

**LINDS**



# livelihood insights

in Zimbabwe

Livelihood Insights: Challenges and Trends in Zimbabwe with Case Studies from Matabeleland and Mashonaland, March 2004

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## Foreword

World Vision is a Christian development and relief organization with a mission to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in working with the poor and the oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.

World Vision Zimbabwe was established in 1973 to provide relief to Zimbabweans and our role has developed over the last 30 years. Recently many Zimbabweans have been affected by chronic food shortages, droughts, the impacts of HIV and AIDS, poor economic performance and increased political tensions. These factors increase pressure on the poor, make it harder for them to sustain their livelihoods and as a result we see important indicators such as health, access to education and people's incomes all getting worse.

We have responded in two ways, through short-term humanitarian assistance and our ongoing development programs. In the last two years our relief response has grown massively. Its budget has increased from US\$2 to US\$92 million. This rapid expansion has presented us with a number of challenges, notably having so many new staff in post and the difficulties of the operating environment in Zimbabwe.

The rapid expansion has also meant that our relief work has not always evolved in a way that integrates with our development programme. If we are to achieve sustainable poverty reduction then the people we help through our relief work must also be helped in the longer-term. We must ensure that when we provide emergency support we do not undermine people's ability to re-establish their livelihoods, but enable them to do this when the pressure eases.

There is always pressure to respond to emergencies. Our relief budget is now the biggest in the World Vision partnership, a reflection of the situation we face in this country, and so the pressure on us is acute. Our challenge is to integrate our relief work, much of which is already proving to be long-term, with our development work.

In February 2004, we commissioned LINDS UK consultants to lead a multi-stakeholder process involving a WVZ consultative group to assist us in analysing our response to this challenge and informing the way forward. Fundamental to the process was the recognition that both development and relief programmes aim to preserve and enhance livelihoods in a sustainable manner, and that this should be the overriding goal.

The process included spending time talking to the people of the regions of Mashonaland and Matabeleland, some of our core operational areas, about how the current situation is affecting them. This report presents the findings of this work, discusses the impact of the trends identified and suggests some possible ways forward. The analysis and thinking is not entirely ours or the consultants, but represents the sum of wisdom and experience of the people who contributed their time to talk with us. Without their openness we would not be able to report so comprehensively.

We hope that this publication provides you with an appreciation of the plight of the people of Matabeleland and Mashonaland. We also hope that it will assist readers in considering what needs to be done to address this situation, and to start to contribute to the improvement of the livelihoods of the people we seek to serve.

Rudo Kwaramba  
Director  
World Vision Zimbabwe

## Executive summary

This publication is based on a review of how the current humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe is affecting the lives of the people of Matabeleland and Mashonaland and their ability to cope. The findings of the review identify some of the underlying reasons and dynamics behind the situation.

The review drew on three main sources of information:

- A literature review
- Fieldwork carried out in Matabeleland and Mashonaland in March 2004
- Discussions with stakeholders in the WVZ National and Relief offices

Overall it was clear that the people of Matabeleland and Mashonaland are becoming poorer and are less able to lift themselves out of poverty. This is happening for a number of reasons. Some of those that emerged are:

- There is a shortage of food and securing a regular supply of food remains a central challenge for households. But this food crisis is not simply an outcome of unfavourable weather it is much more complex
- HIV/AIDS is having a devastating impact on livelihoods. An increasing number of households are headed by widows and children. Nearly all households are now supporting orphans.
- Traditional institutions and social safety networks are breaking down and whole communities are withdrawing into themselves.
- The cost of living is escalating uncontrollably – prices are simply too high for people to survive.
- The public sector is not able to provide basic services.
- People are moving from cities and towns to rural areas and increasing the pressure on already diminishing resources. There are fewer opportunities for young people and households are spiralling deeper into poverty.
- Households, as they become poorer, are less resilient to shocks and stresses.
- Some people are resorting to negative and antisocial behaviour such as prostitution, theft and delinquency in an attempt to cope individually. But this makes the situation, as a whole, worse.
- The lack of opportunities for young people means that the youth are staying at home longer. This is further increasing the burden on households.

The strategies people are adopting to try and cope with the situation are often either inadequate, unsustainable or both. The issues and factors that affect the success of these strategies are interrelated and currently they are working together to reinforce a downward spiral in people's livelihoods.

Many people need immediate assistance and this must be provided. But if people are to be enabled to provide for themselves in the future and re-establish their livelihoods then interventions must be linked to, and not undermine, the realities of their livelihoods.

# 1. Introduction

## The social and economic situation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has enjoyed security of food supply and relative economic prosperity for many years, but recently it has been struck by a number of highly destructive catastrophes. These include; drought and climatic variability, the spread of HIV/AIDS, poor economic performance, chronic food shortages and increased political tensions. A combination of these factors has created a severe economic, humanitarian and food crisis.

The combination of two successive droughts and disruptions in the agricultural sector due to the on-going government policy of land reform has resulted in a large proportion of the population facing persistent food shortages. The numerous consequences of HIV/AIDS are putting a further strain on an already overstretched social and economic system.

The country's economic fortunes have suffered a dramatic downturn and GDP has taken a nose-dive. This has resulted in fewer jobs, less cash being generated, and a general down turn in opportunities and economic activity. Inflation and unemployment are at record levels. Businesses are closing down and the confidence of investors has dropped. Donors have frozen aid, foreign investment has largely disappeared and Zimbabwe's trading position with traditional local partners has become more difficult.

As a result vulnerability, defined as; 'people's exposure to, and ability to cope with, external shocks', is increasing. Key indicators of development such as health, access to education and incomes are getting worse. People are becoming poorer and are less able to provide for themselves.

In response to the crisis Aid Agencies, including World Vision are currently targeting vulnerable households with programmes addressing food aid, nutrition, agricultural recovery, HIV/AIDS and water and sanitation. The challenge is to link relief work to longer-term development work and help people re-establish their livelihoods.

## Analysing the effects

In working to alleviate the current situation, and helping people recover, development and relief practitioners must have a deep understanding of how the factors described above are working together to affect poor people. Community focus group discussions and household interviews were carried out in Matabeleland and Mashonaland Provinces to gather information and listen to what poor people themselves say. This work was carried out following the sustainable livelihood approach outlined in the next chapter.

The emphasis of the discussions was to look forward and analyse how the trends and broad directions of change identified would affect people over the next 3-5 years. To identify what would affect livelihoods over this time the following areas were analysed;

- how are people vulnerable,
- which assets they have access to,
- what strategies they adopt in an attempt to cope,
- which policies and institutions shape their decisions, and
- what outcomes they aspire to.

One analytical tool the team considered when carrying out their research was the New Variant Famine hypothesis. Although the hypothesis is not yet proven, it is stimulating debate around policymaking, relief provision, monitoring and research and was a useful tool for the team.

### Rising Vulnerability – Is the New Variant Famine hypothesis the answer?

The New Variant Famine (NVF) hypothesis is a new theory on the rising vulnerability of rural households in Southern Africa. It looks at the causes and trajectories of food insecurity in Southern African societies afflicted by a combination of shocks including the AIDS epidemic, drought and poverty. According to the NVF, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Southern African countries may be the determining factor firstly, in reducing the capability of populations to cope with external shocks and, secondly, in explaining the grim trajectory for limited recovery. The NVF has four key dimensions, which distinguish it from the traditional famines the region is used to. The dimensions are:

- Household level labour shortages due to adult morbidity and mortality, and the related increase in numbers of dependants.
- Loss of assets and skills due to adult mortality.
- The burden of care for the sick adults and children orphaned by AIDS falling to rural households.
- The vicious circle of malnutrition and HIV/AIDS.

The hypothesis relies largely on the assumption that rural households bear the majority of the caring burden for both the rural and urban population infected by HIV/AIDS. The evidence to support this assumption however is fairly mixed, so whilst the NVF hypothesis may not necessarily be the cause of rising vulnerability, it can help stimulate debate for policymaking, relief provision and research.

## 2. Transformational Development & The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

### Transformational Development

Working together with communities, World Vision aims to facilitate a process of Transformational Development, focusing upon the lives of children. The approach is defined as; “a process through which children, families and communities move towards fullness of life with dignity, justice, peace and hope. Its scope includes social, spiritual, economic, political and environmental aspects of life at the local, national, regional and global levels”. The Transformational Development (TD) approach is community based, sustainable, holistic and focussed on the well being of all children.

