a commendable move towards a new and improved San community. More can still be done by government from where the late VP left through such programs as BEAM which caters for underprivileged children. Scores of children in the community do not attend formal from lack of money for school fees and other necessities. There is a lot of untapped potential in San children which has the potential to take the San community from the poverty trap they are in today.

The San expressed concern over the fact that even if government was to fund any project directed at benefiting the San community, the most likely outcome was that they would not benefit because the Kalanga/Ndebele leadership sidelined them. Lack of representation in the community’s powerful positions like the chief and headmen placed them at a disadvantage in the community and in the end community benefits do not trickle down to them. The government therefore has a role to play in fully intermingling with the poorest of the poor when implementing any projects meant to benefit them and alleviating poverty.

The suffering of the San community is also attributable to the fact that government has not created an enabling environment for dialogue to take place between itself and the San community. The situation in the San community reflects a lack of interconnectedness between the community and the government. The relationship between the community and the government has not been fully realized and it is the role of government to interrogate its relationship with its citizens including those in the margins of society as this will help in the identification of their real needs (Adejumobi, 2006). The San have come to blame government for neglecting them and not taking them seriously on their needs,

*“Thina sikholwa ukuthi uHulumende kasazi, njalo kakwazi lazo izihlupo zethu njengoba kungela umuntu wesiSan osimelayo khona kuHulumende”,* said Mr Vundla (Village Head). (As San people we have come to believe that the government does not know of our existence nor our problems as we have no one to represent us in Parliament).

All the four San village heads shared the same sentiments when they indicated that government has never particularly targeted any projects at them and they have benefited very little from the few government initiated or funded projects in the community as a whole. Thus the role of government lies also in creating an environment where it is in contact with the poor, where communication channels do not hinder the poor from accessing government offices from where they can communicate their grievances. According to Adejumobi (2006), there exists a social pact between government and society that when nurtured will bargain processes of achieving objectives. The communication will enhance interaction between the two parties and as a result address the common good central to poverty alleviation.

This study believes that for governments, poverty alleviation must be at the centre of all development policies and it must also be treated as a separate entity which requires special resources and attention. The main challenge that has befallen the state in its attempts at poverty reduction might be that poverty has not been treated as the special kind of project that it is, rather it has been grouped with other challenges which certainly do not carry the same weight as poverty and no special attention has been given to it. It is important to note that specifically focusing attention on poverty alleviation as a project will make it possible for government to address the gene co-efficient factor that may have been created by economic growth. Closing the gap between the rich and the poor will be made possible by focusing on what is real on the ground as this will identify the different needs of the poor as well as the different levels of poverty in which they are trapped. As a result intervention will be rendered as per need, eventually closing any gaps that may exist between the rich, the poor and the poorest.

It is generally believed that a well governed state, normally reflected by democratic institutions which respect rule of law, transparency and accountability and the anti-corruption doctrine, creates good ground for economic growth. Economic growth has potential to generate spill-over effects on poverty, raising people’s living standards and positively influencing on poverty alleviation through opening up and creating new markets which can best serve the interests of the poor. Although it can be argued that economic growth does not necessarily lead to poverty reduction, rather it exacerbates social inequalities by increasing the gap between the rich and the poor, it cannot be denied that economic growth still retains the potential to raise the living standards of all citizens. Thus good governance is a starting point for government towards poverty reduction.

The San people are marginalised and they do not have access to information and other services which can help them to participate in activities concerning them. This has been a result of both their poverty as well as their minority status. Participation is a crucial point when it comes to poverty reduction as it gives a voice to the poor making them active participants in the quest to poverty alleviation. Although civil society still plays a crucial role in raising the voices of the poor through advocacy campaigns among others, government remains the central entity that has power to give or shun away the voice of the poor. It is also government which has the power and authority to stress the importance and significance of ethnic minorities among us. When the poor are given a voice, they are better able to communicate their needs to government and make government responsive to them (Adejumobi, 2006). One of the major challenges facing the rural poor is that they are voiceless just as they are powerless. Their poverty has somewhat taken away their voice by making their pleas soundless to those in authority and there is nothing they can do about it. Giving a voice to the poor makes them aware of their situation and it offers them a platform to communicate their needs as well as their ambitions. It enhances participation and the whole process of poverty alleviation is made easier and can be carried out on an informed basis yielding desired results.

