SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACED BY RURAL WOMEN OF WARD 13
(CHIVESO AREA) OF BINDURA DISTRICT

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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DEGREE IN SOCIAL WORK OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL
WORK, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES.

2014
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This project is dedicated to my loving mother Ms Constance Ngereyi for her support and also my sisters - Phyllis, Gladys, Varaidzo and Chipo and brother Witness who kept on cheering me up till I reached the end. Thank you for your love, care and support.
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Abstract

Although researches about women have been carried out, they have been concentrating on women in general or on a national level but those at ward level have been few or none. This study was carried out to add knowledge on the problems faced by women at ward level thus it was carried out in ward 13 of Bindura district in Mashonaland central province. It was aimed at identifying the socioeconomic challenges faced by rural women, factors contributing to the challenges as well as assessing the coping strategies employed by rural women of this ward to curb such challenges. In order to obtain the information needed, the researcher used the survey design (any study that collects both quantitative and qualitative data). The research targeted rural women aged 25 and above as these were considered to have matured enough and had more responsibilities as compared to the 18 year olds. Both probability (stratified random) and non-probability (purposive) sampling techniques were used to select respondents (N=52) and key informants (N=4) respectively. Semi-structured questionnaires were distributed to respondents and they were translated in Shona for effective communication with the respondents. Interview guides were also used to gather information from key informants. It was noted that the socioeconomic challenges faced by the respondents included exclusion in decision making, long working hours, domestic disputes, limited access to health services, limited access to information, limited access to education, unemployment, limited access to productive resources and services offered by financial institutions. These challenges were exacerbated by cultural practices, lack of opportunities and colonial imbalances. It is therefore recommended that women be included in decision making, provided land and markets, engaged in income generating activities as well as improving their access to education and health services.
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<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study, statement of the problem, its aim, objectives and significance. It is also going to look at the assumptions of the study, research questions, and justification of the study and lastly definition of terms.

1.2 Background to the study

Rural women are a special group of people with special needs which are different from their urban counterparts. Over the years, women in rural areas have been faced with problems that stretch from social to economic. The challenges faced by women vary from nation to nation and to be more specific, from place to place. Due to these challenges, these women have always lagged behind in the development trail. Scholars like Kachingwe (1986) have observed that throughout the world women face economic, legal, cultural and social discrimination on the ground of their sex and this affects every aspect of their life including their participation in the community development activities. Due to continued marginalization of women within societies, Diana Pearce in 1978 coined a term “feminization of poverty” denoting that women represent disproportionate percentages of the world's poor. This shows that there are differences between sexes with regards to access to economic resources and social services – women bearing the burden most.

The World Bank (2012) noted that restrictions on women participation in economic and social activities are most prevalent in the middle east, north Africa, sub Saharan Africa and south Asia. Of the mentioned regions, sub- Saharan Africa seems to top the list as much literature published on development issues states that the poorest person on earth lives somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa and is probably a woman. It can be added that the stated woman resides in rural areas.

According to the MPSLSW (1997), poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon which is reflected in low incomes, malnutrition; poor health; low literacy levels; low wages, lack of access to safe water, sanitation and adequate clothing, housing and low living conditions. It is highly correlated with social exclusion, marginalization, vulnerability, powerlessness, isolation and other economic, political, social and cultural dimensions of deprivation (MPSLSW, 1997). Poverty results from limited or no access to basic infrastructure and services, and is exacerbated by people’s lack of access to productive resources such as land, credit, and also the lack of institutions, and other
resources needed for sustainable livelihoods. Given the above conceptualisation of poverty, this can be credited for adequately explaining the situation of rural women.

Efforts have been made starting from global to national level to try to uplift the position of rural women but the UN (2008: p 3) report has this to say:

*Despite attention to rural women in international frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, which recognize their contributions, rural women continue to face serious challenges in effectively carrying out their multiple roles within their families and communities. Their rights and priorities are often insufficiently addressed by national development strategies and gender equality policies.*

The above quotation shows that member states still have a long way to go in achieving two of the MDGs which are eradication of extreme poverty and the empowerment of women.

In addition to this countries have come up with a day to celebrate rural women-International Rural Women’s day- on the 15th of October each year but it seems the condition of rural women remains the same.

The Zimbabwean national gender policy postulates;

*“Despite the facts that 52% of our population is women, men continue to have a higher human development index as compared to their female counterparts. Women still lag behind men in political and decision making positions and in education. They continue to be marginalized in the economy and the enjoyment of legal and human rights. These disparities between women and men cannot be allowed to continue as they pose a serious impediment to sustainable development and the attainment of equality and equity are a matter of social justice and good economics. Gender is a core development issue; and a development objective in its own right.”*  

Zimbabwe is a signatory to a number of international treaties like the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, CEDAW and the MDGs and these aim at addressing inequalities that exist
between men and women as well as uplifting the position of women including those in rural areas. Article 14 of the CEDAW, for instance, puts special emphasis on rural women. It states that parties should take into account the particular problems faced by rural women and the significant roles which rural women play in the economic survival of their families, including their work in the non-monetised sectors of the economy, and should take all appropriate measures to ensure the application of the provisions of the Convention to women in rural areas. According to the Zimbabwe 2010 MDG report, the status of women in Zimbabwe, though being continuously addressed, remains low. It is against this background that one may need to understand why women in rural areas like Chiveso are faced with pronounced socioeconomic challenges yet the nation is a signatory to such international treaties.

1.2.1 Social status of women in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society and women usually have a secondary position. This shows that gender discrimination exists in the country. Changes regarding the position of women within Zimbabwean societies were slightly altered by the colonization of the country. In urban areas, the impact of colonialism was greater as compared to rural areas, thus Brydon and Aldershot (1989) argue that women in rural areas are marginalized more than those in urban areas due to their geographical location. With the increase of knowledge and also the wave of globalization, the position of women is being gradually elevated. A report by UNICEF (2007) notes that progress has been made to improve the lives of women in the country but insists that there is still reduced access by women to basic social services, lack of social protection mechanisms and gender based violence which is a major impediment for women development. Zimbabwean societies have cultural practices that differentiate women and men and these are most prominent in rural areas where they were not greatly affected by colonisation. It is in rural areas again where chiefs are well vested with powers. Rural women have to adhere to the traditional leadership and so they become “subjects” of both their husbands and the male leaders (Mungwini 2007).

In the health sector, women are a major group to consider especially if one takes into account the idea that women’s physiology is different from that of men. Zimbabwe is recording deterioration in health care services with the most vulnerable groups like rural women suffering the most. Just after independence, the country introduced free primary healthcare but in a bid to further improve

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the economic situation of the country, it introduced Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAP) (Chinake 1997). He (Chinake) goes on to say that research into the impacts of ESAP showed that women carried the largest share of the costs of adjustment as the state privatised health in the midst of rising unemployment and inflation. Currently most rural areas are facing challenges in accessing health care: it is either the health facilities are far away or they are poorly manned or there is no medication. The situation needs to be improved to achieve a human-centred development.

The hardships of rural women in Zimbabwe have been compounded and further complicated by the raging HIV and AIDS pandemic. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is undermining food production systems. Rural households reported having experienced the following impacts as a result of the pandemic: agricultural labour shortages, sale of agricultural and non-agricultural assets, reduced area planted, agricultural input shortages, increased indebtedness, looking after orphans and withholding children from school (ZIMVAC, 2012). According to ZIMVAC (2013), with the increase in the prevalence of the pandemic, the burden has been shifted from the state institutions back to mostly the poor women under the Home Based Care Programmes, thus further straining rural women.

The country’s education system is open to everyone. Long back it used to be males dominating the system but nowadays it is the opposite. Soon after independence, the government of Zimbabwe subsidised services like education and primary school enrolment became almost universal. By 1995, the country had registered a net enrolment rate of 86%, thus signalling the near attainment of universal primary education. The overall outcome of such policies was very strong social indicators for Zimbabwe, (Zimbabwe MDG report 2010). The education system of the country is reported to be improving during the past decades with the country being among those with high literacy rates. Although the government has put in place policies to better the girl child’s learning environment, some of the rural residents have not come to terms with the importance of education especially for girls whose place they deemed to be in the kitchen. Thus most of the rural women did not excel in their academia. Some of them dropped out of school due to lack of funds and others got married at very tender ages thereby becoming full time housewives.
Most of the old rural women never attended school as they grew up during the colonization era whereby blacks had few or no opportunities to go to school worse still being girls. Up to these days these women cannot read or write. Rural communities, therefore, have a combination of literate and illiterate women. This research has not established the percentage or number of those who are literate or illiterate.

1.2.2 Economic status of rural women in Zimbabwe

The major economic activity in Zimbabwe’s rural areas is agriculture. According to ZIMSTATS (2012) women make up to 52% of the Zimbabwean population. The UN Country Team adds that 86% of these women reside in rural areas. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2011) estimated that about 70 percent of Zimbabwean rural women are engaged in daily agricultural activities, from land preparation for planting through to post-harvest activities. The land they cultivate, however, is mostly owned by their male counterparts. The UN (2011) report stated that out of the two thirds of land in rural areas of Zimbabwe, women own 2%. This shows the disproportionate land distribution in the country.

It is argued that most of the agricultural surplus is produced by female labour but controlled by men. Thus, according to Ester Boserup (1970) in Kachingwe (1986), women in Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes Zimbabwe, form “female farming systems” where women comprise well over half of the agricultural labour force. Whilst women are valued for their agricultural labour power, their work does not bestow status on them. Their low socioeconomic status is both a reflection and cause of women’s position in regard to the main means of production (Boserup 1970). This also influences their capacity to generate and have adequate access to food for consumption or for selling.

Unemployment is an economic issue not to ignore especially in the Zimbabwean context. Made (2012) equated the unemployment rate in the country to the findings of the 2003 Poverty Assessment Study Survey which was at 62% as compared to 35% of the urban areas. The survey also observed that unemployment was high among women with an average of 70% as compared to males at 56%. This is clear evidence that poverty impacts more on women than men due to several factors such as the imbalance in the sharing of resources, discrimination of women in decision making among other factors.
The duties of rural women do not just end with subsistence farming; they make sure that their families have found something to eat by engaging in non-farming activities like vegetable venting, petty trade and casual labour in order to put something on the table (ZIMVAC 2013). They spent time in the gardens so that they can sell their produce to the nearest shopping centres or to other villagers. If one is to pass by a rural shopping centre, he or she will find displayed items like sugarcane, bananas, vegetables, tomatoes and so on, most of which are from rural women gardeners who will be trying to make ends meet. The UN General Assembly urged governments to create an enabling environment for rural women, and to ensure systematic attention to their needs, priorities and contributions so that rural women fully participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of macroeconomic policies and programmes and poverty reduction strategies based on the Millennium Development Goals (UN 2010).

### 1.2.3 Zimbabwe’s efforts to uplift women

The post-independence period saw the formulation of policies and programmes that were designed to create an enabling environment for the attainment of gender equality and empowerment of women. Instruments for empowerment of women which the government has put in place include the National Gender Policy (NGP) that seeks to promote equal and equitable access, control and ownership of resources, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Policy that stipulates a 30% quota of loans to be set aside for women, the Women Development Fund which seeks to economically empower women in Zimbabwe through loans administered in partnership with the People’s Own Savings Bank (POSB), Short Term Recovery Programme (STERP) 1 and 2 which seek to ensure household food security targeting women in the production and reproductive roles in order to eradicate poverty and the Gender Responsive Budgeting, initiated in 2007, that seeks to promote targeted allocation of resources addressing the different needs of men and women, boys and girls (Murisa 2010).

Murisa (2010) admits that the country has registered modest progress towards promoting gender equality in education, in decision making positions, and in the enactment of legislation and policies that support gender equality but he goes on to say that there is still a long way to go before women and girls can fully enjoy their fundamental rights, freedom and dignity to guarantee their well-
being. Thus, gender inequality remains a concern in Zimbabwe, particularly in rural areas, Human Development Report (2003). As for political decision-making, women representation in the lower and upper houses are 14% and 33% respectively against the SADC protocol benchmark of 50% (Zhangazha 2011). The Human Development Report (2011) says that maternal mortality ratio is high at 725 per 100,000 live births; and of the total 1.2 million people living with HIV in the country, 52% are women. The same report revealed that the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions, which are, reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity, stands at 0.583 ranking Zimbabwe 118 out of 146 countries.