Overall TD programmes should have a bias for peace and reconciliation and employ processes and actions that reduce risks and enhance capacities of families and communities to cope, mitigate and respond to disasters, conflicts and HIV/AIDS. World Vision’s transformational development approach is similar to the theory of sustainable livelihoods in that the emphasis is upon participatory processes and sustainable positive change in communities and the lives of the vulnerable through integrated humanitarian and development interventions.

The essence of the sustainable livelihoods (SL) approach is the belief that the goal of development interventions is to facilitate people on a path to their own improved development. In focussing on people and poverty the SL approach accepts that a lot of development effort in the past has not achieved its aims. Tools such as the SL framework have been developed to help put this approach into practice.

### Where has the sustainable livelihoods approach come from?

The SL approach has grown from a recognition that much previous effort by donors and governments has failed to improve the lives of poor people. The increase in participatory poverty assessments throughout the world has provided a better understanding of poverty, for a start it is not just about income. The SL approach learns from the mistakes of the past and draws on best practice to deliver people centred poverty reduction and development.

Figure 1: A brief history of the development of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

40 & 50's	60 & 70'S	80's & 90's	97 to now
One size fits all, technology driven approach to development. GDP is a key indicator of development.	Big projects and technical assistance feature strongly as does bilateral aid. Rural and green issues emerge. Cold-war politics complicate matters.	Debt crisis brings structural adjustment. Lots of international conferences and a growth in participatory approaches but poverty still gets worse.	Millennium Development Goals make poverty the central issue and encourage donors to work together. Country ownership and community participation are now seen as essential. Understanding of poverty deepens and people-centred approaches such as SL emerge.

### What is sustainable livelihoods about?

Firstly it can be described as a goal. Sustainable livelihoods are what we are trying to achieve by moving people out of poverty.

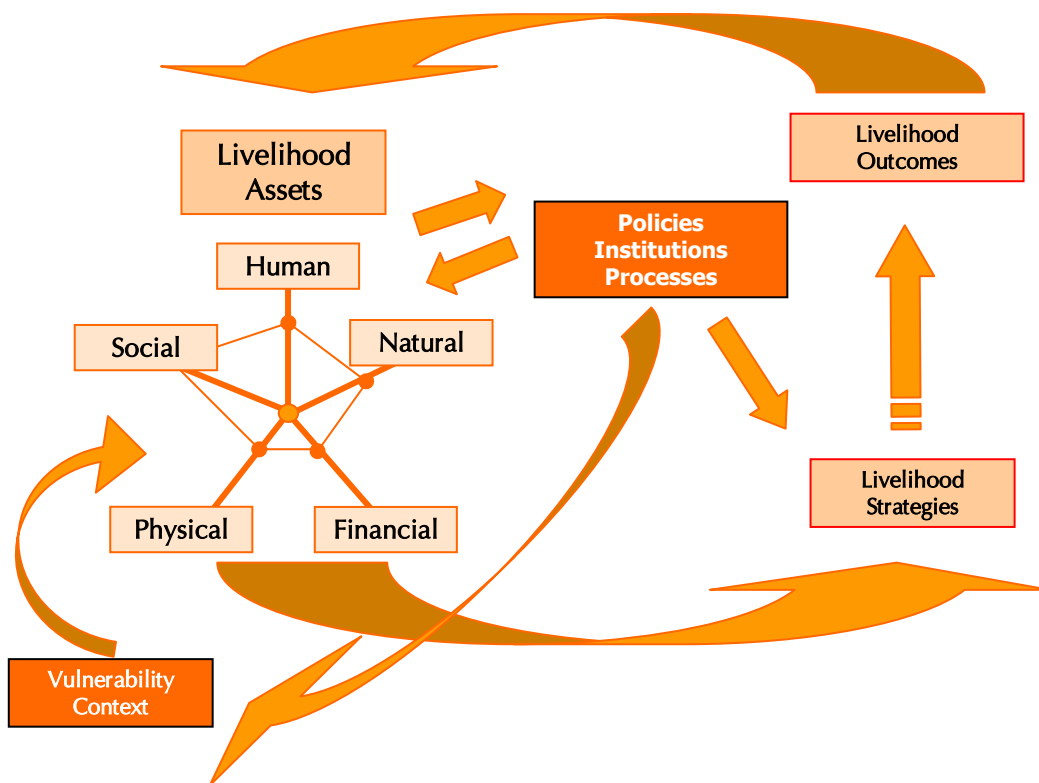
Secondly it is an approach, a way of working. As outlined above it learns from the lessons of the past and also always seeks to learn from what poor people have to say themselves. The key defining principles of the approach are:

- It is people centred and listens to what the poor themselves have to say
- It understands that poverty is multidimensional (i.e. not just about income)
- It focuses on the causes (not just the symptoms) of poverty
- It analyses the vulnerability that affects people’s lives
- It links policies and institutions to the realities of poor people’s lives

A third aspect of the SL approach is the tool that is often used to help practitioners think through the issues on the ground. The SL framework (which can be seen in Figure 2) is a tool that helps us to:

- Analyse livelihoods
- Understand what factors constrain poor people’s livelihoods
- Decide what to do
- Decide where to start – our entry points

Figure 2: Sustainable livelihoods framework



The framework is not an exhaustive research tool. It is not enough to tick the boxes on the diagram. It should be used as a guide and be adapted to the type of research being conducted and the environment in which it is conducted. This will help put people at the centre of the work and highlight the questions and analysis that are needed.

### How the sustainable livelihoods approach was used in this work

Consultants were asked to help WVZ think through some of the challenges presented by their expanding relief portfolio. A deep understanding of the range and interrelation of factors affecting the lives of the people of Matabeleland and Mashonaland was identified as being vital by senior WVZ staff, if they are to successfully link their relief work with development work.

It was agreed, crucially, that the study should not focus on a detailed livelihoods audit in each of the districts. This would take a long time and provide more data than was actually required. What was needed was a validation of the trends observed and a common understanding of the broad directions of change in poor peoples livelihoods. Based on this agreement, a field guide was put together drawing together the SL principles and framework and some guidance on leading community discussions.

Next, the areas for research were identified with Area Development Program Managers and Relief Programme Managers (i.e. WVZ's middle managers). A representative (not random) list of districts and villages was drawn up in order to identify livelihood trends and broad directions of change. This subjective approach was discussed and felt to be appropriate as this study was about identifying trends, not detailed audits, monitoring or evaluation.

An introduction to the field guide and some training on the SL approach was then given to staff in the chosen districts. These staff, as well as some middle managers accompanied and assisted the consultants in their work. The field visits were each carried out over two days, a broad outline of the visits would look like figure 3.

Figure 3: Timeline of field visits

In advance	On arrival	First session	Second session	Third session	Final session
Agenda for the visit drawn up and formal notification sent to village elders.	Formal introductions between the team and key people in the community.	Mixed group plenary. This could range from 30 –200 people, involving all those from the community who wish to be involved. This is useful in identifying broad areas of concern.	Separate discussions held with groups of men, women and the youth to get their different perspectives.	Small discussions held with key members of the community.	Individual or household interviews held to hear full accounts of first hand experience.

Around 100 detailed interviews were conducted in the course of the research. The following areas were analysed and explored as part of the visits:

- The past and present causes of vulnerability, and perceived future causes of vulnerability.
- The strategies people had adopted in order to cope with vulnerabilities and how they saw these strategies changing in the future.
- The policies and institutions that were shaping the decisions they made about their lives.
- The outcomes they were aspiring to.

Assessing vulnerability was crucial to the study as this defines how people are exposed to, and manage to cope with, external shocks. There have been an increasing number of shocks in Zimbabwe over recent years.

The results of the discussions and the subsequent analysis are contained in the following chapters.



### 3. The results

The results presented here are split up into the two regions of Matabeleland and Mashonaland. The team visited three districts in each region and the focus of their enquiry was on the rural populations who are the main targets of WVZ's work. If the two regions are compared then the vulnerability situation in Matabeleland is more acute but many of the issues and challenges that came out of the discussions were common to all of the sites.