Moreover, government needs to pioneer research aimed at understanding the root causes of poverty among its most marginalized populations and design better targeted policies and programmes, ([www.kg.undp.org](http://www.kg.undp.org)). The Vietnamese government employed this strategy when it was tackling the challenge of extreme poverty among its ethnic minorities and with the support of the United Nations, the research went a long way in assisting the government to come up with successful programs towards poverty alleviation among the country’s ethnic minorities.

Intervention by government must be focused towards sustainability which can only be achieved through the capacitating and empowerment of the poor. Without these, interventions will not do anything to have a lasting impact on the lives of the poor and the goal of poverty alleviation will never be realised. So far the government of Zimbabwe has done very little in terms of empowering and capacitating the San community and there is still a lot of work to be done towards raising the standards of living of the San as indicated by the discussion above. Government must partner civil society and NGOs and work towards a new paradigm based on respect for human rights, equal distribution of resources and sustainable livelihood patterns (Ferguson, 2001). Anything short of this will not yield sustainable results as far as poverty alleviation is concerned. However, what other players bring cannot replace what government is mandated to do for its people and the weight that the role of government carries should not be undermined.

**3.2 Role of Civil Society and NGOs**

The role of civil society in the developing world has been largely understood in terms of promoting democracy and being a watchdog for the state. However, since the advent of the MDGs the role of civil society has shifted from democracy promotion to taking an active role in active partnership role within the government in promoting poverty alleviation using pro-poor strategies (Connolly, 2007). Civil society and NGOs come in to complement and support the efforts of government. Civil society provides the social safety net that has the potential of minting into the deepest roots of poverty without compromising the role of government. Due to its extended access to donor funds, civil society and NGOs can specifically treat poverty as a project on its own and exhaust all the resources towards its alleviation.

Although they are still a few involved in helping out the San community, civil society and NGOs have been active partners in the community over the recent years. The Celebration Church has been helping the San community through programmes of Food for Work until its departure in March 2014. Its main form of assistance was grain to curb hunger and starvation in the community. An organisation called ILIMA/ Nhimbe which is government funded took over from the Celebration Church starting from April 2014. It is largely believed that its efforts will be geared towards giving food aid through the Food for Work programme which targets pregnant women, and children between the ages of 0 to 5. The projects that are undertaken under these programmes include road works, digging of trenches to drain water during the rainy season as a measure to prevent floods, and so on.

In 2013 ORAP and World Vision were giving food assistance to the San community to curb incidences of starvation as hunger and starvation is still one of the major challenges facing the San community. The food distribution programme was carried out at the centre of the community such that every San household received food which was intended for them.

In 2012 Tsoro-o-Tso San Development Trust invited the Co-Minister in charge of National Healing and Reconciliation, Honourable Moses Mzila Ndlovu to have a one-on-one meeting with about 180 members of the San community in Tsholotsho where he donated children’s learning materials in a symbolic act (Daily News, 2 April 2012). Tsoro-o-Tso is a community based organization that aims to empower the San to meaning fully participate in decision making, control of resources, safeguard cultural heritage, promote human rights and sustainable livelihoods. The gesture by the Minister is commendable; however, the major challenge in educational development for the San is lack of money to send their children to school. Thus more attention should be paid to ensuring that San children are in school and then assisting them with learning materials for the gestures to be sustainable.