The UN in Zimbabwe has been actively providing support contributing to national development priorities on gender equality and empowerment of women (UN, 2008). The support has been focusing on advocacy efforts to incorporate gender budgeting in the national budget bidding process; the Domestic Violence Act; the establishment of ‘one-stop centres for survivors of Gender Based Violence; supporting rural women to access viable urban markets; as well as through microfinance for small business. These efforts have been beneficial to the country but there is still concern for women in rural areas like Chiveso.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Although there are a number of studies that have been carried out focusing on women, there is an inadequate understanding of socioeconomic challenges and the survival means of women at ward level. This makes research focusing on rural women more attractive and at the same time challenging. Rural women are active agents of social and economic change but they are constrained in varying degrees. They have difficulties in accessing health care, education employment, leadership positions, social security and other valuable services. The challenges faced by the rural women are contributory to Zimbabwean societies’ disturbed growth. Policies and Acts have been drafted in Zimbabwe to try to uplift the socioeconomic status of women but these still need to be known and effectively implemented to the rural populace, a good example of ward 13 of Bindura rural. It is worrisome that even though the country has come up with policies and programmes towards the improvement of women’s socioeconomic status, these have not effected tangible benefits to rural women especially the remote ones like ward 13 of Bindura district. One therefore becomes interested in addressing the socioeconomic challenges faced by
rural women of Chiveso, factors contributing to these challenges and coping strategies of these women as well as possible solutions to the challenges.

1.4 Aim

The study aimed at exploring socioeconomic challenges faced by women in Chiveso and also examining the factors contributing to these socioeconomic challenges. It also assessed the coping strategies of these women and the researcher was well convinced that this would influence policymakers so that the policies they make are useful to women who reside in rural communities.

1.5 Objectives

- To identify the socioeconomic challenges faced by rural women of Chiveso area
- To examine factors which contribute to socioeconomic challenges among rural women in Chiveso
- To assess the coping strategies employed by women of Chiveso in an environment with such challenges

1.6 Research questions

The main research questions were:-

- What socioeconomic challenges are women in Chiveso facing?
- What are the factors contributing to these socioeconomic challenges?
- How are the Chiveso women coping in an environment with such challenges?
- What can be done to improve the socioeconomic status of women in Chiveso?

1.7 Significance of the study

Social work is a profession and academic discipline that seeks to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of an individual, group or community by intervening through research, policy, community organisation, direct practice and teaching on behalf of those concerned. As such, the study laid bare different socioeconomic challenges faced by women in Bindura ward 13 with regards to rural development. It aimed to contribute to greater recognition of women’s contributions to the social and economic development of rural areas and recommended strategies for supporting their contributions. It will assist development planners to come up with programmes
tailor-made for specific needs of women residing in the nation’s countryside. It raised critical issues for improving the situation of rural women in terms of strengthening their capabilities, increasing their access to and control over opportunities and resources, enhancing their agency and leadership, and ensuring their rights and security. The researcher was equipped with better skills in reporting, analytical research and problem solving. Apart from this, it is going to be a stepping stone for further research by other scholars.

1.8 Assumptions of the study

The study assumes that

- Rural women in Chiveso are facing a sundry of socioeconomic challenges.
- Given their situation they are willing to take part in this study so that their plight is addressed
- The research will help uplift the position of these rural women.

1.9 Definitions of terms

Development- the process of improving the quality of all human lives and capabilities by raising people’s levels of living, self-esteem and freedom

Feminisation of poverty- the notion that women represent disproportionate percentages of the world’s poor

Rural development- the process of improving the quality of life and economic wellbeing of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas.

Social challenges- undesirable issues within a society which prevent group(s) of people from fully enjoying their freedom

Economic challenges- problems encountered in earning a living/income

1.10 Summary

Chapter one has managed to give background to the study, statement of the problem and also what the study is aiming at. Objectives and significance of the study have been included in this chapter.
The researcher also managed to come up with definition of key words as they were used throughout the study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contains existing literature on the socioeconomic challenges faced by rural women globally. It presents the origins of women marginalization from different schools of thought and how women themselves have tried to deal with this over the years. In addition to this, the chapter gives case studies of challenges faced by rural women in both developed and developing countries and the factors underlying these challenges. The chapter concludes with gaps that were noted in the existing literature as well as the contributions to be made by this study towards the improvement of the living standards of rural women in ward 13 of Bindura district.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Feminism is one of the theories that the researcher looked at when she was carrying out the study. The theory posits that all men and women are created equal and that they are endowed by their creator with certain unassailable rights among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The goals of feminism are to demonstrate the importance of women, to bring to the fore the subjugation of women and to address gender equity. The theorists include Smith, Butler, Wollstonecraft (liberal feminism), J.S.Mill and S.Beauvor among others. Feminism splits into three major ideas which include radical, liberal and Marxist perspectives. Radical feminists are of the view that male supremacy oppresses women and that is why women suffer the most socioeconomic challenges within societies (Lorber 2010). They, therefore, call for a radical reordering of society. Liberal feminism, on the other hand, argues that female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women’s entrance to and success in the public world and as such, there is need for equality of men and women through legal reform. The liberal feminist postulates that women’s disadvantages in societies can be eliminated by breaking down stereotyped customary expectations of women, offering better education to women and introducing equal opportunity programmes.

There are developmental approaches that emerged as a result of the socialist feminist movement and amongst these is the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm, (Robert 1987).
2.2.1 Gender and Development (GAD) Approach

This paradigm focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations (Aguinaga, Lang, Mokrani and Santillana, 2013). According to Gudhlanga (2012) the gender approach to development highlights the incentives and constraints associated with the work of women and men and highlights the differences in their roles, workloads, access to resources and decision making opportunities, the impact of interventions on them and the implications for planning and implementation. This approach advocates for lessening of social differences between men and women and it has been credited for reducing poverty, raising farm efficiency and improving natural resources management.

Aguinaga et al (2013) argue that the GAD framework emphasises participatory approach as a means to empower women through articulation of their needs, rights and capabilities. Once women are empowered and have the social and economic resources, the quality of life of their households improves. If women contribute so much in the improvement of the quality of life of their families then they can contribute much to the social wellbeing of communities at large. This approach to development advocates for policy makers to develop policies that enable communities to improve women’s access to resources. The GAD framework states that development can only take place in rural areas if both sexes are treated equally in terms of their contributions to their respective societies.

Hazel (2000) however criticizes this approach on the basis that it is theoretically distinct from Women in Development (WID) but practically it is WID. The WID approach puts emphasis on women only and ignoring males because historically it was men who dominated in all spheres of society. The GAD approach therefore incorporates all sexes on paper but not practically. Although there are criticisms levelled against the GAD approach, one can appreciate it as a step towards helping women, especially those in rural areas, to realise their full potential.

2.3 The history of women marginalisation

Quite a number of researches have been carried out throughout the world in relation to the way women are viewed within societies and also the roles they play. Some of them highlighted that
women have been oppressed, neglected and exploited since the days of the caveman (Pushya 1998). He goes on to say that the evolving of man into a more refined, cultured or knowledgeable being did not put an end to this oppression but merely changed the manner in which it was carried out. A good example is women continue to be oppressed and ill-treated even in a country like India where they were given an exalted status surpassing the male during the Vedic times (Pushya 1998). Hindu customs and scriptures made it mandatory for the woman of the house to be present in any prayer or ritual for it to be complete: women were deified as “shakthi” or the power or ability to achieve anything (Pushya 1998). Other schools of thought trace the problems women face back to the biblical origins of humanity. They argue that women’s oppression or subordination began on the day when Eve was cursed by God for eating the fruit of life. Throughout the Middle Ages, the place of women in society was often dictated by biblical texts. The writings of the apostle Paul, in particular, emphasised men’s authority over women, forbidding women from teaching, and instructing them to remain silent. This leaves a question if this is the reason why women continue to be looked down upon within societies?

Oyeronke (2010) argues that the subordination of women can be traced back to our homes. In rural areas and among illiterate families, for example, girls are given secondary status in comparison to boys in nourishment, education and lifestyle. Oyeronke (2010) goes on to say while this robs them of a good start, it creates an ineradicable early impression in the psyche of the boys that they are second class citizens and do not deserve equal treatment with girls which is a more serious issue. Most families bring up girls in a manner that they need to depend on males at home to get their day to day work done which makes them dependent and robs their self confidence. As these girls grow up to be women, they are the ones who would need assistance from men even for the duties other women can perform. Oyeronke (2010) however, asserts that women’s empowerment is vital to sustainable development. Applying culturally sensitive approaches can be key to advancing women’s rights while respecting different forms of social organization. It is in the interest of this study to explore challenges faced by women who reside in country sides of Zimbabwe like Chiveso as well as factors underlying the challenges. The study is also interested in assessing coping strategies of these women in an area with such challenges.
2.4 Global overview of socioeconomic challenges faced by rural women

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2012) carried out a global research and found out that some 70 per cent of the world’s poor are concentrated in rural communities. These communities rely on agriculture, forestry, fisheries and livestock to make a living. The ILO (2012) research found out that within these communities, the poorest of the poor are often women and young girls who lack regular and decent employment, and who may face hunger and/or malnutrition, and poor access to health, education and productive assets. Although gender inequality varies significantly across regions and sectors, there is evidence that, globally, women benefit less from rural employment, whether in self- or wage-employment, than men do.

The ILO (2012) established reasons for women marginalization and it said that gender inequalities in rural societies exist and persist because of a range of interlinked social, economic and political factors. However, there is a specific cause that outweighs all others: the invisible but powerful role of social institutions that disempower one sex above the other. These include traditions, customs and social norms that govern the complex workings of rural societies, and which act as a constraint on women’s activities and restrict their ability to compete on an even footing with men (ILO 2012). From this point of view, the ILO is not saying that urban-based women are not faced with poverty, but that the context of rural communities places an added strain on equal opportunities because the traditional institutions are well versed in the countryside.

Examples of traditional norms and beliefs that disadvantage women were highlighted by the study carried out by ILO like the commonly held view that it is a woman’s obligation to work in the home, cooking, cleaning, and looking after children and the sick and the elderly. Other examples were the belief that women are less able to manage assets and the idea that women have to obtain their husband’s or guardian’s permission to leave the house. Or even social - sometimes legal - restrictions that do not allow women to have any property or inheritance rights. These practices were seen to be extremely difficult to eradicate and are detrimental to women’s capacity to develop as productive members of society. The researcher stated that these traditional beliefs stifle women’s economic empowerment.

The 2009 World Survey states that women play an active role in agriculture or in rural livelihoods as unpaid family labour, independent and farmers wage labour, often without access to land, credit
and other productive assets. This is true of patriarchal societies, for instance in continents like Africa, where in most countries property rights go through the names of male citizens. Although legislations have been put in place to enable women access to productive resources, these have been on paper and it therefore questions the significance of these pieces of laws.

### 2.5.1 Rural women in the developed world

A number of researches have been carried out to establish the socioeconomic status of in the developed world amongst which is the one carried out by European Commission in 2011. The study found out that women in rural Europe face a variety of socioeconomic challenges. Economic problems are said to influence social problems and vice versa. The commission designed questionnaires that it distributed to governments so that they could state challenges faced by rural women of their respective countries. The greatest problems of rural women mentioned by the focal informants in the participating countries were: unemployment, declining or low incomes; economic problems (especially in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria) caused by social and political changes; low levels of education; lack of extension and knowledge in home economics, home management and entrepreneurship. The report also highlighted heavy workload both in paid employment and at home; lack of free time and inequality in free time compared to men. Social problems such as the increasing consumption of alcohol; inadequate and distant or diminishing health care and social services were other challenges faced by these women.