#### Matabeleland

Matabeleland encompasses the entire western area of Zimbabwe. Cattle and game ranching, mining and forestry, are the main sources of livelihood and income. However, these industries tend to benefit a select few. The region features rich plains watered by tributaries of the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers but it suffers from repeated droughts. The past three growing seasons have been poor, but even in good years, food production is still poor in this region.

All the sites visited in Matabeleland had people who were very poor and reliance on food relief was important for many. Nearly everyone interviewed was worried about the future and felt that the combination of HIV/AIDS, inflation and the effects of drought have made life more difficult in their villages.

A major source of concern is the emergence of livelihood activities that are damaging to community spirit, and often to the people involved in them. Gold mining is a good example and seen by many as a potential source of quick income but also as potentially dangerous. Often the income from gold mining does not benefit the community and is spent on drinking. In some villages the levels of HIV/AIDS were blamed on the behaviour of people involved in gold mining. However there were also positive examples of gold mining being used to fund children's education and the building of houses. Often when women are involved the income is used more productively.

Where gold mining is not an option other strategies such as crossing the border to look for work have emerged. Whilst this activity has had some success in generating income, remittances are infrequent and often do not benefit the community as a whole. Those who have crossed the border often only return when they are sick and young people crossing the border to find work are often deported within two or three days.

These sorts of activities are having a destabilising effect on communities already struggling to cope with the effects of drought and inflation. Labour has become expensive, as have agricultural inputs, so cultivation is becoming more difficult. Poor people may not be able to cultivate at all whilst better off people find it harder to generate any income from cultivation. Livestock has also been depleted by drought, theft, disease and even by poisoning from the cyanide used in the gold mining.

The level of poverty seems to be steadily increasing and the trends the villagers identified as leading to increased poverty are, in no order of priority:

- Increased prices placing a growing strain on a household's ability to buy even basic commodities.

- Children increasingly being excluded from education due to the increase in prices (inflation) making it difficult for parents to meet school costs and levies.
- Unemployment and the lack of opportunities for building livelihoods leading to a growing population of delinquent youth.
- The youth remaining in, and dependent on, the household longer as they lack opportunities to sustain their own livelihoods.
- Infection of HIV/AIDS increasing and pushing people further into poverty as they try to cope.
- The increasing number of orphans (together with the impact of youth staying longer in the household) resulting in substantial increases in the size of some households that have no additional resources to cope.
- Access to clinics and other government services remaining limited.

All these pressures are leading to a breakdown in social cohesion reinforcing the downward trend into poverty.

### Faith's story – A poor (umyanganyana) widow

Faith came to Insiza district over twenty years ago from Emakhandeni. Her husband died 10 years ago and two of her 11 children have also died. She now shares her homestead with 9 of her grandchildren. Four of the grandchildren are orphans, the rest were born to single parents who are now doing casual work in town. They live in three metal roofed huts and have a mud hut kitchen.

Two of the grandchildren are in primary school, the rest are too young. All of her children stayed at school until form four, but they did not do well at school so now they find it hard to get decent employment. Her children rarely visit. They seem to be struggling to make ends meet in town and never send her any money.

Apart from a trip to a neighbouring town 8 years ago she has not left her homestead since she moved there with her husband more than two decades ago. When her husband was alive he used to sell bicycles in exchange for cattle and she still has 11 cattle.

She milks the cattle daily to provide milk for the family and she sells the rest, making about \$1,500 a day. She also has 7 goats and 20 chickens. Last year she sold 5 chickens and got about \$7000 each for them.

Faith tries to cultivate her field, and has a full span of oxen that she tries to exchange for labour, but she finds it difficult to get help with ploughing and cultivation. Even though she has access to free seed she finds it difficult to cultivate on time. Last year the harvest was bad, this year she hopes to get about 2 scotch cart-loads – enough to last her household 6-8 months.

As there is no other elderly resident she is responsible for all the household tasks. She rarely receives help from her neighbours and so often has to leave her grand children alone at home. Two of them are sickly, being immuno-compromised

Faith and her grandchildren eat 3 meals a day and when she was interviewed she had milk, beans and green mealies. The family also drink tea, eat melons, porridge and make traditional mahewu drink. She wishes she could afford sugar more regularly because this is what makes her and her grand children happy.

Faith believes that people now have become selfish and the fees they charge for labour are exorbitant. She prays that she can live long enough to help at least one of her grandchildren complete school and secure a job that would help look after her and the rest of the children.

The tables below outline some of the characteristics of the different households in Matabeleland and the livelihood strategies found in the area in more detail:

Figure 4: Household characteristics in Matabeleland

	<b>Umyanga (poorest) households</b>	<b>Umyanganyana (poor) households</b>	<b>Oswelaya (medium) households</b>	<b>Ongcono (better off) households</b>
<b>Assets</b>	May have access to land but can't afford to cultivate. Very few household assets, poor clothes, few or no blankets, few or no livestock.	Have access to land and may own a few livestock	Home is big enough for occupants. Own a plough, scotch cart, and some livestock. May receive money from children with jobs.	Own a number of assets including, scotch cart, wheelbarrow, bicycle or a car. Typically own and rent out complete span oxen and range of other livestock.
<b>Situation</b>	May sell their labour, or remaining household items or livestock	May be able buy some inputs to grow crops, also sell labour and collect and sell wild harvests (mopane worm etc.).	Has a decent home but head of household lacks ideas to improve the situation although he/she has potential to be better off	May have small business such as shop and diverse skill base that can be used for income generation if required. Can use land to full potential
<b>People</b>	Mainly headed by children, widows, disabled or sick and usually supporting orphans. Little or no education. No family or social network	Often female-headed households, supporting children and orphans. Little education and limited social networks	Mix of adults and children with possibly some orphans being supported. Children go to school and social and family networks exist.	Generally male-headed household, healthy, educated and may hold positions in society and have good social networks. May have orphans.
<b>Ambition</b>	May lack vision and believe they will die soon, but still hope for children/orphans to be educated.	To be able to educate and support their children/orphans.	To be able to produce more crops and have more livestock and ensure children are educated.	To feel more secure against theft and inflation, which are both affecting their livelihoods.

Figure 5: Livelihood strategies in Matabeleland

<p><b>Growing Crops</b></p>	<p>This is one of the primary activities in the area, despite difficult growing conditions. But a whole range of factors are making it increasingly difficult:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour is increasingly expensive.</li> <li>• There is shortage of draught power (cattle and plough) for ploughing, although some is hired out the less well off are unable to afford this or get to use it too late.</li> <li>• Agricultural inputs (fertilisers etc.) have become more expensive and seeds are less available.</li> <li>• The market in crops and inflation mean that people are often unwilling to sell their crops as they think in future the prices will be too high for them to buy back what they need or food will simply be unavailable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Garden Produce</b></p>	<p>This is for household consumption or can be sold either fresh or dry. Successful production depends largely on the availability of water, although some communities did continue with their gardens even during the drought.</p>
<p><b>Selling Labour</b></p>	<p>Labouring is a key form of income for the poorest. But the ability to work depends partly on people's health. Working for others also limits the time people have to cultivate their own land. As prices have risen so have expectations of wages and the expected minimum wage is now about 300,000 a month. This is too much for many possible occasional employers. Labourers would rather try other, riskier, activities such as panning gold than work for less money.</p>
<p><b>Livestock Keeping</b></p>	<p>This is the most important source of income for some but can be heavily affected by drought. Stocks were depleted in the 1992 drought and were beginning to build back up when the 2001 and 2002/3 droughts knocked them back again. The drought leaves animals weak and many deaths resulted not from the drought itself, but from the fact government vets did not have the right medicine to treat diseases and conditions such as ticks. Theft of livestock is also a big problem.</p>
<p><b>Trading and selling wild harvests</b></p>	<p>Some trading in items such as clothes and vegetables does happen. The main wild harvests that are collected and sold include; mopane worm, wild leaves, firewood (although collection requires a scotch cart) and fish from the lakes and dams.</p>
<p><b>Gold panning</b></p>	<p>This can be a lucrative activity but is often treated as a last resort due to the hazardous nature of the work. There is also concern that it can have a corrupting influence with the money that men and children earn from panning often being spent on drink and cigarettes. Where women are actively involved, gold panning is often more beneficial to the household. Money is invested back in the household resulting in improved livelihoods through the purchase of cattle and education of children.</p>
<p><b>Other Skills</b></p>	<p>There are many other skills existing in the community with the potential to generate income. These include; carpentry, knitting, sewing, weaving mats and bags, making doyleys, hairdressing, fencing, making hoe handles, blacksmithing, bricklaying and building. Unfortunately most of these skills remain with the older population (over 40s) and they have not been transferred to the youth. There appeared to be no apprentice schemes to engage the youth and the skill base is dying out as parents aspire for their children to have an education rather than a skill.</p>

## Mashonaland

The Mashonaland central and east provinces are located in the north and north eastern areas of Zimbabwe. The two provinces generally enjoy favourable climatic conditions which are conducive for both crop and livestock farming. In good years, the majority of farmers are able to produce sufficient food to meet household requirements and some surplus for the market. Of late however the regions like the rest of Zimbabwe have experienced serious problems which have severely affected livelihoods pushing the majority into poverty.