Creative Arts and Education Development Association (CAEDA), an organisation spear- headed by Davy Ndlovu was formed specifically to raise awareness about the San people in Zimbabwe with a specific goal to revive their otherwise dying language is also doing much work to assist the San community. Through the advocacy work of CAEDA, the new constitution recognized Tshara-Tshwao as an official language in Zimbabwe. Now the organization is working in partnership with University of Zimbabwe (UZ) to write a dictionary in Tshara-Tshwao. At the time when this research was carried out, Ndlovu and one San elder (Mr Sibanda) had just returned from a workshop at the UZ where the dictionary was being written. This study acknowledges that this is a significant step towards the recognition of the San community and in the long run other pressing challenges will be addressed.

In the above light, both civil society and NGOs have targeted their efforts towards providing food for the San community as well as raising awareness about the San people and their plight. It is crucial to note that the Civil society and NGOs assisting the community with food have approached taken a different approach to the community’s challenges whereby they use food aid as a tool of creating assets for the San community. The active civil society and NGOs in the San community have managed to utilize the ample labour found in the San community through making the San people to work for their food rations. Normally civil society and NGOs have been known to be lifesavers by being food providers to the hungry people and nothing more. In the past beneficiaries were generally known to be idle recipients who always waited for assistance from ‘donors’ for them to survive. This kind of interaction between the two created not only a dependency syndrome on the part of recipients but also left an unsustainable track of assistance. This time around civil society and NGOs came with a twist whereby they now use food as a tool of creating assets which will enhance sustainable livelihoods for the whole community in the long run.

The Food for Work programmes empowers the community through asset creation whilst at the same time they enhance participation and promote ownership. These are essential in the proper usage and maintenance of the created assets and they rid of the beggar/dependency syndrome. When poor people are enlightened on their ability to make something usable, crucial and commendable, it boosts their confidence and gives them a new hope for the future. It is possible that they will push themselves to do even well than before and utilize every opportunity created in the goal to better themselves.

There is more that civil society can still do in the quest for poverty alleviation in the San community. A number of issues still need to be addressed concerning such issues as advocacy from every sector, that is, political, social and economic sectors. Due to their organization and focus, civil society can play an important role in raising awareness about the plight of poor people and advocating for their rights to different social, economic and political needs in the society at large. They give voice to the poor and the marginalized populations and should be the cornerstone towards poverty reduction as one of the major reasons why communities such as the San community are still living under extreme poverty is the issue of exclusion. Civil society have the potential and ability to bring the poor and government to the same table where issues can be discussed and experiences shared in order to rebuild a vibrant political will from government.

The main advantage with civil society is that they are formed for a specific cause, such as women’s rights movements, human rights oriented groups, children’s rights groups, churches among others. Their indigenousness brought about by the fact that they are home-grown and local gives them leverage against suspicions otherwise suffered by NGOs and as a result they win the trust of governments. These groups also draw a lot of attention from donors attracting considerable funding which will most benefit the San community. Hence civil society needs to take advantage of their position and drive the issues of the San community to the relevant stakeholders especially the government.

There is great potential in civil society and NGOs of empowering and capacitating the poor communities to make changes to their lives. More projects can be identified that have the capacity to lift the San community out of poverty. By financially assisting communities to setup projects such as income generating projects using the same tool of Food for Work as an incentive will help empower the community financially and raise their standards of living. Such projects have the potential to raise the income base and level of the San people and in the long run help them to purchase crucial assets like cattle.

Since civil society and NGOs’ operations are right at the grassroots where the poor live, they are in the best position to carry the grievances and the plight of the poor to the government and other stakeholders. More so, the mere fact that they intermingle with poor means that they are able to make sure that assistance or projects benefit the correct people (those who really deserve it), who under most circumstances are sidelined and are unable to speak for themselves. At the same time it is the role of civil society to strengthen the political will of government to consider those living at the margins and under extreme poverty. This is because sometimes the poor are poor due to mere lack of political will from government such that with even the slightest support from government, poverty alleviation is possible.

