

**THE RURAL WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY CROP FARMING AND RURAL WOMEN
LIVELIHOODS IN LESOTHO: THE CASE OF MAFETENG**

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Certification

This is to certify that Thaba-Bosiu Ernest Chabeli's master's dissertation, of student number 200905053, has been fully read, and is in compliance with National University of Lesotho's requirements for the award of an MA in Development Studies, and has been approved to do so by the department of development studies, faculty of humanities, and institution.

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Date _____

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late uncle Mr. Lehlohonolo Mpoli, who passed away in a car accident while attending the graduation ceremony for his Master's degree, and to my wife Mrs 'Manthabane Nthabane for her unending support. I have triumphed. Also, I want to encourage my children, Boitumelo Chabeli and Boiketlo Chabeli, to draw inspiration from this work as they pursue their own academic ambitions.

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“Ntate Lerato la hao, le lekakang le ntsithabetsa kutlo,

Ke le nhlollang,

Le ntletse pelo le khaphatsehile

Leme la ka le mpa le rarehile, ke mang a ka bolelang lerato le hlollang,

Rato la Molimo le bolokang.”

(Sefela sa Sione: **345**)

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the contribution of Rural Women's Assembly (RWA) Crop Farming and Rural Women Livelihoods in Lesotho. It highlights the Rural Women's Assembly crop farming activities and how these activities improve the member's household livelihoods security. The objectives were to investigate the extent to which crops selected for crop farming support improvements in food and nutrition security for all household members of the assembly; to establish accessibility of land to rural women members of the assembly; and to investigate the impact of crop farming on rural women household members livelihood security. The qualitative methods were utilised in this study in collection and analysis of data, and a case study approach was used in three villages under study in Koti-Sephola community council. The forty-five households were utilised from women who were the members of RWA. To obtain the information interviews and focus groups were carried out and the main findings are: overtime, women have dominated crop farming in Thabana- Morena to prevent poverty and therefore their participation improves their food security; Rural Women's Farming crop production sustains rural women livelihoods at household level. However, these women still face challenges of lack of credit, climate variability, lack of roads and extensive training on crop farming. The study therefore recommends that women should have adequate access to productive resources and government support in order to increase crop farming amongst women in rural areas as livelihood strategy and the extension officers should train these women in marketing skills so that they should know which crops to grow depending on the market.

Key words: rural women, crop farming, sustainable livelihoods, food security, Rural Women's Assembly, land and rural.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

RWA	Rural Women's Assembly
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
CF	Crop Farming
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers the background to the study with special focus on the community-based development projects globally, in Africa and Lesotho. The statement of the problem is also covered, the significance of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, hypothesis, and assumptions of the study, moreover, the delimitations of the study, definitions of the important terms, and finally the summary of the chapter.

1.1 BCACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Community-based development initiatives in rural regions have a long history and are very important initiatives that have had a significant impact on rural residents' quality of life. The process of rural change is positively impacted by community-based development initiatives through increased income, better health, increased nutrition literacy among the populace, microfinance, education, sustainable agriculture, additionally, access to sanitation amenities and clean water (Palmer, 2007).

In Africa, community-based development projects have been used to tackle fragility, finding innovative ways to empower communities and improve lives in remote areas (World Bank, 2015; Motherway, 2006). The benefits of community-based development projects are significant. Its express objective is to shift the distribution of power in a way that provides the underprivileged more agency and a voice, giving them more say over development aid. The ability of the populace to participate in self-initiated development activities, the targeting of anti-poverty initiatives, the responsiveness of the government, and the supply of public goods and services are all expected to improve as a result. It will also increase the responsiveness of development funds allocated to meet their needs (Mansur, 2004).

Community-based development projects in Lesotho focus on capacity building and technical assistance to government institutions, orphans and vulnerable children (Management Sciences for Health, 2013). For instance, we have “Grow” in the district of Mokhotlong that offers psychosocial support; protection and legal aid services; food security and nutrition by increasing and diversifying the food production capacity of at least five hundred households (Management

Sciences for Health, 2013). However, very few community-based development projects have given much attention to the empowerment of rural women livelihoods, thus the researcher has an interest to investigate the contribution of The Rural Women's Assembly crop farming on rural women livelihoods as a community-based organization.

Ever since the 2007 World Food Crisis things became more difficult for women to survive especially women who were farmers. In Lesotho, most women farmers became vulnerable to effects of drought and floods limiting their agricultural output and adversely affecting their standard of living (Mamello, 2021). Rantso (2019), in his study indicates that most women in farming are widows and their primary source of income is agriculture.