In addition to the above mentioned problems, the European Commission report says that rural women reported lack of household services and equipment; unhealthy nutrition and poor health; deficiencies in the rural infrastructure; social isolation; lack of social and cultural activities in villages; the low social status of rural women and the tradition that women are outsiders in public life; the traditional division of labour inside families and women’s economic dependence on men; women’s lack of self-confidence in their potential (mentioned especially by Hungary and Bulgaria); and depopulation of the rural areas, especially the migration of young rural women as a result of the problems they were encountering (European Union, 2011).

Braithwaite (1996) also states that European rural women play a pivotal role in maintaining rural communities but most of their efforts go unrecognised. Their economic activities make major contributions to the maintenance of family and community life, yet most rural development
strategies - to their detriment - do not fully incorporate them. It should however be noted that successful rural development depends on harnessing the skills and resources of all citizens and on delivering benefits which meet their different needs. Braithwaite (1996) goes on to say that it is currently popular in Europe to talk of the need to recognise women as a vital human resource and, as a consequence, to encourage them to become more economically active but the implication is that women are not currently active in the formal labour market.

Unemployment amongst rural women in Europe is generally far higher than amongst rural men and in some regions; female unemployment is more than double. In rural areas of Portugal, nearly two-thirds of the rural unemployed are women (European Commission 2011). In only a few rural regions is male unemployment higher than female. This is the case in England and Scotland, due primarily to the growth of part-time, low-paid service sector employment, which has been taken up primarily by women.

Moreover, participation of rural women in the formal economy is said to be lower than for rural men, and generally lower also than for urban women. According to the European Commission (2011), these low rates of participation and high rates of unemployment are due to a range of phenomena, including: traditional attitudes about the respective roles of women and men; a severe shortage of suitable paid jobs for women in rural areas; and certain obstacles - in particular the absence of transport and of care services - restricting women’s access to the labour market. Current trends aggravate the already difficult situation of rural women. The cutbacks in public services and in public sector employment and further centralisation of the location of both public and private services affect rural women doubly, making it both more difficult to obtain jobs and to access the services they need for themselves and their families (European Commission 2011).

The European Commission (2011) states that in fact, taking a broader view than just formal labour market activity, rural women generally have more roles and responsibilities and work longer hours than men. In France and Ireland, where information on people’s use of time is available, rural women, and particularly farm women, have the fewest number of free hours, fewer than urban women and most rural men. Rural women everywhere have multiple roles: in the domestic sphere they are household managers and family carers; in the community they maintain social and cultural
services, predominantly on a voluntary basis; and in the economy, if they are not formally engaged as employees or entrepreneurs, they are often active in family businesses and farms. In contrast, they are generally less involved in decision-making at local or regional levels. Often their domestic and community maintenance roles not only restrict them from participating in decision-making, but provide the support which enables men to participate. The unequal share of family and domestic responsibilities is a significant constraint to the equal participation of women and men in rural development.

In response to the rural women’s situation, different countries came up with projects and initiatives to better the lives of these rural women. A good example is given by Fischler (2002) whereby the European Union came up with an Advisory Committee on women and rural areas, which is made by representatives of socio-economic organisations (agricultural producers, trade, consumers, the European Women Lobby and workers). The committee is said to be actively working for gender mainstreaming in rural areas. Through the work of the commission, policies have been drafted in Europe and most of them prioritise gender equality.

Systematic checking (gender proofing) of policies, strategies and projects is being undertaken prior to their adoption or approval in order to verify that they will not discriminate against women, or will even make a positive contribution to greater equality between women and men (EU 2011). This needs information about the situation, roles, needs and motivations of women and men in the region and a planning method which integrates this information. The information is obtained through one way of involving both women and men in the development process to do participative analyses of the policies and appraisals as well. In Norway, a cooperative project between numbers of government ministries, Municipal Planning on Women’s Terms, was set out to establish participative planning processes and organisational structures in six municipalities to ensure that women and “the woman’s perspective” are integrated into municipal planning and initiatives (EU 2011). Each municipality created a working group, of 7 or 8 women, whose role is to ensure that the interests and needs of women are taken into account in municipal policies, programmes and projects.
Given the situation of women in Europe, a continent which is among developed continents of the world, one is left to wonder how those women in developing continents like Africa are surviving. This calls for a look into the continent’s -Africa- situation.

2.5.2 Rural Women in Africa

The continent is amongst those continents that are considered the “south” for their lagging behind in terms of development. Women in African countries are disproportionately put at the highest risk of poverty and continue to face social and cultural barriers that prevent them from alleviating themselves out of poverty. Rural women in Africa are not a homogeneous group; there are important differences among them based on country, class, age, marital status, ethnic background, race and religion (Nemes, 2005). In many countries, gender-based stereotypes and discrimination exist which deny rural women equitable access to and control over land and other productive resources, opportunities for employment and income-generating activities, access to education and health care, and opportunities for participation in public life, (UN 2008).

There are many impediments due to patriarchal customs and laws in Africa that means that poor women are left vulnerable. On cultural basis in some countries in the continent, widows whose husbands die in estate and wives from polygamous unions are not recognized as legally married. These women are easily exploited and lose access to land they work and depend on for survival. Economically it means the women under these cultural practices are already vulnerable.

According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (1999), uneducated rural women in West Africa are often not well informed about their legal rights nor have the business acumen about how to purchase or lease land using processes that involve complex economic and social negotiations, often dominated by men. Studies in the region reveal that women mostly enter into oral land transactions and fail to register their land, and most women do not inherit land but gain access via marriage. The study also revealed that violence against women by in-laws often prevented women from taking up their rights.

As a response to challenges faced by rural women, Women in Development and Law (WiLDAF-AO), an organisation in West Africa reaches out to women farmers to promote their access to full ownership of land and to work on the land in safe and secure conditions, New Partnership for
Africa’s Development (NEPAD) Agency (2010). WiLDAF-AO recognizes that this requires women being educated on their rights including participating in decision-making within the communities and in farmer organisations. It also means supporting women’s rights in the settlement of family disputes and community of inheritance claims and tackling violence against women in rural areas. The MDG3 Fund has provided WiLDAF-AO with the funds to support women members of farmers’ organisations and rural women in 5 West African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo) to know and claim their rights. Through the support of the Fund the organisation trains women in farmers’ organisations on how to change gender inequalities experienced by rural women in West Africa particularly around land inheritance and access to resources and economic opportunities and access to power and decision making. NEPAD (2010) states that in the stated countries WiLDAF-AO trains paralegals to work with the women farmers to understand the law to help them in their homes, communities and economic activities.

2.5.3 Rural women in Morocco

The female population, especially in rural areas, dominantly represents the face of poverty in Morocco, Skalli (2001). There have been two major methods to measure poverty in Morocco (classical and capabilities approach) and it was noted that Moroccan women represent the most economically insecure social group in the country. One of six Moroccan households is lone-mother households, which represent the most impoverished households in the country. Women are categorized to have the highest levels of socio-economic and legal constraints, which exclude them from obtaining their basic needs. Although recent surveys show that women actively help in providing for their families economically, Moroccan legal texts discourage women's participation in economic productivity (Nemes 2005). Article 114 of the Moroccan Family Law, for instance, states that every human being is responsible for providing for his needs by his own powers except the wife whose needs will be taken care of by her husband. The patriarchal social structure of Morocco puts women as being inferior to men in all aspects. Women are denied equal opportunities in education and employment before the law, as well as access to resources. As a result, the female population in Morocco suffers from deprivation of capabilities. Young girls are often excluded from educational opportunities due to limited financial resources within the household and the burden of household chores expected from them.
Over time, Moroccan women have gained more access to employment. However, Nemes (2005) argues that this quantitative increase in labour participation for women has not been accompanied by higher qualitative standards of labour. The labour of rural women in Morocco remains unacknowledged and unpaid. Women are put into a higher risk of poverty as their domestic workload is added onto their unpaid labour. This balance of domestic labour and work outside the home imposes a burden on rural women. Since the socioeconomic exclusion of women deprive them of the capabilities to be educated and trained for certain employment skills, their susceptibility to poverty is heightened. Low educational skills of women openly relate to the limited employment options they have in society. Although both men and women are affected by unemployment, women are more likely to lose their jobs than men. Recent research in Morocco shows that economic slumps in the country affect women the most.

2.6.1 Rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa

According to the World Bank (2012) report, 80% of rural people in Sub-Saharan Africa depend on smallholder agriculture for their livelihood and women provide 70% of the agricultural labour and produce over 90% of the food. It reiterates that despite the hugely significant contribution that women make to Africa’s food security; their voices are often ignored by policy makers. According to International Monetary Fund, the World Bank (2012) and much literature published on development issues, the poorest person on earth lives somewhere in sub-Saharan Africa and are probably a women. It should be noted that women are foundational pillars upon which all the family and community structures rely.

FAO (2011) reports that in Sub-Saharan Africa, women perform 80% of the work associated with rural domestic tasks, including fetching water and firewood, preparing and cooking meals, processing and storing food, and making household purchases. Poor rural women can work as many as 16 to 18 hours per day, doing fieldwork as well as handling all their domestic responsibilities. FAO (2011) goes on to say that service provision and social protection are much lower in rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa as evidenced by: the higher maternal mortality rates; higher rates of HIV/AIDS infections among women; lower education levels of rural women compared to national averages; limited electricity, energy and water supply and deficient road networks.
In South Africa, for instance despite large-scale urban migration, most women live in rural areas where the incidence of poverty is much higher than in urban areas (Ozoemena 2010). She goes on to say about 59.3% of poor individuals are rural dwellers and the highest prevalence of poor rural dwellers is found in the female population between the ages of 25-49. In line with global commitment to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015 in terms of the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG), South Africa has made pronounced achievements in reducing income poverty and poverty amongst those living under the international rate of less than US$ 1 a day. As a way of eradicating poverty amongst the rural populace, the country increased social grants. During the same period, the South African government managed to provide quite a number of homes with electricity, sanitation and safe drinking water. Despite these achievements, the extent of inequality between rich and poor is so great that it is impossible to bridge the gap by 2015 with current efforts (Ozoemena 2010). Such disparities are defined by several factors such as race, gender and class. This is why poverty is mostly noted among the rural, poor and black communities.

Ozoemena (2010) postulates that several factors contribute to poverty amongst rural women, including gender disparities in economic power-sharing and changes in family structures caused by migration or ill-health. All of these factors have placed additional burdens on women, particularly those who provide for several dependants. The feminization of poverty in South Africa has a rural and a racial dimension, to the extent that it obstructs the well-being of women and sustainable development (Ozoemena 2010). Manifestations of poverty in South Africa include limited or no access to education, increasing mortality and morbidity from illness, chronic ill-health, homelessness and inadequate housing, and unsafe environment. Inadequate housing and homelessness significantly affects poor women, erodes their dignity and undermines social justice and development. Ozoemena id reiterates that adequate housing (or ‘human settlement’ as it is now referred to in South Africa, for women is imperative to sustainable development.

In order to deal with this issue, the South African government created the Department for Women, Children and People with Disability (DWCPD) in 2009 with the mandate to emphasize the need for equity and access to development opportunities for vulnerable groups in society. The Department of Women, Children and Persons with Disability was therefore established to
empower women, particularly the rural poor; to ensure that they have access to basic necessities in their communities regardless of class and status. This policy was supposed to ensure social justice and development for women, especially for the rural poor, who are most vulnerable. In addition, the government of South Africa presented the Ministry of Human Settlements with a new directive to include sanitation as a necessary condition for human settlement. Government emphasised the fact that housing is not just about physical structures, but that it should include other aspects aimed at guaranteeing the over-all wellbeing of individuals. The absence of basic shelter for women exposes them to other vulnerabilities like violence and disease. The fact that women are not provided with access to the necessities guaranteed by socio-economic rights and justice is therefore at the root of many of the issues they face (Ozoemena 2010). The need to harness the rights of women with proper developmental policies to promote social justice is certainly urgent and deserves more attention and resources.