Civil society and NGOs, however, have their own limitations. Nyong’o (2002), cited in Adejumobi 2006, raises an important argument in criticism of civil society and NGOs when he states,

*“Most of the organisations* (referring to both NGOs and civil society) *are urban based, middle class led, single oriented and donor funded. While they may quite often ably articulate the issues of the poor and advocate pro-poor policies for governmental action, they are rarely in a position to mobilize the poor to speak for themselves. The poor therefore remain largely unorganized, powerless, and marginalized in terms of raising their voices in public policy making, or in terms of participation in public affairs. So called active civil society is confined to a small layer of elites that is relatively articulate and close to the centres of power. The extent to which their ‘voices’ leads a better economic dispensation for the poor remains problematic”,* (Nyong’o 2002).

It should also be noted that civil society and NGOs have been in the game of poverty alleviation for decades now and despite all their efforts, chronic poverty still remains. Their limitations lie in the very fact that they are prone to manipulation by donors and their leaders. At the end of the day they are not able to fully utilize their interconnectedness with the poor people and their efforts are somewhat thwarted.The researcher would like to believe that it is at this juncture that the media comes into play taking on the crucial role of information dissemination to and from the poor and capturing the voices of the poor in their original state of need.

**3.3 Role of the Media**

It is time to recognize the important role of the media in poverty alleviation. Ideally, the media aims at reporting current affairs without bias and as a result influence the course of events and decision making by those in authority. Its potential contribution to poverty alleviation has not been fully understood and is undermined. The media plays a scrutiny role which has the potential to unearth issues that are otherwise unknown to the general public and it can mainstream poverty issues in its news coverage. Much of the media’s reach raises awareness and increases constructive debate holding responsible authorities accountable. According to Wood (2007), the media provides an open forum where public views including the poor’s are reflected.

A number of newspapers have been reporting on issues affecting the San community in Tsholotsho. These include the Daily News, the Southern Eye, Radio Dialogue, Bulawayo 24 and the Chronicle. The Southern Eye made a report concerning the San people’s cry for government help whereby the San appealed to government to assist them with food and farming implements.

*“We are wallowing in poverty. We, therefore, appeal to our government to assist us with food parcels and farming implements so that we can be able to fend for our families. We are such a small number and we hope the government and non-governmental organisations will come to our aid*”, said Sibanda (quoted in Southern Eye, 19 August 2013).

The Daily News paper reported that the San were crying to be taken back to the bush citing neglect and marginalization by government, with sentiments about being treated like animals.

“*We want to go back to the bush, they should open up Hwange National Park and we go back. Our grandfathers had better lives that side than here where we are still treated like animals. The government has totally failed to help us improve our lives for the past years and some politicians have been telling us lies all these years*”, said Maphosa (a headman quoted in Daily News, 2 April 2013).

Despite all the efforts being made to put the plight of the San community at the forefront of much news, not much has been done to address their plight and the status quo is maintained. As indicated in the quotation above, politicians have been using the San people only to get votes by meeting them at their most vulnerable point, that is, hunger, and giving them food packages which stop as soon as the politicians win the elections. In general, the government has been negligent to this part of its constituency and it seems that the needs of the San community are not high on government’s priority list. Reasons to this may range from the fact that the San people are a minority group who have very little to offer thus they are seen as unimportant, to issues to do with mere lack of political will.

CAEDA approached some government ministers when the country was still under the GNU. The plight of the San people was told to David Coltart, (Ministry of Education, Sports, Arts and Culture) and the then Water Resources minister Samuel Sipepa Nkomo who both expressed willingness to assist the San community through all ways possible. However, after the end of the GNU and the ushering in of a new government in 2013, none of the promises made to the San people have been granted. It is evident that the government knows about the plight of the San people but is not doing much to assist them, bringing the subject of political will or lack of it thereof.