Rural Women's Assembly represent women in a broad spectrum- small-scale farmers, labourers in the agriculture sector, peasants, destitute landless women, fishermen, indigenous women, caretakers, handicapped people, and international traders and Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender and Inter-sex Organisation (LGBTIO) of Southern Africa, young and old. Rural Women's Assembly has been working in Lesotho in Mafeteng for a period of five years now.

After the declaration of the state of emergency on 22 December 2016 because of the drought that was induced by the El Nino, humanitarian activities were carried out to sustain resilience in Lesotho (Mokati, 2022). The most affected areas by drought were Mohale's Hoek district, Mafeteng district and Quthing. The drought brought socio-economic problems like poor harvest, rising food prices and water scarcity. Notably this drought increased the burden upon women worse than when Basotho men were retrenched from South African mines in the 1990s (Boeta, 2018), as more men had to migrate back to South Africa again to seek for other options of livelihood and women had to play a leading role in farming despite not owning the land.

With this background, the research aims to explore the contributions of Rural Women's Assembly Crop farming on the livelihoods of rural women in Lesotho.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rural Women's Assembly in Lesotho has always played a significant role in food production. Rural women in Thabana-morena had embarked on the journey of crop farming for more than five years now ever since 2017. Despite their prowess in farming, food insecurity is still high in Thabana-Morena.

In Lesotho about three hundred and fifty thousand people are facing serious food insecurity and it is projected that between October 2019 and March 2020 about thirty percent of the people will be affected by food security. In the year 2021 Lesotho has seen decreasing food security as the number of food insecure households has been escalating and about three hundred and forty-nine thousand people in rural areas are already severely feeling the consequences of food insecurity in six districts of Lesotho including the district of Mafeteng (IPC Lesotho, 2019). This implies that if no action is carried out immediately to act against food insecurity, more than fifty percent of rural population in Lesotho will be facing acute food insecurity and implicating more the lives of women in rural areas of Lesotho.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to investigate the contribution of the Rural Women's Assembly Crop farming on rural women member's livelihoods- in Lesotho.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. to investigate the extent to which crops selected for crop farming support and improve food and nutrition security for household members of the assembly.
2. to assess accessibility of land to rural women members of the assembly; and
3. to investigate the impact of crop farming on rural women household members livelihood security.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Following are corresponding research questions for the study:

1. To what extent do the crops select for crop farming support improvements in food and nutrition security for all household members?
2. How accessible is land for agriculture to rural women assembly members?
3. What is the impact of crop farming on rural women household livelihood security?

1.6 HYPOTHESIS

Null: Rural Women's Assembly Crop Farming does not improve rural women livelihoods.

Alternative: Rural women's Assembly Crop Farming improves rural women's livelihoods.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Researchers such as Matsie (2009) and Rantso and Seboka (2019) indicate that women participate in agriculture while their husbands are employed in towns but are still vulnerable to food insecurity. Thus, this study will help in enabling good interventions to give to women food sovereignty in the rural areas of Mafeteng. Secondly, the study will be an eye opener to policy developers that sustaining women livelihoods in rural areas must be tagged with upholding good gender relations in households for women to be fully empowered. Lastly, the study will help in sharpening strategies to sustain rural women livelihoods holistically and that being pivotal to non-government organisations which are the ones mostly engaged in the betterment of women's lives.

1.8 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

Koti-Sephola community council has a majority of elder females over 60 years of age. Many women in this area are affected by migration as their men left to “*litotoma*”-illegal mining and women are left with agricultural production. The worst burden is that this area is exposed much to drought and agricultural production is facing challenges as many do not have the capacities to respond to drought shocks.

1.9 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study focused only at Makoabating community council in Mafeteng district, and one hundred women will be used as the population. However, it could have been good to include other neighbouring community councils where Rural Women's Assembly touches people's lives as this would enable comparing results and merge general concluding statements.

1.10 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Livelihood is all activities conducted in order to meet basic needs in life.

Crop farming is the practice of growing plants for human consumption, animal feed, or other industrial purposes.

Rural Women are formed in their positions as farmers, producers, investors, providers of care, and consumers in a number of ways and to different degrees. They are the driving forces of economic and social development and environmental protection. (United Nations, 2012).

Rural is any population, housing or territory not in an urban area or people who live in places with small populations with population density less than thousand per square meters.