Progress in bringing women’s issues onto the policy makers’ schedule has been slow and it has been further reduced by local traditional structures that often in good deed with men (Ozoemena 2010). Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, rural women consistently lack access to land, credit, agricultural inputs like seeds, training, technology and information on their rights like land rights, meaning they cannot escape poverty and lead the life they want. It has been noted that it is only by recognising the feminine role with its specific superiority on life issues that the development of sub-Saharan African nations will be effective as there is no development without this recognition.

2.6.2 Rural women in Zimbabwe

A number of studies have been carried out in Zimbabwe to assess the socioeconomic status of women in Zimbabwe and amongst them are Mungwini (2007), Gudhlanga (2012), Made (2012) and Zhangazha (2014), only to mention a few. Since the year 2002, the government together with its developmental partners have been carrying out Vulnerability Assessment Study of Rural Livelihoods yearly in order to ascertain as well as improve the livelihoods of the majority of rural
Zimbabwe. From these studies, it is being noted that the women in Zimbabwe, like their global counterparts, continue to face numerous challenges despite constituting a large part of the Zimbabwean population, UN (2008). The challenges they face include but not limited to gender based violence, familial inequality, lack of education, lack of access to healthcare as well as the inability to own property. According to UN (2008), rural women play a critical role in rural economies of both developed and developing countries but they are particularly disadvantaged, both as poor and as women.

During the Southern Rhodesian era, women were seen as the custodians of rural homes, children and livestock while men would go to towns to work for the whites. Most rural communities of this time were dominated by women. As the wind of civilization blew over Africa, men started to call their wives to towns so that they would be full-time housewives, preparing food for their husbands before and after work, doing the laundry and sometimes doing gardening. With the country gaining its independence, the number of males leaving for urban centres increased leaving women to make up the highest percentage of the rural population.

One major resultant social-cultural change to the flocking of men to towns was the dualisation of homes. Working men became migrants moving between their urban homes and their rural homes but still controlling decision making in the later. Thus, de-facto female headed households were largely created from this process and this socially reengineered culture continues to this day. The separation of spouses led to the feminization of rural areas and poverty. In addition to farming on poor soils, women became the sole farmers but without decision making powers to dispose of the produce and to spend money without consulting their absentee husbands. Migrant men, though still generally poor, nevertheless, yielded financial power in relation to poor and disempowered women in the rural areas, (Zimbabwe Human Development Report, 2003).

Zhangazha (2014) states that rural poverty has risen in Zimbabwe to 76% from the 63% that was recorded last year by Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee’s (ZIMVAC) 2014 study. Zhangazha id goes on to say that most of the rural poverty victims are women. A lot of the rural households fail to produce enough food to meet their needs and they live below the national poverty line or less than US$1, 25 a day (World Food Programme 2014). Most households in the rural areas are net food buyers: they do not (for a number of reasons) produce enough food to meet
their needs through to the next harvest season. Consequently they rely on markets and other non-farm sources such as casual labour to bridge the food gap to the next season. As such a number of rural areas will struggle to meet their daily food needs.

Additionally the country continues to face economic stress with implications on food security especially for vulnerable groups in rural areas (ZIMVAC, 2013). This is also affected by the absence of effective and affordable farming equipment. Due to deflation, household incomes are likely to remain low and liquidity challenges affect aggregate demand for goods and services especially for poor households. Batter will be a common form of exchange. In the case that grain is used for such transactions, household food stocks are likely to get exhausted at a faster rate (ZIMVAC, 2012).

According to ZIMVAC (2013), over 70% of the households that sell maize, wheat, sorghum and millets do so in their local markets, mainly to other households. Though this is desirable to reduce grain prices at the local level, initiatives must be developed so farmers can also access the best possible market returns. About 60% of the rural households do not own cattle and a similar proportion do not own goats, barring the enormous capacity for providing household nutrition and building overall resilience (ZIMVAC, 2012).

In Zimbabwe generally, rural women are the most affected by social ills. These are exacerbated by the traditional view that women should submit to both their husbands and other male members in their societies. Countrywide, the socioeconomic challenges that were established by prior studies, like Mungwini (2007), include domestic violence, lack of voices in decision making processes, lack of access to education and health, lack of access to opportunities and other productive resources like land and markets, food shortages and others mentioned earlier on. Although these studies established the socioeconomic challenges faced by rural women throughout the country, justice has not been done to those challenges faced by women at ward level.
2.7 Developments in rural women’s situation in Zimbabwe since Independence

A number of eminent scholars have produced illuminating work on the plight of women in Zimbabwe since independence (Gaidzanwa 1985, Kazembe 1986, Batezat and Mwalo 1989, Tichagwa 1998, McFaden 1999, Lewis 2003, Esof 2005, to select just a few), and much more research has continued to be produced in this area (Mungwini 2007). One thing that is clear from the outset is that the government was committed to changing the plight of women in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. As noted by Batezat and Mwalo (1989), at independence women were for the first time in the history of the country officially recognised as an oppressed group and as such were the target of a conscious government policy to change their situation. The government wanted to transform the status of women so that they could assume their rightful position in society and work alongside their male counterparts in the development of the nation. Zimbabwe’s efforts to safeguard women through legislation can be summarised as below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Zimbabwe examples of major legislation to outlaw gender discrimination</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matrimonial Causes Act Chapter 5:13 1985</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Customary Law and Local Courts Act, 1981</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Deceased Persons Family Maintenance Act Chapter 6:03, 1987</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Equal Pay Regulations 1980</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The Labour Relations Act Chapter 28:01 1984</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 1997 Chapter 6:07</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Sexual Offences Act No.8 of 2001 Chapter 9:21</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The Domestic Violence Act Chapter 5:16 of 2007</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>New constitution of 2013 chapter2 section 17</strong></td>
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**Source:** ‘Children and Women’s Rights in Zimbabwe: Theory and Practice’; UNICEF, September 2004, but with own modifications.

Mungwini (2007) says that in order to achieve this goal of uplifting women, a number of initiatives were undertaken that ranged from landmark legal reforms that were meant to safeguard the rights of women such as the famous Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982. Since then legal reforms have continued with the enactment of several laws, the most recent being the much publicized Domestic Violence Act of 2007. The point being made is that the commitment of the government to raise the status of women has never been in question right from the beginning. As soon as it became a member of the United Nations and the now African Union the government ratified a number of regional and international instruments and protocols that had a strong bearing on the status of women in the country (Tichangwa: 1998). Over the years the government has always had a Ministry to deal with issues of gender and women’s affairs, thus demonstrating its unwavering
commitment to the uplifting of women. The idea was to eliminate all customary, social, economic, and legal constraints that inhibited women’s full participation in the development of their country. In its national gender policy the government spelt out one of its aims as that of ensuring that women, especially those in the rural areas, become aware of their social, economic, political and cultural rights. This in itself was recognition of the disparity between the plight of rural women and their counterparts in the urban areas.

In addition to this, Zimbabwe formulated a National Gender Policy in 2004. Some of its critical goals include: eliminating all negative economic, social, legal and political policies, cultural and religious practices that impede equality and equity of the sexes; mainstreaming gender in all aspects of the development process and to ensure sustainable equity, equality and empowerment of women and men in Zimbabwe, in all aspects of life, UN (2006). In addition a National Plan of Action was put in place to guide the implementation of the National Gender Policy. Zimbabwe established national gender machinery in the form of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development in 2005 together with gender focal points in all key ministries. Several gender desks are present in both the public and private sectors in Zimbabwe which act as ‘focal points’ for gender mainstreaming and addressing gender equity concerns.

While the government has made these strides, all of which are undoubtedly commendable developments since the turn of the century, this raises some important issues. Connected to the fast track land reform and the emergence of serious opposition in the political landscape and further compounded by the hostile attitude of the international community towards the country, there have been new developments that may have far-reaching consequences for the empowerment of women in Zimbabwe, particularly in the rural areas, (Chinake 1997).

The country’s efforts to upgrade the position of women especially in rural areas have been affected by cultural factors. Since Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society which values much the position of traditional leaders, the institutions of these leaders are invariably patriarchal driven and as such pro-male and without doubt anti-women, (Mungwini 2007). Through this revitalisation of traditional leadership institutions, government has facilitated a reawakening of the patriarchal values and customs some of which were fading with the passage of time. There is a clear
resuscitation of male dominance and ultimate control of events in the rural areas that has a negative effect on women and their capacity to participate openly in the affairs of their community and to make decisions for themselves.

In terms of agriculture, Gaidzanwa, a Zimbabwean feminist and gender activist has written on women’s access to land, focusing on how women’s inability to access land impacts their economic limitations. She argued that until the land tenure system is changed giving women, who make up the majority of subsistence farmers, equal access to land, then the women of Zimbabwe shall continue to be disadvantaged.

One can also argue that although efforts have been made in trying to uplift the position of rural women, they seem to be fruitless because of the women’s view of their positions in the societies they live. Globally, for instance, people commemorate the International Rural Women’s Day (IRWD) on the 15th of October every year in a bid to help them feel recognized but the rural women themselves are unaware of all this. Keijiro (2009) argues that although governments have come up with a number of policies to support women, some of them have not translated into tangible benefits. This is also because of the rural women’s ignorance.

Zimbabwe’s health sector has been characterized by deterioration in health infrastructure, drug shortages, and a lack of health professionals. Women therefore, bear the brunt of a poor health delivery system and because of limited incomes; they have limited access to services (Zhangazha 2024). Women are also the ones who provide care for sick family members in home based care programmes. This affects their ability to participate effectively in their political and economic lives, further cementing them in poverty. In addition to this, the personnel in the health sector are poorly remunerated leading them to lack motivation. If the workers are on a go-slow, it means that women are affected most as they are the ones who flock to health centres more than men. Under STERP, revised expenditure proposals sought to address some of the challenges in the health sector, one of which was the attraction and maintenance of highly skilled professionals in the health sector. This was not fruitful as most if not all of the health centres in rural areas do not have doctors.

The Zimbabwe MDG (2010) report states that mothers in rural areas are often discouraged by the long distances they have to travel to reach a health facility. The number of women attended to by
skilled birth attendants is inversely related to the distance they have to travel for care. Therefore, the issue of distance will most likely continue to affect many pregnant women, especially in the rural areas where only 58% are reported to be attended by skilled birth personnel (WHS, 2008). As a result of this frustration, most of these women end up giving birth at home where they will be attended by traditional midwives. Usually the resultant will be high maternal mortality rate.

The Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (DHS 2005-06) posits that social discrimination is keeping women poor and marginalized in rural areas. There is a wide gap between women and men in terms of access to social services. Households headed by women in Zimbabwe face a plethora of multiple disadvantages. They are likely to be ultra-poor because of the historical marginalization of women in development or because of culturally set values and norms. Religious beliefs have been noted to contribute to some women in rural areas not accessing health services. An example is given of the apostolic church of Marange which forbids women to take contraceptives or to immunize children. Although it can be argued that some of the apostolic sects are now allowing members to access healthcare, there are some individuals who need to adhere to their earlier beliefs hence the country still has a mile to go in terms of helping rural women.

2.8 Factors contributing to rural women’s socioeconomic challenges

Various scholars have come up with different factors contributing to the socioeconomic challenges faced by women who reside in rural areas, for example, Made (2012) attribute it to cultural factors. Made (2012) says that some traditional views and customs in Zimbabwe continue to encourage and permit violence, abuse and discrimination against women and that women experience low status than men which then reduces their access to resources and constraints their influence in decision making at all levels. Mungwini (2007) also argued that the traditional way of ruling societies leads to further oppression of women for instances the so called virginity testing by chief Makoni which is contrary to human rights especially for the girl child.