Although the response from government and other stakeholders has been slow and sometimes non-existent, the media has been very active in reporting and documenting the plight of the San community and the researcher would like to believe that this is a starting point and with time and more documentation on the plight of the San people, a positive response from government and other stakeholders will be obtained. The media has speculated much on issues to do with discrimination, lack of leadership issues, and lack of access to clean water and health services as well discriminatory marriage practises among other things.

The San people themselves have grown to understand the importance of the media in making their plight known and raising awareness of their existence in public. They regularly invite the media crew from newspapers such as the Southern Eye and the Daily News to attend their functions, particularly during their Cultural Heritage day in August annually where they go to the bush and demonstrate how they used to live in their most natural habitat. This is done in conjunction with the United Nations Indigenous Day of the World’s Indigenous People (UNIDWIP). On this day they wish to showcase to the world their traditional way of life as a way of reviving their culture.

It can be argued that in most cases government response is shaped by how the media reports an issue. The country’s media through sustained and consistent coverage can prompt government into more substantive action by bringing the weight of public opinion to prick on the national conscience because governments on their own can only do so much. Much coverage on the San community only began about three years ago, thus there is still more to be done in order to raise people’s awareness of the San community and its needs. The media is still one channel that can be used to raise awareness on poverty issues and drive towards the alleviation of poverty.

**3.4 Conclusion**

Given an understanding that poverty is a multi-dimensional social, economic and political phenomenon, it is therefore important to fight it from a multi-dimensional approach. This study argues that if different actors combine their efforts towards poverty alleviation and tackle it each from their strongest points then poverty reduction is achievable. The above discussed players may not be the only ones who have the potential to alleviate poverty but if these work together in making poverty alleviation a priority, many lives will be lifted out of the poverty trap. The government remains the major player and needs to create an environment that is enabling for other players to come in and compliment its efforts.

**4.0 GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The study explored the extent of poverty among ethnic minorities in Zimbabwe, represented by the San community in Tsholotsho District, a group of people who have been somewhat forgotten as history goes by. During the whole period of information gathering and presentation of this study, the researcher could not help but note that the San population in Zimbabwe is known by just a few people nationwide. The majority of the people the researcher came into contact with during her research were amazed when they heard that the San people are still part of us and they still live among us. A lot of interest was shown by many people who had no idea that the San are still found in Zimbabwe and the researcher always found herself having to recount the story of the San people to tens of people.

A clear and detailed analysis of the living conditions of the San people was carried out by this study and a number of issues emerged concerning to some of the reasons why the San are still living in poverty despite the fact that their Ndebele/Kalanga neighbours are better off and lead better lives. After having narrated the origins and the historical background of the San people in Zimbabwe, the study went further to collect data on the extent and nature of poverty among the San in chapter two. Both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to methodology were employed and the researcher was able to gather as much information as possible using questionnaires, interviews and personal observations. The livelihood strategies employed by the San have proven to be unsustainable as these have not been able to capacitate the San in terms of assets acquisition to support their wellbeing.

This study established that among the many challenges facing the San community which contribute to their status quo of extreme poverty, lack of agricultural assets and lack of education were identified as the major challenges. With agriculture being the main economic activity for the rural folk, the San are faced with a dilemma whereby if nothing is done to improve their agricultural productivity there is still a long way to go before their lives can turn around for the better.

It was therefore imperative that this study explored also the roles of various stakeholders who have the capacity and mandate to improve the lives of ethnic minorities by lifting them out of the poverty trap which they are in. The roles of government, civil society and NGOs as well as the role of the media were discussed in chapter three where a starting point is established for each sector with suggested intervention measures and ways that should be taken to improve the lives of ethnic minorities in Zimbabwe.

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**Questionnaire for the San people**

Mangarai Zhou is an undergraduate student at Midlands State University, in the Department of Development Studies. This research has chosen your community to represent ethnic minorities in Zimbabwe and it is aimed at examining the extent of poverty among ethnic minorities. I warmly appeal for your contribution in this assessment by responding to the listed questions below. All the data that will be gathered through this questionnaire will be strictly used for academic purposes and it will be treated with uncompromised confidentiality.