Poverty in Mashonaland was widespread in the villages visited. Health was a particular concern with the effects of HIV/AIDS as well as TB and other diseases being identified as a major problem. Health facilities were seen to be inadequate.

Many poor people are relying on food relief and this was identified as a source of concern. Some poor people felt that better off people were benefiting from this relief. Others identified the relief as being one of the causes of the breakdown of traditional community support. Traditionally one neighbour would have helped another in need. Now they just assume they will get food relief, but they are also poorer and less likely to be in a position to help anyway.

There is a rise in child-headed households and young people are seen as being increasingly unruly and difficult to control. The rise in theft was largely blamed on young people.

Animal health was also a major concern and many people reported dwindling herds due the effects of drought and disease. Veterinary services were felt to be poor. Cultivation is becoming harder as the cost of inputs is rising and seeds are hard to obtain. A decline in the fertility of the soil was also reported. The last 10 years have been very difficult and the general perception is that nobody is getting richer, everybody is getting poorer.

Some of the issues and concerns that people in Mashonaland are worried about and confronted with on a daily basis are:

- HIV/AIDS - More deaths and an increasing number of orphans due to HIV/AIDS. This puts pressure on households both in terms of the time and cost of caring for the sick. Also reported not always being sure if one is suffering from AIDS or not.
- Health service - This is getting worse. There is no medication in clinics and nurses give prescriptions that most people cannot afford. The clinics are quite far away and transport costs are too high.
- Hunger – Hunger and malnutrition are a problem and the concern is that these are getting worse because of continual drought.
- Farming - Farmers are not getting value for their produce, their soils are becoming infertile due to heavy use. They cannot afford fertiliser to improve fertility. Veterinary services are poor, with few or no drugs, and animals are dying.
- The cost of living – This has increased. The price of agricultural inputs and education are now beyond the reach of many.

- Unemployment – There are fewer jobs and unemployed youths are becoming thieves thereby reducing the capacity of communities to invest and grow positively.
- Money - There has been an increase in corruption and cash scarcity in the bank.
- Early marriage - These were reported to be on the increase as households struggled to cope.

All these pressures are leading to a breakdown in social cohesion that reinforces the downward trend into poverty.

### Patrick and Ellen's story – Poor (murombo) household

Patrick and Ellen (who are now 50 and 42 years old respectively) were married 14 years ago and they now have 11 children. Ellen is pregnant with a 12th but she and some of her children appear sickly. None of Patrick and Ellen's children go to school. Although they were offered assistance with school fees they cannot afford to buy the uniforms and books. When they sent their children to school without them the children were ridiculed by others and often sent back home and so now they have decided to forget about education.

Two of the older girl children eloped with men and they now rarely visit home. The remaining 9 children live with Patrick and Ellen. They all sleep together in one round hut. They have 2 other round huts in their homestead but both are dilapidated and leak and they cannot afford to repair them.

They do not own any livestock. Between the 11 of them living in the homestead they have 5 plates and 4 blankets which Ellen bought from the money she earned selling Mopane worms many years ago. Patrick cuts and sells gum poles used for thatching. This month he earned \$30,000, which he used to buy a bucket of maize (costing \$25,000) to supplement the food that they receive from the relief program.

They receive a 50kg bag of cereal through the WVZ relief program, this only lasts 2 weeks. On the morning they were interviewed they had sweet melon for breakfast (amakhabe), for lunch they were boiling sour melon (amajodo), and their plan was to have sadza and wild vegetables for dinner.

The family spends the day together doing various chores in the fields. Patrick and their children concentrate on cultivation whilst the Ellen collects wild vegetables and prepares meals.

Their priority is to gather sufficient food for the day. The sorghum crop in their field is patchy. They suspect they will harvest at the most 7 bags of sorghum. This will only last 3 months and after that they will be totally out of supplies.

When asked about their vision for the future, both Patrick and Ellen said they believe they will be dead.

Figure 6: Household characteristics in Mashonaland

	Murombo-tsitsi <i>(poorest)</i> households	Murombo <i>(poor)</i> households	Varipakati nepakati <i>(medium)</i> households	Varinani <i>(better off)</i> households
<b>Assets</b>	No hoe, plough, scotch cart, cultivator or blankets. Home is dilapidated or donated. No livestock.	Have hoes but no bicycles, scotch cart, or plough. Usually no blankets and no livestock.	Own a plough, scotch cart and around 5 cattle but have no bank account.	Beautiful house and toilets, car and sometimes tractor. Enough cattle, goats and chickens.
<b>Situation</b>	May sell labour or beg.	Often taking care of sick or orphans, may well be selling off assets.	Have a decent home but head of household lacks ideas to improve himself although he has potential to be better off.	Has enough food, can afford agricultural inputs and is eligible for loans and thus always benefiting from loans.
<b>People</b>	Household may contain disabled dependants or orphans and may be child headed, or childless. No money to educate children.	Sometimes described as lazy people, drunkards, or lacking in vision. May not always be presentable.	Typically man, wife and children. Children are sent to school.	Man, wife and children and children are sent to school.
<b>Ambition</b>	That they will get free inputs to enable them to begin farming.	That their children will begin school	To invest in more cattle.	To become successful business people.

Figure 7: Livelihood characteristics in Mashonaland

<b>Crop production</b>	This does provide an opportunity for households to earn some income and to meet subsistence food requirements. Many people have the necessary skills to undertake crop farming but are hampered by three main factors; costs (for example of seeds and fertilisers) and lack of credit facilities, the effects of consecutive droughts, and declining soil fertility
<b>Market gardening</b>	This can be profitable and some of the areas visited are close to urban markets. However the problems here are similar to those faced in crop production. High transport costs make it hard to take goods to market.
<b>Livestock production</b>	This could yield extra income and act as insurance in hard times but most cattle have died from diseases due to the lack of veterinary services. Theft is also a major problem and the current solution of bringing cattle kraals close to homesteads increases the risk of humans catching diseases from cattle.
<b>Selling labour</b>	For poorer households this can be an important way of generating income but it means they have to forego their own farming activities thereby increasing vulnerability. Also as better off households are becoming more vulnerable they are less able to provide employment.
<b>Wild harvests and natural resources</b>	These can be important for poor families but deforestation has affected wild harvests and there is little gold in the area so very little panning takes place.
<b>Other skills</b>	Skills such as carpentry, craft making, upholstery, welding etc can provide local employment opportunities for the youth. But school curricula are academically based and no vocational training facilities exist locally.

## 4. Poverty and livelihoods analysis

### Poverty Analysis

This section highlights the characteristics of poor and vulnerable households. No two households are the same. However common characteristics begin to emerge when we look at the different levels of resources in households, and we begin to see a pattern around the way certain groups of people try to thrive and survive in a community. This section begins to examine what these characteristics are, as defined by the communities themselves.