The concept of social exclusion is a process that influences the incidence of poverty. Chant (2006) argues that many developing countries have social and cultural norms that prevent women from having access to formal employment especially in parts of, Africa and Latin America and Asia. The cultural and social norms do not allow women to have much labour productivity outside the
home as well as an economic bargaining position within the household. Chant (2006) goes on to say that this increase in occupational gender segregation and widening of the gender gap increases women’s vulnerability to poverty. Another cause of poverty is that women have to perform the traditional roles which are socially ascribed to them by the society such that they end up having low or lack of opportunities to education and economic opportunities because they have too many roles they are expected to perform at home and in the community. This has been seen to cause poverty among women as they are traditionally not expected to take up jobs, for it is believed that men are supposed to be the providers and women do the house chores and rearing of children. In the end women are not economically independent thus they are poorer.

Women in rural areas suffer extreme time scarcity. Blackden and Woden (2006) identify main links between time and poverty among women as following “low productivity and many non market tasks renders them time and labour intensive thus reducing the availability of time to partake in more economically productive activities.” It is also due to gendered division of labour that there is poor sustainability of labour allocation in non marketing work and women are unable to take full advantage of economic opportunities and participate in income generating activities.

However other factors such as HIV and AIDS epidemic remain one of the largest drives of the widespread of poverty among women in Zimbabwe (Jackson, 2002). Due to economic hardships most men are seen to be moving to towns and growth points in search for work and due to the separation most people are promiscuous and they end up dying of HIV and AIDS leaving their wives as household heads. Female headed households have been reported to be the most impoverished.

2.9 Coping strategies for women in rural areas

Given the condition of rural women in Zimbabwe, it is of concern to know how the women cope. Under traditional culture dictates, married women are supposed to be submissive to both their husbands and other males within their societies. Mungwini (2007) noted that rural women endure the conditions no matter how painful the situation may be. Most of them sacrifice their freedoms
in the name of marriage. Others were raised in such a way that they admit to the status quo or they do not see any problem with their condition.

Rural women also depend on remittances from their spouses, children or family members who are either in urban areas or in the diaspora. With the economic hardships that the country has experienced and is still experiencing, the remittances which the rural women used to receive are dwindling. Most of the rural women therefore end up making use of the available resources, most of which are controlled by males.

Farming and gardening are also main sources of income for rural women. Most rural women in Zimbabwe practice subsistence farming to sustain their livelihoods. It is from these crops that rural women get money to send their children to school or buy other essentials. The worrisome thing is that most rural women do not own land and they have to wait for their husbands to allocate them pieces of land to grow “feminine” crops such as groundnuts, cowpeas and round nuts. Women therefore continue to be marginalised in rural areas as they do not have the power to make decisions on resource utilisation.

Programmes and projects from government departments and also those ushered by non-governmental organisations have come to the rescue of some rural women. The Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development has been regarded as the machine that is pioneering the empowerment of women and also the development of rural communities. It is popularly said empowering women is empowering the nation but this is easier said than done. Reliance on donor funding has been criticised for creating a beneficiary syndrome for the recipients yet development is anchored on empowering women so that they become self reliant.

Rural women travel for long distances for health services as there will be no other health centres available in their locality and the education system is almost similar. In education, some of them had no opportunities to go to school because their parents had no money to send them to school so the same is being transferred to their children leading to what UN (2008) referred to intergenerational existence of poverty. There are many pressing socioeconomic situations that rural women endure especially depending on their geographical location. It is therefore in the interest of this study to assess coping strategies of rural women who reside in ward 13 of Bindura district. Researches have been carried out on the social and economic challenges in Zimbabwe.
(Chinake 1997, UNICEF 2004 and Mungwini 2007, Murisa 2010, Gudhlanga 2012) but they have been focusing on the whole country without specific areas, the likes of Chiveso. This study, therefore aimed at identifying the socioeconomic challenges at ward level as well as the causes to these challenges and how best these women could be assisted so that they develop both socially and economically.

2.10 Summary

The chapter managed to explain the theoretical foundations upon which the research is based. It has also given an overview of how women are perceived in rural areas the world over. The chapter gave a background of the Zimbabwean situation depending on researches carried out previously by other scholars as well as the current status of rural women. It also highlighted the gaps that are in the existing literature as well as how the study is going to contribute to a better socioeconomic environment for women in Chiveso.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is a detailed outline of how the research was carried out. It explains the research design employed by the researcher, location of the study as well as the target population. Apart from this, the chapter also highlighted the study sample, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data presentation and analysis and also the feasibility of the study. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also included in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

The researcher applied the survey design to gather data from the participants. Survey is described as any research which collects data, both qualitative and quantitative, from a sample of people (Dawson 2002). Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires that were administered to respondents and qualitative data was collected through interviews with key informants. The survey method is normally used to carry out research with a large number of people thus the researcher considered this method in line with her sample size. In a survey, standardized questionnaires are administered to respondents to solicit for responses thus questionnaire was one of the instruments used by the researcher for data collection.

3.2 Study Population

The study had rural women as its respondents. These were residents of Chiveso area or ward 13 of Bindura rural where the research was carried out. Ward 13 consists of 9 villages namely Chidamba, Matare, Ushongani, Chiveso, N’andu, Mazarura, Sawada, Gwezere, and Imbwanhema. According to the Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency’s (ZIMSTATS) 2012 census report, ward 13 of Bindura rural has a population of 3259 with 1619 males and 1640 females. Since the research was focusing on socioeconomic challenges faced by women in the stated ward, the number of women (1619) constituted the study population.
3.2.1 Study Area

The study was carried out in Chiveso; an area located 25 kilometres south of Bindura town. It is ward 13 (rural) of Bindura district in Mashonaland central province and it consists of 9 villages which have a total population of 3254 people, (ZIMSTATS 2012 report). For the purpose of the study, the two names (Chiveso area and ward 13) were used to mean the study area. It is an agricultural area with residents building houses on the pieces of land allocated to them for farming. The area has one primary school by the name Chiveso and a secondary school- Murembe. The villagers in this ward either go to Chiveso or Murembe for their shopping as these are the two shopping centres in the ward. Chiveso clinic is the only health facility situated in the ward and it is near Murembe secondary school, three kilometres off the Harare road towards the east. Below is a map to show the study area.

Fig 1: Ward 13/ Chiveso area

3.2.2 Target Population
The target population for this study was all women above the age of twenty-five who live in Chiveso area. The researcher targeted this group on the argument that at the age of twenty-five one will be having adult responsibilities like taking care of one’s self and other people or will have been married. They are legally regarded as ones who can fend for themselves and they are more mature than 18 year olds. According to the ZIMSTATS (2012) census report, females aged twenty five years and above are 32 % of the overall population of the ward and the researcher mainly focused on these. Basing on the 2012 census report, the total population of females aged twenty five and above is therefore 1041. This figure might have changed during the time of the study but for authenticity purposes, the researcher used the 2012 census report figures.

3.3 Sample

3.3.1 Sample size

The study sample consisted of 52 women of twenty five years of age and above, thus the sample was 5% of the target population. Each age group had ten respondents except for the 25 – 34 and 35 –44 age groups which had 11 respondents each. The researcher resorted to this in order to have equal representation from all the targeted age groups of women who reside in Chiveso area. The respondents were from the five villages of the ward namely Matare, Chiveso, N’andu, Mazarura and Sawada. These villages were selected for their geographical locations. The researcher chose this sample size also considering the challenge of limited resources like transport and stationery. Other stakeholders such as the head of Department of Women Affairs, councillor and the district administrator formed part of the study sample as key informants. The head of the Department of Women Affairs was interviewed on the activities being carried out in ward 13 and the response of women towards the programmes or activities as well as the experiences they have had with the participants.

3.3.2 Sampling techniques

The researcher used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Probability sampling was used to extract a sample of 52 respondents from the target population which is all women who reside in ward 13 who are twenty-five years and above. Non probability sampling was used to select key informants. Stratified random and purposive sampling techniques were employed during the study as described below.
Stratified random sampling
Stratified random sampling was used when the researcher came up with five strata representing the five age groups as indicated in the questionnaire. The age groups had different needs and different challenges which was why the researcher chose to separate them. The ward has 9 villages so five of the villages (Matare, Chiveso, N’andu, Mazarura and Sawada) were selected and the respondents were selected from these villages. The researcher used the probability sampling technique as it allows the generalization of results on the study population.

After stratifying the target population, the researcher then used simple random sampling to select the actual respondents (52 women). Simple random sampling was easy to apply and this is the reason why the researcher chose it. It consumes less time and little resources. This sampling technique had the assurance that the population would be evenly sampled.

Purposive sampling
Purposive sampling, as a non-probability sampling technique, was used to select key informants thus Sanders, Philip and Thornhill (2008) argue that purposive sampling is sampling with a purpose in mind. Those people who had experience in gender issues were selected by the researcher as they were to provide needed information. The key informants were the head of the department of women affairs, the councillor, the district administrator and the chief. This sampling technique is differentiated from simple random sampling in that the researchers use their judgment to decide which participants to include in the sample, trying to choose respondents who are typical of the population (Leary 2001).

3.4 Data collection
3.4.1 Data collection techniques

Data was gathered through administration of questionnaires to the respondents and also through interviews with key informants. The researcher sought the research assistant’s services in carrying out the study as the number of people studied was a bit big and the study area was also big. The researcher and her assistant distributed the questionnaires to the participants and left them to answer the questions on their own then questionnaires were collected later.

Interviews were carried out with the key informants at their respective work places. The researcher was under the guidance of the interview schedule during conversations with the key informants.
Questions were asked depending on how the conversation started as indicated by Babbie (2007). The researcher made use of an interview guide during the interviews so that not too much or too little information was asked.

3.4.2 Research instruments

The researcher collected data using questionnaires and interview guides. Questionnaires were used first in pilot study and later in gathering information from the respondents. The interview guide was used to key informants to probe on the factors leading to the socioeconomic challenges faced by the rural women of Chiveso and also how they were responding to the situation. These research instruments enabled the researcher to obtain as much information as possible concerning the way rural women of Chiveso make ends meet. The research instruments are explained further below.

The questionnaire

This is a data collection instrument or document which contains questions to solicit appropriate information which needs to be analysed (Given, 2008). The questionnaire holds the advantages that less time and money is needed for distribution, respondents can complete the questionnaire when it suits them and analysis of answers to closed questions is relatively straightforward’ Gillham (2000). The questionnaire was designed in a way that respondents used pseudonyms to protect their identities and usually people feel freer in an anonymous style of responding.

Although questionnaires are most suitable in quantitative researches, they were used in this research to try to solicit as much information as was possible from the sampled respondents. The research instrument was also suitable in cases where sensitive matters were encountered because there was anonymity in answering the questionnaires. The questionnaires were self administered whereby they were given to respondents and collected later.

The questionnaire contained questions categorized in four sections, that is, the ones under economic challenges, social challenges, factors leading to the socioeconomic challenges and lastly how the participants managed to make a living in their area (coping strategies). The questions were both closed and open ended. Open ended questions gave the respondents an opportunity to answer the questions in their own words and the closed questions limited the respondents as they directed them to give answers like “YES” or “NO”. Closed questions were chosen as they have an
advantage of eliciting a standardized set of response from all the respondents, thus allowing for easier comparative of data analysis.

**Interview guide**

The information was also gathered using semi structured interviews with the key informants. The key informants included the head of the Women Affairs Department, the councillor, the district administrator and the chief. The researcher produced an interview schedule which guided the conversations with the key informants. The questions asked included their experiences with the women of Chiveso especially on the programmes they were carrying out in the ward as well as the challenges they have encountered in the implementation of the programmes.

**3.4.3 Pretesting**

A pilot study for both the interview guide and the questionnaire was done with ten selected individuals (who were not part of the final sample) mainly to test the efficiency and effectiveness of the survey instruments. The researcher used this in order to evaluate the feasibility, time cost, adverse events as well as effect size of the appropriate sample size before the actual study was carried out. Pretesting was crucial as it assessed whether the questionnaire and the interview guide had been designed in a manner that would elicit the required information from the respondents.

During the pilot study, the researcher noted that most of the respondents understand Shona so this helped the researcher to ask the questions in Shona so the respondents could provide the needed information. The pilot study also helped the researcher to add questions to the questionnaire so as to gather required information.