**Part A: Demographic Data (tick where appropriate)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Male | Female |
|  |  |

Sex

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| >15 | 15-20 | 20-30 | 30-40 | 40-50 | 50-60 | <60 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Age

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Primary level | Ordinary level | Advanced level | Tertiary level |
|  |  |  |  |

Level of education

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| <5 | 5 to 10 | >10 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Number of people per household (specify number)

**Part B**

Objective 1: To assess the extent of poverty levels amongst the San people

1. Do you possess any assets ? Yes/No
2. If yes, mention them............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
3. What is the highest level of education attained by a member of your family? ....................................................................................................................................
4. Are you employed? Yes/No
5. What is the nature of your employment?..................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
6. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
7. What is your monthly income? ......................................................................................................................
8. Do you have access to basic shelter? Yes/No
9. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
10. Do you have access to clean water? Yes/No
11. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
12. Do you have access to food? Yes/No
13. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
14. Do you have access to sanitary facilities? Yes/No
15. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Objective 2: To investigate why ethnic minorities are living in extreme poverty

1. Do you have access to land? Yes/No
2. If not, why?...............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
3. What skills/competences do you possess?..............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
4. What do you think is the source of all your challenges?.............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Objective 3: to examine the gestures that government has made towards addressing the plight of the San people

1. Has government implemented any projects in your community? Yes/No
2. Were the projects beneficial to you? Yes/No
3. If not, why?.......................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Objective 4: to examine the gestures that NGOs have made towards addressing the plight the San people

1. How many NGOs have worked with you so far?.....................................................
2. Did you benefit from their projects? Yes/No
3. If not, why? ....................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

Objective 5: to get recommendations from the San people on what should be done to alleviate their poverty

1. What do you suppose should be done to alleviate your poverty? By government.............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................by NGOs..........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................by other players....................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

**THANK YOU!**

**Questionnaire for the Ndebele/Kalanga households**

Mangarai Zhou is an undergraduate student at Midlands State University, in the Department of Development Studies. This research has chosen your community in an attempt to examine the poverty levels among ethnic minorities in Zimbabwe. The information that will be obtained by this questionnaire will be used to compare your asset base to that of the San people among you. I therefore warmly appeal for your contribution in this assessment by responding to the listed questions below. All the gathered data that will be strictly used for academic purposes and it will be treated with uncompromised confidentiality.

**Part A: Demographic Data (tick where appropriate)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Male | Female |
|  |  |

Sex

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| >15 | 15-20 | 20-30 | 30-40 | 40-50 | 50-60 | <60 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Age

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Primary level | Ordinary level | Advanced level | Tertiary level |
|  |  |  |  |

Level of education

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| <5 | 5 to 10 | >10 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Number of people per household (specify number)

**Part B**

Objective 1: To assess the extent of poverty levels amongst the Ndebele/Kalanga people

1. Do you possess any assets ? Yes/No
2. If yes, mention them............................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
3. What is the highest level of education attained by a member of your family? ....................................................................................................................................
4. Are you employed? Yes/No
5. What is the nature of your employment?..................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
6. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
7. What is your monthly income? ......................................................................................................................
8. Do you have access to basic shelter? Yes/No
9. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
10. Do you have access to clean water? Yes/No
11. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
12. Do you have access to food? Yes/No
13. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................
14. Do you have access to sanitary facilities? Yes/No
15. If not, why? ........................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................................

**THANK YOU!**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Interview guide for the San Village heads**

1. Where did you come from?
2. What challenges are you facing as San people in Tsholotsho?
3. What do you think is the cause for your challenges?
4. What are you doing to cope with your challenges?
5. What were your livelihood sources before you came to Tsholotsho?
6. What are your livelihood sources now?
7. Are these livelihood sources sustainable?
8. What is your relationship with your neighbours (Ndebele/Kalanga)?
9. What have NGOs done for you?
10. What has government done for you?