#### *Poverty Characteristics*

At each of the study sites four social and economic groups were identified, based on how households were coping. They ranged from the poorest households to better off households. Participatory research methods were used to identify the attributes of these groups. Whilst no two households are the same their typical characteristics are described below:



- **Households described as poorest (Umyanga<sup>1</sup>/ Murombo-tsitsi):**  
These are often large, with many orphans, and are usually headed by women, children the elderly or the sick. It is likely that only one household member, if any, is able to work and the children do not attend school. They have no livestock and little or no land and are unable to cultivate. Household assets such as plates and blankets have often been sold. They may lack basics such as soap or any variety in their diet. They are always short of food. Their hut may be in poor repair with only one room to sleep in and they have no pit latrine. They have little or no family or social support to draw on and often lack any positive vision for the future.
- **Households described as poor (Umyanganyana/ Murombo):**  
These are typically female-headed and have a number of dependents including orphans. Between 1-3 members of the house are normally able to work. This work may consist of gathering wild harvests, taking part in gardening projects or cultivating land, but they cannot normally use the full potential of land they have access to because of the cost of the inputs. They may also sell their labour to others. The children may attend school but only at times when books and fees can be afforded. The household may have a small number of livestock. They normally have limited social and family networks and their hopes for the future depend on educating the children in the household.
- **Households described as just managing (Osweloya/Varipakati nepakati):**  
These households have a mix of adults and children and may include some orphans. They own a small number of livestock and are able to work and cultivate their land. During a good season agriculture will sustain the family. They may be able to rent out their assets such as a scotch cart or plough, buy in labour when required and have may have other sources of income such as brewing, basket-weaving or selling firewood. The children normally go to school. They probably have developed social and family networks and are often involved in community groups. They aspire to build their livestock herds, improve their crops and educate their children.

#### Footnote(s)

<sup>1</sup>Sindebele translation followed by Shona translation

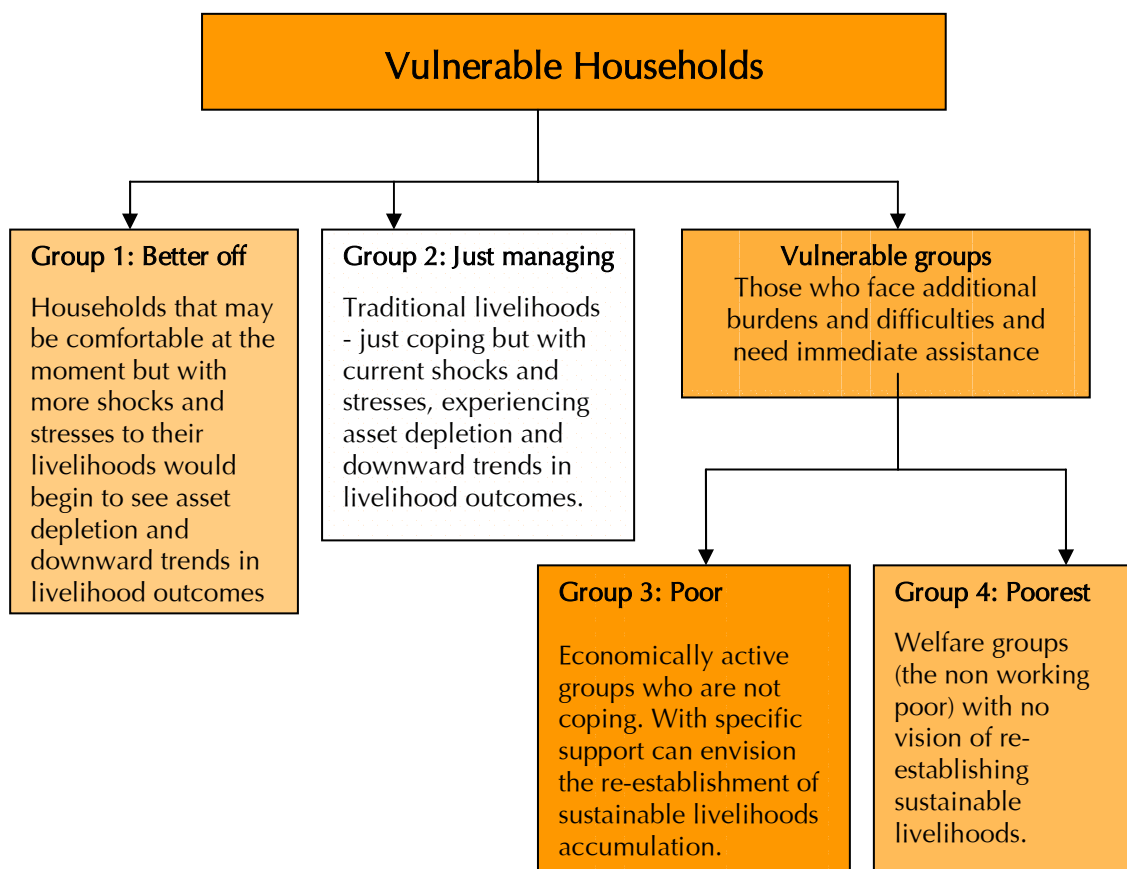
o **Households described as better off (Ongcono/Varinani):**

These are generally headed by men but are still quite likely to include one or two orphans. Household members are normally in good health, able to work, educated and able to send their children to school. They cultivate their land and own herds of goats, donkeys, chicken and sheep as well as cattle, although these are in smaller numbers than before the 1992 drought. They may have skills such as making doilies, knitting jerseys or making mats and baskets but these may now be engaged in more as hobbies than for income generation. Their assets are likely to include a plough, hoes, a scotch cart, wheelbarrows, bicycles and a complete span of oxen they rent out for tilling. They may also run a small local business such as a shop. They have developed social and family networks and are likely to hold prominent community positions.

*Vulnerability*

One of the key factors in identifying the four groups was an assessment of their vulnerability. This is essentially an assessment of how they are coping now and how likely they are to be able to cope in the future with any shocks or stresses that may affect them. All the households were identified as vulnerable to some degree, however particularly vulnerable groups were identified as needing immediate support. The key characteristics of the groups are described in the diagram below.

Figure 8: Classification of vulnerable households (Source IDL 2002)



### Victor's story – a better off (ongcono) household

Victor lives with his two wives, two of his children who are still at school and four of his grandchildren. The grandchildren's parents have gone to South Africa and Botswana in search of paid employment.

Victor is a livestock farmer and has 40 cattle and some goats and chickens. Before the droughts he had 95 cattle but many died during the drought or were too weak to produce. Others died of blackleg as the government vet rarely comes and never has the correct drugs.

As result of the drop in production from his herd Victor has had to sell off further cattle to buy maize and other food for his family. Although the family live fairly comfortably in asbestos houses and eat two proper meals a day they are concerned that the herd is decreasing. They cannot now provide much support to their neighbours and are concerned that one day they may be asking for support themselves.

Victor still hopes to increase his herd and believes that with the help of a cattle loan scheme he could become a successful rancher.

### *Poverty trends*

As well as identifying four broad social groups the study also identified four key trends that are affecting the lives of poor people in Zimbabwe. These are all inter-linked and work to magnify the effects of each other. However they are worth considering separately as each will need to be addressed if the lives of poor Zimbabweans are to be improved.

#### ○ Households have fewer and fewer assets

Since the 1992 drought, and subsequent droughts, there has been a continual decrease in household assets. Very few rural households have been able to rebuild their asset base back to the levels they had before the 1992 drought.

For the better off households this has meant a decrease in the size of their livestock herds and a decrease in food stocks. For the poorest households it has often meant having to sell basic household goods in order to survive. These household goods include items such as plates, pots and blankets and can leave the household with no assets at all.

The animals, food stocks and household items that households would draw on in times of crisis have now either been reduced or have gone completely.

#### ○ Communities are becoming far more vulnerable

In addition to the depletion of assets described above, the effects of HIV/AIDS have been devastating. The combination of the repeated droughts and widespread HIV/AIDS infection has left many households barely able to cope.

The uncertain supply of food caused by the droughts is already a serious problem. But added to this are; the reduction in the amount and quality of labour available to work on the land, the increase in medical expenses, the increase of diseases such as TB, the need to meet funeral expenses and the increases in the number of orphans, dependants and child headed households. This combination of problems makes the situation far more serious and immediate.

It is only by considering the cumulative effect of all of these problems that a full understanding of the vulnerability of the poor people of these regions can be gained. It is hard to envisage how they will be able to handle any further shocks. In fact some of the people interviewed could not envisage how they would continue to cope in their current situation.

- **Poor people cannot afford basic necessities**

The macro-economic crisis in Zimbabwe means the cost of living is spiralling. The impacts of high inflation, unemployment, foreign currency shortages, unrealistic interest rates, a decrease in government services and the fluctuation in fuel supplies are all acutely felt in rural communities.