**3.5 Findings**

**3.5.1 Data presentation**

Data was presented using both the graphical and narrative format. Graphs were drawn using excel and they were explained afterwards.
3.5.2 Data Analysis

The collected was analysed using excel and thematic analysis. Excel was used to come up with graphs that were described afterwards. Thematic analysis was used to give meaning to some of the statements or themes uttered by the respondents.

3.6 Ethical issues

The researcher conformed to standards of conduct of the social work profession while carrying out the research. The ethical issues that the researcher honoured include voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent.

Informed consent

Participants were made aware of the purposes of the research prior to their participation for them to decide whether to take part or not. She also got permission from the participants and from this the researcher had backing from both the respondents and key informants. The researcher sought the permission of responsible authorities (district administrator’ office) before carrying out the study.

Voluntary participation

Respondents were not coerced to take part in the research but rather, the student first asked them if they were willing to partake or not. For those who refused, the researcher respected their decisions so they were not forced. In addition to this, the respondents who opted to stop participating in the midst of the survey had their decision honoured, thus the researcher adhered to research ethics.

Confidentiality

This ethic was greatly honoured by the researcher who kept the information she was provided by the participants as highly confidential as possible. The participants answered their research instruments anonymously as a way of upholding the principle of confidentiality.
3.7 Feasibility

The researcher had ample time to carry out the research hence it was feasible. Besides this the researcher got permission to carry out the research from responsible authorities (the district administrator’s office). The participants were accessible such that the researcher gave questionnaires to the respondents and also had face to face interviews with key informants. With research support services offered by the university supervisor, the researcher managed to accomplish the research project.

3.8 Delimitations of the study

- The study was confined to ward 13 (Chiveso area) in Bindura district and it only targeted a specific age group which is 25 years and above which then cannot be generalised to the entire district or country.

3.9 Limitations of the study

The following were identified limitations to the study:

- Most of the respondents understood Shona but the questionnaire was asked in English. In order to deal with this challenge, the researcher used the native language so that the respondents would provide the required information.
- The choice of the study sample could not have yielded the required results but the researcher tried to incorporate different villages and age groups.

3.10 Summary

The chapter examined the research methodology applied in this research. It outlined the research design (survey), how the sample was extracted from the target population and the research instruments used in data collection like interview guides and questionnaires. Advantages and disadvantages of the research instruments were highlighted and also how the researcher managed to minimize challenges encountered during the process of data collection. Lastly the chapter showed how data was presented and analysed.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data gathered during the survey. The data was discussed and then analysed. This was done to derive meaning from the raw data collected to answer the research questions as outlined in chapter 1. The findings are arranged in line with the research objectives, thus the first part outlines the socioeconomic challenges faced by the women in ward 13, and the second part highlights the causes to the stated challenges. The third part brings to light the coping strategies employed by these women. The last section discusses and the findings thus giving meaning to raw data that was collected during the study.

4.2 Presentation and analysis of findings

4.2.1 Demographic profile of respondents

Age of respondents

Table 2: Distribution of the age of respondents

Respondents were asked about their age. The researcher grouped the respondents as shown in Table 1 with age groups (25 – 34 years) and (35 – 44 years) having 11 respondents each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 – 34 years</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 44 years</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 54 years</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 – 64 years</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and above</td>
<td>20 %</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=52

The other age groups had 10 respondents each thus summing up to a total of 52 respondents. The researcher used this method in order to have equal representation of the age groups. The
socioeconomic challenges faced varied depending on the age groups which is the reason why the researcher stratified the respondents.

**Marital status of respondents**

Respondents were asked about their marital status. The responses are presented in Chart 1.

**Fig 2: Distribution of the marital status of respondents**

![Chart showing marital status distribution](image)

Fig 1 shows that most of the respondents were married with a 60% (N=32) followed by those who were widowed 20% (N=10). The divorced and the singles had the same percentage 10% (N=5) each.

**Education status of respondents**

Respondents were asked about their education status and the responses are as shown in Chart 2.

**Fig 3: Distribution of the level of education of respondents**
19% (N=10) of the respondents never attended school, 50% (N=26) of the respondents attained primary education and 31% (N=16) attained secondary education. Those who fell under the category of those who never attended school were mostly women above the age of 65 as they were affected by the white government’s educational policies. Primary level consisted of respondents who attained standard 3 which they equated to today’s grade three and also those who were born in the post colonial era.

**Sources of income**

Respondents were asked about their sources of income and below are a chart (Chart 3) to show their responses.
From the above diagram, 60% (N=32) of the respondents engage in farming, 20% (N=10) in gardening, 12% (N=6) in piece jobs and the remaining 8% (N=4) reported to be doing other activities not related to the stated sources for instance remittances from spouses and children and also vending.

4.2.2 SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES

4.2.2.1 Social challenges

Respondents were asked to mention the social challenges they were facing. The social challenges faced by women in ward 13 are presented on fig 4. They are expanded afterwards.

Fig 5: Distribution of the social challenges faced by the respondents
Exclusion in decision making

From the information provided in fig 4, women are excluded a lot from decision making boards. 96 % (N=50) of the respondents claimed not to have social positions whilst the remaining 4% (N=2) served lower positions like secretaries to their respective Christian denominations or headmen’s secretaries.

Long working hours

The respondents showed that they had very long working hours especially when compared to their male counterparts. 80% of the respondents reported to have limited mobility due to pressing household chores which include cooking, cleaning, looking after children, the elderly and those who are sick. Those between the ages of 25 to 54 years had quite a large number of those who reported to have limited mobility. Respondents who were above the age of 55 had a less number of respondents with limited mobility.

Domestic disputes

Another social nuisance reported to be faced by the respondents is domestic disputes. 58% (N=30) of the respondents reported that they have been involved in domestic disputes and these were mainly between spouses. Of these 30 respondents, 2 reported to be having domestic disputes on a
daily basis, 3 on a weekly basis, 5 fortnightly, 10 monthly and 10 others often as shown in the table below.

**Table 3: Distribution of involvement of respondents in domestic disputes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involvement in domestic disputes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=30

Those who reported to have disputes daily were married women and the disputes were over child bearing issues. Two of them had no children at all after being in marriage for three years whilst three were not having a boy child. It is most common in patriarchal societies like Chiveso that women are blamed for not having children at all and for not giving birth to a boy child who is believed to carry with him a family name. These men fail to understand the biological view that men are the ones who determine the sex of the child.

Domestic violence has been reported to be high in rural areas and most of the time it goes unreported. The chief echoed that women are vulnerable to this type of abuse and despite the fact that some nongovernmental organisations like PADARE (Men’s forum) put efforts to teach men on the negative implications of abusing women, the issue has not yet come to terms with men.

**Limited access to health care services**

This was another social challenge faced by the respondents. 50% (N=26) of the respondents reported to have limited access to health services and also they travel long distances for instance more than five kilometres to get to their nearest health centre. Villagers from Chidamba, Gwezere, N’andu and Ushongani were amongst those who have to travel for hours to get to Chiveso clinic. Some of them have to board kombis to Manhenga clinic which is in ward 10. The challenge gets worse for pregnant women who have to frequent to health centres for their checkups.
Limited access to information

It was observed that 40% (N=21) of the respondents have limited access to information for example news. The respondents did not have television sets or radios and newspapers could not reach the area. Some of the respondents also reported to be unaware of pieces of legislations that protect women. It is of much concern that women in rural areas, due to the urban bias of technology or other sources of information, they are not aware of the international rural women’s day. This alone is an indication that rural women in ward 13 are lagging behind.

Limited access to education

The researcher grouped the respondents into four categories with regards to their educational level and noted that most of them (50%, N=26) reached the primary level. There were none who attained advanced or tertiary level.

Gender inequality

From the questions asked concerning treatment of the sexes in the ward, 81% (N=42) of the respondents said that they were not treated in the same way as males and the remaining 19% (N=10) reported that women are treated the same as males. This is illustrated below.

Fig 6: Distribution of gender inequality in ward 13
Inequality was shown in the way women were disproportionally represented in the societal structures (not having social positions), the way roles were assigned to a boy or a girl child as well as their low voices women had on the spending of the income earned by the family. This is in line with the UN (2008) research which associated this inequality with the underdevelopment of women.

4.2.2.2 Economic challenges

The diagram below shows the economic challenges faced by women in ward 13 of Bindura district. Each challenge is accorded a percentage which shows the severity of the stated challenge among the respondents. The challenges were explained later on.

**Fig 7: Distribution of the economic challenges faced by respondents**

![Bar chart showing economic challenges faced by respondents]

**Lack of access to productive resources like land**

The respondents reported that they do not have their own pieces of land. 90% (N=47) of the women depend on their husband’s fields where they are given small pieces to grow crops like groundnuts, round nuts and cowpeas. These types of crops require a lot of labour and hence it is the women’s duty to take such type of jobs. Landlessness has left most women in Chiveso dependent on their husbands. It was noted that the land challenge leaves women with almost no or
less decision making powers. The remaining 10% (N=5) owned pieces of land. These were widows who had inherited their husbands’ pieces of land. Half of the widow respondents did not own land as the land was left in the name of the surviving male children or they were send to their parents after the passing away of the husbands.

**Unemployment**

This was reported to be a major economic challenge among the respondents. All of the respondents were not formally employed such that if one is to go by Ristau (2010)’s definition of employment, the researcher noted that there is 100% unemployment rate among the respondents. This shows that the respondents are living in absolute poverty which is less than $1 a day. Todaro and Smith (2011) therefore argue that women make up the substantial majority of the world’s poor. They go on say that if the lives of the inhabitants of the poorest communities throughout the developing world were to be compared, it would be discovered that virtually everywhere, women and children experience the harshest deprivation.

**Lack of access to services offered by financial institutions**

100% (N=52) of the respondents had no access to services such as loans and credits. This lack is exacerbated by their lack of immovable assets which they can use as collateral security in an endeavour to get loans or credits from banks (70% (N=36) of the respondents). Some of the respondents (30%, N=16) highlighted that they do not have the knowhow when it comes to application of loans which is the reason why they fail to go and seek the services offered. Although there is an argument that women are “risk averse” or that they have no idea on the procedure of the application of loans and credits, it should be kept in mind that they do not own productive resources such as cattle, goats or even houses and land to use as collateral security. This leaves them dependent on those who own the means of production (men), a perspective from the Marxist feminism.

**Failure to secure children’s school fees**

70% (N=36) of the respondents reported to have challenges in sending their children to school. The challenges brought to table included lack of money, disputes between spouses and also refusal by some of the children to go to school. Lack of money to send children to school emanated from
the fact that these women are unemployed and also they have no access to productive resources that can generate income. Disputes between spouses especially those whose husbands were at work, was a contributory factor to the difficulties the women face in sending children to school. One respondent said “murume wangu anongoti ndizvonere nekuti vana ndevangu saka kana akasandipa mari, vana vanobva varega kuenda kuchikoro,” meaning my husband refuses to give me school fees for the children; he says I should take care of their educational requirements as they are mine. After such disputes, the girl child is affected the most as she would have lost the empowerment source (education) and this will affect them later in life as they will lack the capacity to make informed decisions.

4.2.3 Factors contributing to the socioeconomic challenges

Cultural practices

The respondents attributed some of the challenges they face to culture. Culture plays an important role in shaping human beings thus 80% of the respondents reported to have unequal treatment with men due to the patriarchal nature of their society which treats men as first class citizens. The ILO (2012) refers culture as the invisible but powerful facet of social institutions that disempower one sex above the other. It includes traditions, customs and social norms that govern the intricate workings of rural societies and it acts as a constraint on women’s activities and restricts their ability to compete on an even footing with men. The empowerment of women is close to impossible if cultural practices that value men more than women still persist. The respondents reported that some of the social positions were reserved for men whilst others said that their husbands denied them the opportunity to take part in other societal positions like chairperson, secretary and others. The women alluded that males do not want their wives to take part in such position as they are time consuming- they exempt women from taking household chores which they say to be the reason why women were created.

The remaining 20% reported that there was equality with regards to how the sexes are treated in society. Oyeronke (2010) argues women subordination can be traced back to our homes, for example in illiterate families, girls are given a second class citizen status which builds in them the idea that they should be lower than boys in all sectors of life whether education, nourishment or lifestyle. This robs the girls’ self esteem and when one has a low esteem, Sachs (2005) views this.
as underdevelopment. Certain negative cultural practices and norms continue to constrain women’s enjoyment of rights such as freedom.

**Lack of opportunities**

The fact that women in ward 13 are not on an equal footing with men is contributing much to the above mentioned socioeconomic challenges. Oyeronke (2010) argues that denying women opportunities in all spheres of life means that they develop low self esteem and as a result they will have a mentality that they are second class citizens who cannot be treated in the same manner as men.

**Colonial imbalances**

It was noted from the study that these had an impact on most rural women. Illiteracy levels are high in ward 13 especially for those who are above the age of 65 years. Of the 19 % (N=10) who reported that they have never been to school, 15 % (N=8) attributed this to unfair educational system during the colonial era which did not recognise the blacks especially girls. 4 % (N=2) of the respondents attributed their failure to go to school to parental failure to pay their school fees as well as illness. It was also noted that the same is being transferred to the respondents’ children as most parents reported that they are unable to send their children to school because of lack of money. This will therefore result in what the Ministry Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare (1997) termed intergenerational poverty, denoting that poverty experiences of parents are being transferred to their children.

**4.2.4.1 Coping strategies (economic)**

Women in Chiveso engage in the following activities as a way of dealing with the socioeconomic challenges highlighted earlier on. The following diagram shows the coping strategies as well as the percentage of people who engage in each of them.
Agriculture (Zero tillage)

Women in ward 13, as highlighted earlier on, lack access to productive resources such as land and livestock thus they have difficulties in growing crops to feed their families. They therefore engage in what they call *chibhakera* (zero tillage) or *maricho* (piece jobs in other villagers’ farms). 58% (N=30) of the respondents reported to engage in this activity. Zero tillage is when they use hoes to grow crops as they do not have ploughs or cattle to do the job for them. This form of growing crops has been discredited for not creating a conducive environment for the crops to root deep into the ground. The ZIMVAC (2013) report attributed poor harvests in rural areas to this method of farming.

Vending

This has come to the rescue of some women in ward 13 as 20% (N=10) of them engage in selling items like second hand clothes and kitchen utensils. They reported to bulk buy these in Harare,
Bindura and sometimes South Africa. Some of the respondents barter trade the goods with maize and other crops.

**Remittances**

From the study, it was noted that 6% (N=3) of the respondents survive on remittances from their husbands or children. The women who received remittances from children were those above the age of 55 whilst those who received remittances from their husbands were between 25 and 34 years of age.

**Selling fruits**

The area receives adequate rainfall depending on the rainfall pattern of the year and as a result, indigenous and exotic fruits grow to a reasonable quantity. Wild fruits are mostly in the form of Mazhanje and they ripe in between November and April. Through her participation in Harmonised Social Cash Transfer (a programme designed by the government through the Department of Social Services to assist the disadvantaged), the researcher observed that the wild fruit (mazhanje) has come to the rescue of most of the respondents as it is consumed or sold to bring income in the households. A significant number of 20 respondents (38%) reported to sell the fruit in order to supplement their main source of income.

**Other**

Besides the stated activities, the women in ward 13 also engage in other activities such as brick formation, poultry and piggery in order to survive the stated socioeconomic challenges. The respondents said that activities like brick formation had long term negative effects on the women’s health as these are tiresome.

4.2.4.2 **Coping strategies (social)**

**Domestic disputes**

This was amongst the most reported challenges faced by women in Chiveso. Married women had the most reports of domestic violence as compared to their single and widowed counterparts. As a way to cope with this challenge, women engage other elderly relatives, chiefs/sabhukus or church leaders to solve their problems. Those who engaged the elderly relatives in the form of aunts and
uncle reported that it was not an effective strategy as the outcomes were biased towards the males. A similar research carried out by Mungwini (2007) indicated that in cases that involve domestic misunderstandings between men and women in the villages, women stand very little chance of obtaining a favourable ruling because of the bias and geriatric composition of the council of elders. The women said that the ruling of most cases involving elderly relatives is normally for women to submit to their husbands. Mothers who were approached by their abused children were said to echo the words “aah ndizvo zvinoita imba mwanangu shingirira zvichanaka,” meaning that domestic violence or disputes are common in marriages but what you need to do is keeping the grip as she was going to notice some positive changes as time progressed.

Another strategy employed by the women was the involvement of traditional chiefs or village heads. This strategy is more or less the same as the one mentioned earlier. The chief highlighted that ruling/sentence depended on the situation. He said that sometimes it would be the women who would have provoked the men so the ruling would be in favour of men but at times it would be the men so the ruling would be in favour of the women. Mungwini id questioned the traditional way of solving domestic misunderstandings on the basis of the composition of the institutions. She argued that the so called “intelligent males” make up the council of traditional courts and women are only involved when they are victims, offenders or witnesses. This is true of most traditional courts in Zimbabwe. There are rare cases when a female chief is instated otherwise chieftainships go through the males’ names.

Other women consult the advice of church leaders as a way to solve their domestic disputes. Those women who reported to be utilising this strategy saw it beneficial as they said these elders preach the word of God which has the power to reprimand their male counterparts. The stated method is however subject to debate as the Functionalist theory views religion as the opium of the oppressed.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 Social challenges

From the research findings, one of the social challenges that are being faced by women in ward 13 is exclusion in decision making process. It has been noted that 96 % of women do not have social
positions. The social positions include, among other things, a stake in the tradition structures such as chieftainship and village heading. These positions are reserved for men and of all the nine villages in the ward, there are no female village heads yet the sabhukus (village heads) are the ones responsible for land distribution and also oversee the activities of the village. Mungwini (2007) argues that traditional institutions are given a lot of power in Zimbabwe and it is from these institutions that women oppression emanates. There is a great discrepancy from what the constitution of Zimbabwe outlines and what is on the ground especially with regards to rural areas like Chiveso. Section 17 of the constitution echoes that the state must promote full participation of women in all Zimbabwean society on the basis of equality with men but in practice this is not done.

Limited mobility is another social challenge women in ward 13 are facing. Lack of investment in time and labour-saving technologies for women has left women liable to time and mobility constraints. This erodes their ability to participate in development activities outside the homestead. This is similar to the research carried out by European Commission in 2011 which stated that rural women generally have more roles and responsibilities and work long hours than men. The commission highlighted that in the domestic sphere, rural women are household managers and family carers, in the community, they maintain social and cultural services, predominantly on a voluntary basis; and in the economy, if they are not formally engaged as employees or entrepreneurs, they are often active in family businesses and farms.

Domestic disputes were reported as another social challenge faced by the respondents. Disputes were in different categories thus those between spouses, others between members of the extended family and those between siblings. Disputes between spouses mainly revolved around child bearing, leadership, extra marital affairs and control over the available resources among others. On child bearing, the respondents stated that males were the ones who would decide on when to have a child no matter how prepared the woman is. This led to misunderstandings between spouses thus resulting in fights or scolds. Giving birth to girl children only, was also another factor reported to be contributing to disputes between spouses. In marriages, men were reported to value the boy child such that if the women failed to provide one, they were sent to their matrimonial homes or the men would resort to extra marital affairs “in search for a boy child.” One respondent said that her husband ran away from home and was staying with his “small house” because the first wife
had failed to give birth to a boy child. The men therefore failed to honour the biological view that men are the ones who determine a child’s sex. This is in line with the research carried out by Mungwini (2007) when she says that in most of the families that fail to have a boy child; women are the victims or the centre of the blame.

Disputes with regards to leadership and control over available resources were less as compared to those of child bearing and extra marital affairs. These disputes were high among the respondents aged between 24 and 44 and they were married. The husbands or males were reported to want to control all the means of production such as land and livestock while the women wanted also to table their views with regards to how these were to be exploited. This was reported to result in conflicts between the sexes as women also felt that their views were supposed to be taken into consideration. Those above the age of 45 reported that men are the ones who make most of the decisions both in the family setup and in the society at large. There is a relationship between age and decision making in that the older women were socialised in a way that they should respect their husbands and that males were heads of the family who should not be questioned on the decisions they make. Culture therefore is a social institution that is there to disempower one sex (female) whilst empowering another one (male).

Lack of access to health services is high in most rural areas of the country including Chiveso. 50% (N=26) of the respondents reported not to get adequate medication when they visit their nearest health centre. This relates to the observations made during evaluation process of the MDG number 5 where it was noted that the country’s health sector has been characterized by deterioration in health infrastructure, drug shortages, and a lack of health professionals (MDG 2012 Report). Women therefore, bear the brunt of a poor health delivery system and because of limited incomes; they have limited access to services. Women are also the ones who provide care for sick family members in home based care programmes and this was said to affect their ability to participate effectively in their political and economic lives, further cementing them in poverty.

The white community educational system left a landmark in most Zimbabwean societies including ward 13 of Bindura district. Respondents, mostly those above the age of 65, highlighted that they missed opportunities to education due to the oppressive nature of the system that existed before independence. Although the government introduced adult schools soon after independence, most of the affected did not benefit from the scheme as during the time most of the blacks in rural areas
did not value education. One of the participant responded “hatina kumboita hanya nechirongwa chacho nekuti tanga tisingaone kukosha kwekudzidza,” meaning that they never took the adult lessons too seriously as they saw no importance of education.

4.3.2 Economic challenges

**Inequitable access to land and other productive resources**

From the research findings women represent the most farm labourers but with limited access to the land they work on. Usually land in Zimbabwean rural areas is distributed to male residents as they are viewed as the breadwinners. No matter how clearly the constitution of Zimbabwe states that all sexes must have equitable access to productive resources such as land, the traditional view is still dominating most rural societies in Zimbabwe including ward 13. Females or to be more specific girls, are not given land as they are said to get married. When women are married, the decisions on what to plant for that season as well as the monetary resources to be spent are all men’s decisions to make. This leaves women with no option but to dance according to the tune of the so called “land owners.” The findings of this study are similar to those by the ILO (2012).

**Lack of access to services offered by financial institutions**

From the responses of the participants, the researcher noted that all of them had no bank accounts and also they could not access loans or credits as they lacked collateral security 100% N=(52). As men control productive resources such as land, draught animals and equipment, women control resources relating to their reproductive such as kitchen ware. The resources that men own have a market value and can be used as collateral security in loan applications thus giving them an upper hand whilst those owned by women cannot be used as collateral security. A woman cannot approach a financial institution to apply for a $5000 loan using pots, plates or dishes as collateral security which therefore means women are a looked down upon sex.

**Lack of access to markets**

Ward 13 is a communal area which relies mostly on farming and gardening. The women produce reasonable amounts of products which they at times need to sell in order to get farming inputs and other commodities. The major challenge they reported to be facing was unavailability of markets. From the research findings, 60% (N=32) of the women either go to Bindura town or Harare to sell
their farm and garden produce. These markets are a long distance to travel to especially when selling perishables. In Bindura town for instance, the respondents said that they are only supposed to be selling their products from 0600hrs to 1100hrs and from there it will be “retailers’” turn to sell till unset. The “retailers” are said not to buy the vegetables for resale during the designated time for farmers but wait for them to be chased out of the musika (vegetable market) where they then sell the products at a very cheap price. One respondent said “kanzuru yeBindura haisi kutibatsira nekuti vanotipa nguva shoma yekutengesa zvirimwa asi maretailer haauyi kuzotenga. Vanongomirira paya panenge pakubuditswa murimi panze vouya kuzotenga nemitengo yekaderera zvoita kuti ini wacho ndingovapa sezvo ndingenge ndisingadi kubhadhara mari yetransport yekudzokera nezvirimwa.” By this, the respondent meant that the Bindura municipality is not taking corrective measures to protect the farmers who usually fall victims of the retailers’ cunning methods in business. On average the farmers produce about 50 bundles of vegetables per week which they transport for $8 and normally sold at $1 for 4 bundles. The average profit for these farmers is $4 to $5 which is far way below the poverty datum line.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter presented the research findings and gave meaning to the data that was gathered during the survey through the administered questionnaires and interview guides. The use of tables, graphs and pie charts helped in understanding the diverse as well as the intensity of the socioeconomic challenges face by the study population. The discussion that proceeded after the research finding helped in giving meaning to the chats that were used to present data.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights what the research intended to find out and how this was achieved. Firstly the chapter summarises chapters 1 to 4 and then draws conclusions based on findings. Conclusions that were drawn from the research findings are also included in the chapter. Lastly the chapter gives some recommendations on what can be done to improve the living standards of women in ward 13 of Bindura district.