Poor households face shrinking incomes and a sharply rising cost of living. The numbers of school dropouts is increasing due to an inability to pay school fees or purchase books and uniforms. Rural households cannot afford to cultivate the amount and variety of crops as they had in the past. This increases the pressure on food and prevents households from re-establishing their asset base leaving many of them vulnerable.

In urban areas the increased cost of living is forcing some people to voluntarily resign from their jobs and move back to rural areas, putting a further strain on already diminishing resources.

- **There is a breakdown in traditional social networks**

All the communities visited reported a breakdown in the traditional institutions and cultural practices that have provided safety nets, community cohesion and local governance in the past.

The poorest people are finding themselves unable to draw on the support of the extended family that they may have relied on before; often no one in the extended family is in a position to be able to help. There is also a reported increase in the number of child headed households.

Resulting pressures have seen a rise in crime and an increased emphasis on individuals looking for their own ways to survive. At times these may be damaging to the community, such as adults selling cigarettes and alcohol to minors, further decreasing social unity and increasing the number of delinquent youths. All these pressures are leading to a growing breakdown in social cohesion.

The effect of these poverty trends, considered together is that increasing numbers of people are losing the ability to cope. The overall result of these trends is a spiralling downward trend into poverty for many households in rural Zimbabwe.

### Daniel's story – a very poor (umyanga) child headed household

Daniel is only 20 years old but is already the head of his household. He is not married but takes care of his 7 siblings. One of his sisters got married and is now living with her husband. Occasionally she will send them some money.

Daniel used to be a gardener in Bulawayo but he lost his job and now relies on earning small amounts of money from casual work. Losing his job is a big problem for the family as his wage used to be their main source of income after their father died.

Daniel is keen that his brothers and sisters should further their education, but they cannot afford the school fees, and even if they had help with this they would struggle to buy books and uniforms. They have sold their three legged pots and plates to buy food and they also have no farming implements at all. The family eats 2 meals a day - porridge in the morning and sadza in the evening.

Daniel wants to be able to educate his siblings, as this will help the family have a better future. But he did not have the opportunity to get a good education himself so it is difficult for him to get a job to pay for the school fees.

### Livelihoods Analysis

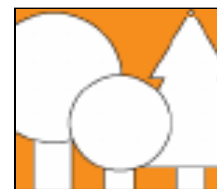
People's livelihoods are determined by the complex interrelation between their assets, available livelihood strategies, vulnerabilities and the policies and institutions that govern them. These factors are inextricably linked, however, each is examined in detail to gain a better understanding of the livelihoods of the people of Matabeleland and Mashonaland.

#### *Assets*

Assets are the building blocks of livelihoods. They range from land, livestock and household goods, to the skills and education that sustain people's work and the social networks that may provide them with some support. In previous sections of this report many of the assets people own have been listed, here we examine some of the impacts these assets have on people's livelihoods.

**Natural**

Poor and very poor people struggle to cultivate any land, as the cost of inputs is high. Those people managing to cope better may cultivate some land but are still affected by the cost of inputs and crops are diminishing due to soil becoming less fertile. Herds of livestock are smaller than in the past. Cattle in particular were affected by the 1992 drought. Natural harvests can provide some limited help in times of stress but at certain times in the year even these cannot help. Deforestation has depleted the natural resources available. Water is less available than it has been, due to drought and a breakdown of water infrastructure. Other natural assets such as gold panning can provide a crucial safety net in some areas.



**Human**

Education levels are limited amongst poorer people and HIV/AIDS is having a major impact on the number of people able to work so labour is less available. All households seem to focus on investing in the education of their children, where they can afford it, but more traditional skills such as carpentry and weaving are not being taught and now appear to belong to the older population. These skills may in future be lost. Skills are also being lost as people migrate away from the area and there has been a noticeable loss of capacity in the health sector.

**Physical**

The houses and huts of some very poor people are falling into disrepair and they may have sold household goods such as blankets or plates to buy food. Some better off people may have ploughs, scotch carts and teams of oxen they can rent out but in general these are too few or too expensive to help many other people cultivate at the right time. There is also a lack of irrigation schemes, and many that do exist are in disrepair. The water infrastructure has broken down. The road and communication infrastructure are adequate but there is little access to public transport, no markets nearby and poor access to health facilities and secondary schools.



**Financial**

The droughts and other shocks that have hit these communities mean that the poor have sold off all the assets they could spare; the very poor may have sold even essential household goods. Those that are just managing may generate some income by selling their labour whilst others rely on their cultivation and livestock. There is no access to credit or savings and many assets have been devalued by inflation. Widespread unemployment and the high cost of living means that remittances have declined in amount and frequency.

**Social**

Family groups have traditionally been strong and provided important safety networks. These are being challenged by HIV/AIDS, the increasing corruption and delinquency amongst children, early marriages and the irresponsible behaviour of some men. Increased crime and conflict are also contributing to a feeling of powerlessness amongst the traditional leaders and the breaking down of informal institutions. As resources are becoming increasingly scarce, social support networks are becoming strained and people are more likely to look out for themselves. But despite the general feeling that community spirit is diminishing and selfishness and jealousy are on the rise it should be noted that some very poor people only survive due to the support of their neighbours.



### Sandra's story – a very poor widow

Sandra is a sixty-year-old widow. Her husband died 10 years ago and her only son and his wife died in the last four years. They have left her with 2 orphans now aged 8 and 10 years. Her brother lives 60 km away. He visits her 3 or 4 times a year but does not bring any groceries, as he himself is a lot poorer. His wife is mentally disturbed.

Both orphans currently attend school. The government BEAM program pays for the tuition, she buys books using the money she earns from casual labour.

They live in 2 huts, both are leaking and she can't afford to have them maintained. She has 2 pots, both of them are lacking handles and her 12 plates mostly have holes in them.

Sandra has been poor all her life. Her husband was a farm labourer and he never made any investments. They had one cow that died 10 years ago. Her son had a goat, but it developed some diseases and had to be slaughtered.

She does have a large piece of land that she cultivates by hand. But her yields are very low as she can't afford inputs and is often late in cultivating her plot. She harvested 3 buckets of maize last year and hopes for at least 6 this year. They cannot afford sugar. They eat plain porridge and sadza with vegetables.

Sandra wishes she could get medicine to help stop her teeth hurting then she would be in better health and work longer hours to earn a living. If she had money she would have the teeth extracted.

### *Livelihood activities*

In many ways assets determine the type of livelihood activities that are available to people. Other factors include their health or the appropriateness of the season. The table below gives an outline of more traditional activities people have used to generate food and income.

Very Poor	Poor	Just managing	Better off
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selling labour in the village if able</li> <li>• small area laid to crops for subsistence use</li> <li>• selling of household goods</li> <li>• begging</li> <li>• gold panning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selling labour</li> <li>• small area laid to crops for subsistence use</li> <li>• gardening</li> <li>• a few livestock mainly goats and donkeys</li> <li>• collects and sells wild harvest (e.g. mopane worms, wild vegetables)</li> <li>• fishing</li> <li>• brick moulding</li> <li>• collecting thatch</li> <li>• fencing for income</li> <li>• gold panning &amp; sieving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growing crops for family use &amp; maybe selling some of the excess</li> <li>• small numbers of livestock (cattle, goats, poultry)</li> <li>• petty trading (buying and selling of vegetables &amp; clothes)</li> <li>• gardening</li> <li>• rent out of scotch cart</li> <li>• selling of firewood</li> <li>• beer brewing</li> <li>• making baskets</li> <li>• hairdressing</li> <li>• sewing &amp; selling</li> <li>• wood carving</li> <li>• cutting poles for sale</li> <li>• thatching</li> <li>• gold panning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• growing crops for family use and selling some of the excess</li> <li>• keep large herds of livestock (cattle – inc. a full span, goats, chickens, donkeys)</li> <li>• hire out of draught power</li> <li>• mat and basket making</li> <li>• knitting jerseys</li> <li>• rent out of scotch cart</li> <li>• small family run businesses</li> </ul>

As the table shows, the very poor, due to their lack of assets, have fewer options available to them. They cannot afford to cultivate much land and rely on the sale of their labour to bring extra food/income to their household. But this is frequently constrained by ill health and the fact that their labour is fully taken up in their own household.