5.2 Summary

Chapter 1 presented the aim and objectives of the study which were the main guides during data collection. The aim of the project was a summary of the objectives and these were to identify socioeconomic challenges faced by women in Chiveso, examine the factors contributing to these socioeconomic challenges as well as to assess coping strategies employed by these women. The second chapter identified literature relating to the study and identified gaps that existed in the researches. Other researches that were carried out in Zimbabwe, for instance, Mungwini (2007), Made (2012) ZIMVAC (2012 and 2013) and Zhangazha (2014) were at national level and there was no specific mention to socioeconomic challenges faced by women at ward level. The study therefore came as a fit in to this gap. With a well defined methodology, it was easy to gather data to answer the research questions raised in the first chapter. Survey was the research design employed to gather information from 52 respondents (aged 25 and above) and four key informants. Chapter 4 presented, discussed and analysed the research findings. The research managed to identify the socioeconomic challenges faced by women in ward 13 which include exclusion in decision making, lack of access to information, lack of access to health services, high adult illiteracy, lack of access to land, markets, employment opportunities and services offered by financial institutions. These socioeconomic challenges were emanating from cultural practices that suppress women, unequal representation of women in decision making and colonial imbalances.
5.3 Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn after discussion and analysis of data findings in chapter 4:

5.3.1 Women are excluded in decision making

It was noted that regardless of the women in ward 13 making up to 51% of the total population of the ward, they are less represented. Social positions are dominated by men and in some of the cases; it is men who deny their wives the opportunity to take positions in the society.

5.3.2 Women lack access to information

The research has concluded that women lack access to information. Most of the women in the ward have no access to news or legislations that protect women from oppressive cultural practices as well as from their abusive husbands.

5.3.3 Women lack access to health services

It has been figured out that women in ward 13 have limited access to health services as most of them have to travel for long distances (more than 5 kilometres) to access health care services. Pregnant women are at a more disadvantaged state as they have to frequently visit Chiveso clinic which is the only health centre available to them.

5.3.4 Adult illiteracy is high among women

Most of the adult women in ward 13 (especially those above the age of 55) cannot read and write as most of them were affected by the educational system that existed during the colonial era which was more favourable to the white settlers. Girls also drop out of school more than men which then affect them even at adulthood.

5.3.5 Women have no access to land

Women represent the disproportionate percentage of people without access to land. They offer 90% of labour needed in agriculture but to the detriment, they are the least number of land owners.

5.3.6 Women have no access to services offered by financial institutions
Lack of collateral security and ignorance are the most factors affecting women’s access to services offered by financial institutions such as loans and credits.

5.3.7 Women have no access to markets

Women in ward 13 are facing difficulties in selling their farm and garden produce and when they go to markets in town (Harare and Bindura) they find conditions put forward by the responsible authorities not favourable. No matter how they try to make ends meet, this is shattered by the fact that they have nowhere to sell their produce.

5.3.8 Women lack opportunities to employment

Employment opportunities in ward 13 are very slim especially for women. Women are either denied the opportunity to go to work by their husbands or they too many roles to perform at home thus they are left with no time to do other income generating activities outside the home setting.

5.3.9 Poverty is high among rural women

Poverty is high among women in this ward and for most households, it manifest itself as absolute poverty. Many women live on less than $1 a day thus the women in ward 13 are said to be living in absolute poverty.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Inclusion of women in decision making

From the research findings, it was noted that women are still excluded in decision making. This is supported by high responses by women of not having social positions. There is need to include women at all levels of decision making as outlined in the constitution of Zimbabwe. Traditional institutions such as courts should include women in their councils so that women can feel part and parcel of all societal activities.

5.4.2 Improve women’s access to information

One author said that the only way to empower an individual is through knowledge. This is the only resource that one cannot be robbed of. Improving women’s access to information is a key weapon to empowering them. From the research, it was noted that quite a number of women in the ward
are unaware of the pieces of legislation that protect them from the verge of oppressive cultural practices as well as other social ills. Awareness campaigns can be carried out in communities on pieces of legislations that protect women so that women know how tackle issues that bother them.

5.4.3 Improve women’s access to health services

There is need to improve rural women’s access to health services through adequate staffing of health centres that are available in the ward. Medication is scarce at the health centre so it is of more importance to share the medicines available equitably. Just like what the MDG5 says, there is need to improve maternal health in ward 13 as pregnant women reported that they go to Bindura hospital for their first pregnancies because this is where they can be attended to in a better way.

5.4.4 Improve women’s access to education

Women need to be awarded another chance in education. Adult literacy is low in the ward especially on the feminine side as traditionally women were not afforded the same opportunity to go to school as boy. It is not too late to introduce an adult school in the ward so that it caters for the education of older women.

It was also noted that girls have a large number of school dropouts and this is because in rural areas, quite a number of people have not realised the importance of education in their lives. Children on the other hand learn from their parents so if the adult women are not taught the importance of education, they are more likely to follow suit thus the ward will end up having intergenerational poverty.

5.4.5 Provision of land to women

Land is a valuable resource especially in rural areas like Chiveso where residents depend much on it for survival. There is therefore need for equitable access to land for development to take place in ward 13. Land is distributed only to males who decide on the acreage as well as the type of crop to be grown. Women should have land rights as well as the right to decide on how the income obtained from that land should be used.
5.4.6 Income generating activities

Respondents said that they need to engage in income generating activities such as poultry, piggery and soup making. These activities require less manual labour as compared to brick formation which some of the women engage into for survival. Activities such as brick layering have a negative impact on women as their biological makeup is different than that of men.

5.4.7 Improved access to markets

Women’s improved access to markets is another way of improving the living standards of women in ward 13. It will be more beneficial if a central marketing place is established near the farmers so as to reduce transport costs for farmers and also to avoid other inconveniences caused by travelling to Harare or to Bindura.

5.5 Summary

This is a conclusive chapter. Conclusions were drawn from the research findings that were presented in the previous chapter. Recommendations were also made as responses to the study findings.
References


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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR RESPONDENT

Questionnaire No…………………………

INTRODUCTION AND CONSENT FORM

My name is Abigail Mufundirwa a third year Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education. I am carrying out an academic research on the socio-economic challenges faced by rural women of Chiveso area (Ward 13). I would like to seek your consent to participate in this study. The information given will be treated as confidential and used for academic purposes only. If you agree, sign below using a false signature of pseudonym.

Signature.................................  Date.................................

INSTRUCTION

Tick or write in the appropriate box or spaces below where applicable.

SECTION A: RESPONDENT’S PROFILE

1. Age group

25-34 years □  35-44years □  45-54years □  55-64years □  65 years and above □

2. Marital status

Single □  Married □  Widowed □  Divorced □  Other □

3. Level of education

Never been to school □  primary □  secondary □  tertiary □

SECTION B: SOCIAL CHALLENGES

NB. Tick where appropriate.

YES  NO

1) If you are married, was lobola paid?  □   □
2) **Do you have?**
   a) Any social position/status
   b) Access to information (e.g. News)
   c) Anywhere you cannot go because of household chores
   d) Any challenges in sending your children to school

3) If YES, please list the challenges you face in sending the children to school:

   ............................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................

4) Do you distinguish roles according to sex? .................

5) Which roles do you assign to a girl or a boy child?

   **BOY**....................................................................................................................
   **GIRL**....................................................................................................................

6) How long is the distance between your nearest health centre and your home? .......................

   YES NO SOMETIMES

7) Do you receive the needed treatment at nearest health centre?  

8) How often have you been involved in domestic disputes? Daily weekly monthly other

   fortnightly

9) What were the reasons for these domestic disputes? ............................................................

   Please list any other social challenges that women in this ward are facing.

   ............................................................................................................................
   ............................................................................................................................

**SECTION C: ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

   YES NO
10) Do you own land?

11) What is your main source of income? .................................................................?

12) What else do you do to supplement your main source of income? .........................

13) Who makes the decision on the spending of the income you get? .........................

14) Why are you not on social cash transfer? .............................................................

15) If you are married, is your husband at home or away? ...........................................

16) Males dominate in decision making at home and in the community at large. Do you agree?
Agree ☐ strongly agree ☐ disagree ☐ strongly disagree ☐

17) State the livestock you own........................................................................................

18) Do you have a bank account? ..........................................................

19) If YES, do you have access to loans or credits? .....................................................

20) If NO, what are the challenges you are facing in accessing those loans? ............... 
........................................................................................................................................

21) Any other issues..........................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

SECTION C: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES

22) If you do not have any social position, what is the reason(s) behind this? .................
........................................................................................................................................

23) Are women and men treated the same in your society? .........................

24) If NO, could this be the reason why women are always lagging behind in development? ........................

25) Are you aware of any pieces of legislation on women’s rights? .............................
26) If YES, state the pieces of legislation you are aware of.........................................................

27) Any other issues.......................................................................................................................... 

SECTION D: COPING STRATEGIES

28) How are you coping with the challenges you face in agriculture?.................................................. 

29) Where do you get funds to sent your children to school?............................................................ 

30) For those who are married, if you are faced with challenges in your marriages, where do you get help?................................................................................................................................. 

31) How effective are the services provided by those you approach?.................................................. 

32) What do you think should be done to improve the standards of living of women in this ward?.................................................................................................................................................. 

33) Any other issues.......................................................................................................................... 

Thank you.
APPENDIX 11: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

Introduction and consent form

My name is Abigail Mufundirwa a third year Social Work student at Bindura University of Science Education. I am carrying out an academic research on the socio-economic challenges faced by rural women of Chiveso area (Ward 13). I would like to seek your consent to participate in this study. The information given will be treated as highly confidential as possible and will be used for academic purposes only. If you agree, sign below using a false signature of pseudonym.

Signature.......................................... Date........................................

Name of respondent.................................................................

Position........................................................................................

Experience in gender....................................................................

SECTION A: SOCIAL CHALLENGES

1. Can you comment on the challenges that women in ward 13 are facing in terms of
   (a) access to education...........................................................................................................

   ................................................................................................................................................

   (b) access to health services............................................................................................... 

   ................................................................................................................................................

2. What do you think are the reasons why women do not like to take leading positions within their societies?

   ................................................................................................................................................

3. Do you think cultural beliefs have anything to do with women lagging behind in terms of development and how?

   ................................................................................................................................................

   ................................................................................................................................................
4. What is your view on the concept that women should submit to their husbands?

5. Do you carry out awareness campaigns on women’s rights and protection in this ward and if yes, how do both men and women respond to this?

6. Can you comment on cases of domestic violence within this ward?

7. What strategies do these women employ to improve their social life?

8. How effective are the strategies used by these women?

9. What are the other social challenges being faced by women in ward 13?

10. What do you think should be done to deal with the social challenges that rural women are facing?

SECTION B: ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

11. Have you ever faced challenges in implementing programmes in ward 13 and if yes, what are the challenges?

12. Are there any efforts being made towards women’s economic empowerment?

13. Can you comment on the way land is distributed within the ward between males and females?

14. What other economic challenges are these women facing?
SECTION C: COPING STRATEGIES

15. What strategies do these women employ to improve their social life?

16. How do women cope in the area of agriculture?

17. What other activities do women in ward 13 do to improve their economic life?

18. How effective are the strategies employed by these women?

19. In your opinion, how best can these women be assisted economically?

20. Any other issues that you feel we can discuss?

Thank you.