Attempts to cultivate, keep livestock and exploit natural resources in other ways such as gathering natural harvests take up the majority of people's time and are the basis of most households. But they are not a major source of income.

Selling labour does generate some income but many people now have a minimum wage of around ZW \$ 350,000 a month (March 2004) in mind when looking for work. This figure, far more than unskilled urban workers can expect, is based on the cost of basic household goods, and if this cannot be reached there is an inclination to think 'what is the point of working?'

Gold panning is another potential source of significant income but has the drawbacks that it is, by its nature, hazardous work and is also perceived to have a disruptive and corrupting influence on many of the men and children involved. Where women have been involved the reported results have been more positive.

#### ○ Coping mechanisms

Traditional activities such as cultivating crops and keeping livestock are not always enough to help people overcome the shocks and stresses that may affect them. In difficult situations people have to find other means to try and cope. Some of the main mechanisms identified were:

#### ○ Collection of wild harvests

Although this is a regular activity for some people it can become particularly important at certain times of the year and at times of stress. For example during the 1992 drought wild harvests such as mopane worms, wild fruits and wild leaves were collected to supplement people's diets. People reported however that the availability of these wild harvests is decreasing due to overexploitation, making it a risky coping mechanism.

#### ○ Neighbourhood watch schemes

This is a reaction to one of the major shocks that can affect people, theft of livestock and other household goods. Theft is becoming a major problem so some communities are forming neighbourhood watch groups in conjunction with the police. Although it has not stopped it completely, this response has reduced crime where villages have tried it.

#### ○ Rotational savings club

In some villages people are coping with the shortage of household goods by establishing rotational savings clubs. Households pay a small amount of money into a central pot and then take it in turns to buy essential household goods that they need, ranging from soap for laundry to sugar. This mechanism means that households don't go without completely.

#### ○ Extra-marital affairs

All villages reported an increasing number of extra-marital activities ranging from establishing second relationships to prostitution. These are seen as last resorts in order to try and get a little money or food in order to survive. They are also risky strategies likely to contribute to the problems caused by HIV/AIDS.

o **Borrowing from neighbours**

A few people are still able to borrow from their neighbours at times of need, although this is becoming increasingly rare. When people borrow from their neighbours they usually pay back their debt by providing labour to help their neighbours.

o **Selling assets**

Better off households are likely to sell some livestock to cope with shocks thus depleting their herds whilst very poor people are selling basic household goods such as pots and plates. Almost all households would rather sell these items than their grain crops as experience suggests it is very difficult to buy crops at all at times of shortage. The effects of inflation also mean that even if crops were available they may not be able to afford them. As a result households are storing crops and selling other assets.

*Livelihoods are 'vulnerable' when they are unable to cope with and respond to exposure to risks, stresses and shocks*

*Vulnerability*

Increased vulnerability was a common characteristic of livelihoods, especially in Matabeleland. A large number of people there no longer have the capacity to manage shocks and stresses and there is a growing number of poorer households. They are struggling to keep and use assets to help them cope, leading to increased vulnerability. Critically the depletion of these assets also undermines their ability to recover and rebuild their livelihoods in the longer term.

Vulnerability has been brought about not solely by the drought as many perceive but rather a combination of factors including the impact of HIV/AIDS, the high cost of production (due to the continuous increase of costs of inputs needed), lack of availability of seed in the market and the collapse in the commercial sector as a result of serious disincentives to production (i.e. low prices offered by the GMB and lack of guarantee of subsequent payment).

*The impact of policies, institutions & organizations*

The success of the attempts of the people of Mashonaland and Matabeleland to establish livelihoods is partly determined by the effect of policies and institutions that are beyond their control. In many cases these are placing further pressure on the livelihood choices made by the people of this region. For example the national policy to encourage people to use hybrid seeds has meant the loss of the traditional practice of saving seeds (that had been done at no cost) and created a need to buy seed and other inputs such as fertiliser. Key policies and their impacts are outlined below:

Figure 9: The impact of policies and institutions on livelihoods of the poor

Influence	Impact
<p><b>Policy</b> To get people to use hybrid seeds (high yielding varieties) rather than local varieties. Seed companies are only allowed to sell and replicate hybrid seed.</p>	<p><b>Negative -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skill of saving OPV seed being lost.</li> <li>• Dependency on hybrid seed has emerged.</li> <li>• Created need for use of other inputs i.e. fertiliser, however, other government policies are restricting the use of these additional inputs due to high costs.</li> </ul>
<p>Regulation of the price of gold.</p>	<p><b>Positive +</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has stabilised prices of other products enabling better financial planning.</li> </ul>
<p>Ban on cutting down trees.</p>	<p><b>Positive +</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has controlled deforestation</li> </ul>

Influence		Impact
<b>Policy</b>	Fast track resettlement	<p><b>Positive +</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has availed more land for cropping and grazing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Negative -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has created new communities with no social cohesion or history as settlers come both from within and outside the district.</li> <li>• Has created new vulnerable groups as settlers lack access to essential agricultural services and in addition they have less access to health care facilities, education facilities, water and sanitation.</li> </ul>
<b>Institu-tions</b>	Legal Age of Majority (18) compared to communities previous traditional recognition of adulthood (25)	<p><b>Negative -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has encouraged youth are being disrespectful to their parents/elders</li> <li>• Empowerment of the youth at the cost of disempowerment of parents and traditional leaders</li> </ul>
	Children should not be beaten up (Children’s Rights Laws)	<p><b>Negative -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children can be rowdy and disciplining them can mean being reported to the police</li> <li>• Increased child delinquency</li> </ul>
	Traditional governance in the community has become ineffective	<p><b>Negative -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No regular meetings to address pressing issues.</li> <li>• Erosion of self-help within the community.</li> <li>• Breakdown in conflict resolution mechanisms.</li> <li>• Disempowerment of traditional leadership as their roles are ignored.</li> </ul>
	Community institutions are breaking down	<p><b>Negative -</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children can buy products illegally from within the village (cigarettes, alcohol, drugs) encouraged by adults who socialize/drink beer with them</li> <li>• Support networks are disappearing.</li> <li>• No longer access free labour from neighbours.</li> <li>• Respected conflict resolution mechanisms are disappearing.</li> </ul>

The table shows some of the policies that people identified as having an impact on their lives. Other policies that are having an effect include the government’s monetary policy and the country’s crippling inflation. The impact of these policies and the institutions has a huge bearing on the success of people trying to cope and establish their livelihoods.

Any humanitarian intervention needs to consider these and the interrelation of the factors that make up peoples livelihoods. It should be this that informs strategies designed to support communities to move out of poverty.

*Community priorities for interventions*

During the discussions held with the communities on the problems they are faced with, a number of ideas for projects to help them cope with some these problems emerged. These ideas are summarised in the table below:

Problems	Opportunities
Breakdown in social networks.	Focus on community managed projects. Need for formation and strengthening of clubs, church groups, and community solidarity groups.
Boreholes in disrepair	Train locals to rehabilitate boreholes – restore motivation for self help
High cost of living	Establish rotational savings clubs and other small micro-finance clubs to help the high cost of living.
Prevalence of HIV/AIDS	Awareness prevention care programs
Unemployment	Generate local employment and local markets through supporting small enterprises.
Persistent drought	Construction of dams and irrigation, water harvesting techniques, water conservation
Lack of remittances	Establish local income generation activities
Cost of labour and hired equipment is to high	Introduce appropriate technology and equipment hire schemes
Seed availability	Introduction of seed fairs and improving rural markets
Decrease in livestock	Restocking programmes
Increase in delinquents	Need projects which focus on the youth establishing livelihood opportunities

## 5. Emerging issues

This livelihoods analysis highlights the complexity of people's livelihoods and has examined how people make their livelihood choices and strategies. The table below outlines some of the emerging issues that are fundamental to people's livelihoods and suggests what some of the implications are for development programmes. *See Figure 10 on pages 33 and 34.*

### Targeting support

The analysis so far has concentrated on understanding the issues confronting people and therefore helped identify the type of interventions that may help them. It is also important to target this help at the people that will benefit from it. It is not only important to accurately identify the groups in need, efficient and 'leak proof' distribution channels have to be developed to reach them. Poorer households within communities have specific needs and these should be considered when trying to reach them.

Emerging vulnerabilities have stretched coping capacities, weakened precarious livelihoods, and more households are slipping into destitution. Addressing the food and livelihood security of rural communities requires a three-pronged strategy of appropriate targeted support:

1. To improve local capacity to deliver targeted welfare support to destitute populations.
2. To improve capacity to deliver community-based services to protect and support vulnerable populations.
3. To enhance livelihood opportunities of vulnerable groups able to effectively engage in economic activity by building upon the local production and asset base.

Particularly vulnerable groups (the welfare groups) can be relatively easily identified and so can be easy to target. But targeting support to focus on relevant livelihood issues and activities may not always be exclusive to the poor. Including medium and better off households in the interventions may bring benefits to all. For example improving the agricultural productivity of better off households is potentially critical in reducing food insecurity within villages and may well generate employment opportunities. The nature of some interventions, such as food for work, encourages poor people to select them and so the targeting is effectively done by the person receiving support as the type of support offered is useful and relevant to them, and may be less attractive to others.

Any approach will have to balance some tradeoffs in terms of timescale and impact on poverty. It will have to balance the need to provide humanitarian support whilst also taking a developmental approach. Focusing on vulnerable groups can be relatively expensive and extend few benefits beyond the preservation of the livelihoods of beneficiaries themselves. An exclusive focus on 'productive livelihoods' would - as the evidence has shown - bring insufficient short-term benefits to the poorest, who have basic concerns regarding access to basic services and food security. In reality a mix will be needed.

A detailed livelihoods assessment when designing a project intervention will help answer the question of what kind of institutions and mechanisms need to be in place. This is where the livelihoods framework is a useful tool to help to ensure sensible and location-appropriate decisions are made.

Figure 10: Emerging issues and implications for programme development

Emerging issue	The impacts this issue is having
HIV/AIDS is having a devastating impact on livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The elderly, children and women are particularly burdened in caring for those with HIV</li> <li>• Quality and quantity of labour within households is diminishing</li> <li>• New vulnerable groups are emerging.</li> <li>• The number of orphans is increasing and responsibility of care is falling to grandparents and/or the extended family. Where they are unable to help children themselves are becoming the heads of households and looking after siblings.</li> </ul>
There appears to be a breakdown in traditional institutions and social networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children are becoming unruly and not respecting elders</li> <li>• There is an increase in crime in the community</li> <li>• Drinking and the use of drugs is increasing bringing a breakdown of social norms</li> <li>• A mentality of 'each to their own' is evolving</li> </ul>
Young people lack livelihood opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There appear to be no opportunities for young people</li> <li>• Young people are dependent for longer placing a growing strain on the household</li> <li>• Increase in households with fit able-bodied people unable to work because of lack of opportunities.</li> </ul>
The cost of living is escalating out of control – prices are too high for people to survive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People can no longer invest in the household. They can only buy basic household items (if anything at all)</li> <li>• Inputs required for agriculture are too expensive for successful cultivation for many people</li> <li>• Many children are missing school due the high cost of fees and cost of books and uniforms</li> </ul>
The public sector is not able to meet the demands placed on it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medicine is not readily available at clinics</li> <li>• Education has become too expensive</li> <li>• Veterinary services either do not exist or are lacking in necessary inputs such as the relevant drugs needed to operate effectively.</li> </ul>
Households are less resilient to shocks and stresses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Household assets are being sold off to survive and are not being replaced, leaving household more vulnerable to the next shock.</li> <li>• Community safety nets have broken down.</li> </ul>
The food crisis is not simply an outcome of unfavourable weather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other factors including the high cost of production, due to the increase in costs of inputs, are making effects of drought/late rains worse.</li> <li>• Markets are failing to deliver – shortages and rising prices mean people unwilling to sell grain and what is available is too expensive for the poor.</li> <li>• Seed is hard to buy as the commercial sector collapsed due to disincentives to production (i.e. low prices and lack of payment from GMB)</li> </ul>
Negative livelihood strategies are emerging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People looking for quick wins at expense of developing sustainable livelihood strategies</li> <li>• Unsustainable livelihood activities that cause land degradation deforestation are emerging.</li> </ul>
Livelihoods still depend predominantly on the natural resource base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livelihoods revolve predominately around livestock, agriculture and gardening</li> <li>• Collection of wild harvests is an important additional food source and income generation activity</li> <li>• Firewood is also sold for income</li> <li>• Labouring is predominately for agriculture</li> </ul>
Poor households livelihood are barely coping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Livelihood options for the poor are very limited</li> </ul>

## The implications for programme development

- People's capacity to manage the livelihood impacts of HIV/AIDS needs to be central in any programme
- Traditional institutions are critical to achieving sustainable livelihoods.
- Supporting these institutions could provide sustainable entry points.
- Look at strengthening the role of youth in communities
- Support diversification of livelihood activities.
- Incomes from within the village are important
- Consider the wider macro-economic environment
- Work with the trends and consider how to address these issues within a programme of development and relief.
- The effective delivery of government services is key to sustainable livelihoods.
- Consider how to bridge the gap and/or work with government.
- Work with local CBO's to deliver services.
- Food security is vital.
- Focus relief interventions upon preservation of household livelihood opportunities including assets. Target vulnerability from theft, costs of inputs, health costs, and loss of markets.
- Consider seasonal element, and provide support at the right time to break the cycle of asset depletion
- Need to ensure programme addresses the root causes of problems and not the symptoms if livelihoods are to be sustainable
- Supporting emerging livelihood strategies is key but they must be sustainable. Ensure wider impacts such as environmental degradation do not follow.
- Develop innovative approaches to development that work with trends and recognise the changing context
- Secure access to natural resources is critical for the poor, Degradation of resources hits the poor hard Programs to preserve and manage natural resources
- Support is needed at key points during the year
- Need to identify realistic livelihood options

## 6. The way forward

This report has presented the voices and concerns of communities in two provinces in Zimbabwe and analysed some of the implications. In essence it is a snapshot of what is happening on the ground as seen and felt by a relatively limited number of households. Whilst it is not possible to draw conclusions on the livelihoods of the poor rural communities across the whole of Zimbabwe from this study, it does provide us with a useful starting point in terms of the questions we, as development and relief agencies, need to be asking when designing interventions to support these communities.

It is clear that development and relief organisations need to think carefully about how to respond to the current complex crisis. Interventions must:

- Address the causes and not the symptoms of increased vulnerability both at the policy and household level.
- Use short term responses of livelihoods protection which can reduce vulnerability and support livelihoods in the longer term.
- Distinguish between types of vulnerable livelihoods and 'vulnerable groups' and target support accordingly.
- Be holistic and address the multiple dimensions of livelihoods (assets, strategies etc).
- Build on existing capacities and coping strategies.
- Address the exclusion of vulnerable groups from the policy and institutional framework.

### Key questions in the design of interventions to support vulnerable livelihoods:

- What have been the achievements and lessons of the current response?
- Are interventions addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity including; access, availability, production and markets?
- To what extent is the problem one of food availability rather than an access issue?
- Is there a need to distinguish between those who could afford to pay for food if it was available and those who cannot?
- Are interventions targeted at the real causes of increased vulnerability at the household level, for example running down of assets to pay for education?
- Is it realistic to aim for more accurate targeting in the current context? At what additional cost, for what additional benefit?
- Are interventions providing the right kinds of transfers to different livelihood groups at the right points in time? Do interventions work to reduce vulnerability of livelihoods in the longer term, i.e. taking forward the idea of the productive safety net approach
- Are interventions building on institutional capacity and developing mechanisms for targeting and transfer that would inform efforts to institutionalise and scale up social protection approaches when the political environment allows?
- Are interventions responding to the multiple livelihood needs of vulnerable groups?
- Is emergency feeding an entry point for moving into other livelihood needs?

**Source: IDL 2002**

Any response needs to address the current immediate welfare needs of the population and provide sustained welfare support where this is required. But this must be done whilst also working to address the underlying causes. Emphasis needs to be placed on long term recovery so that communities can recover and build up their asset base to reduce their vulnerability.

The questions outlined in the box are a useful starting point in helping to identify and design appropriate interventions to support vulnerable livelihoods in Zimbabwe, particularly for food security programming. This list is not exhaustive and is meant to provide a guide only.

If we are to help people provide for themselves in the future and re-establish their livelihoods, our interventions must be linked to the realities of their livelihoods.

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