1.11 SUMMARY

This chapter included the history of the study, the problem statement, the study's goals, the research questions that fit those objectives, the study's importance, and the theoretical frameworks that supported the subject of the study, and the research methodology that includes of research design, data collection, delimitations, assumptions of the study and data analysis. Next chapter discusses related literature to contextualize the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines key ideas for the research as well as academic literature on women's involvement in crop farming. It further discusses the participation of rural women in community-based projects.

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework on "livelihoods assets" and the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) serve as the foundation for this study. For this study, the SLF and the idea of livelihood assets are applicable for two key reasons. Sen, Nussbaum, and Moser's work comes first. For instance, Sen and Nussbaum's research on poverty in the middle of the 1980s had led to a focus on capacities, which were operationalized as assets, opening the door for the livelihood's strategy. (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1992). Moser (1998) discussed the asset-based strategy from the standpoint of sustainable livelihoods as "identifying what the poor have, rather than what they do not have". The second factor is the type of issue being investigated and the area in which it is contained. For instance, assets-generation literature claims that the sustainable livelihood strategy was first used in rural developing nations (Moser & Dani, 2008). As a result, the appropriateness of SLF and the associated idea of "livelihood asset" for this study is being supported by both its use in developing nations and the extreme poverty that exists in those countries' rural areas, including rural Mafeteng (Lesotho) chosen as a study area.

SLF demonstrates that the quantity of livelihood resources that underprivileged individuals may access, acquire, or own determines the attainment of favourable livelihood outcomes, such as food security. The study uses "livelihood assets" as its conceptual framework in order to provide a framework for experimentally establishing an understanding of poverty and underdevelopment from the viewpoint of underprivileged women in developing nations, especially the community-based development projects in rural areas such as Mafeteng in Lesotho. The five main assets—social capital, human capital, physical capital, natural capital, and financial capital—combine to form the conceptual foundation for the study's "livelihood assets." Scoones (1998), explains that the effective use of these five resources is crucial for comprehending the workings and dynamics

of projects focused on people, such as community-based development initiatives that promote socioeconomic aspects of eradicating poverty and empowering individuals, particularly rural women. It will also help in understanding how disadvantaged rural women organized in community-based development initiatives could combine these five resources to help or impede their attempts to achieve their targeted livelihood goals (Petersen, 2010). Chambers & Conway, (1992), stress that the livelihood framework demonstrates that people's access to resources they need to make a living depending on how they set up their groupings that are dedicated to the activities they engage in. It is vital for the chapter to quickly summarize each asset and explain how its application serves as a foundation for the study in order to position each asset in both the study's context and primary purpose.

Literature contends that the first component of human capital—skills, knowledge, labor capacity, and good health—are necessary for people to achieve their intended livelihood outcomes (Petersen, 2010). Health state affects people's ability to work, and knowledge and competence influence the benefits of their labour. The chapter makes the case that more attention should be paid to the numerous trainings and skills obtained before and during group involvement by rural women, who in this study are members of the Rural Women's Assembly in a rural context. This is done to contextualize the first asset on human capital. Applying this resource allows the study to ascertain how primary activities and associated decision-making processes can be people-centered and hence responsive to the domestic needs and issues through practice and management of community-based development projects by the members themselves.

The second is social capital, which emphasizes the significance of providing aid to the impoverished using social resources. According to social capital, social resources involves networking, membership in formalized groups, relationships of trust between people, and access to larger societal institutions are necessary for disadvantaged people to achieve their desired life results (Petersen & Pedersen, 2010). To put simply, social capital is ingrained in formalized economic, political, and civic institutions as well as at the micro-institutional level (in communities and homes) and in the laws and regulations regulating those institutions. Accordingly, from a social sphere, the study examines the socio-economic significance and sustainability of interactive networks, as well as community-based development initiatives, in which rural women in developing nations par-take to receive institutionalized technical and

financial support for making a living. Interacting networks like that typically involve concerns of mutual trust and solidarity among community members (Chambers & Conway, 1992).

The third category is natural capital, which emphasizes the value of resources like trees, minerals, land, water, and forests that are thought to be essential for achieving and maintaining sustainable livelihoods. The study focuses on the importance, availability, and access to land (ownership) in assisting rural women working in community-based development initiatives in developing nations to support their livelihoods. Gaidzanwa, (2012); Maruzani, (2014); Moonga, (2015), notes that, historically natural resource ownership and management have been denied to women in developing nations, notably land, making the natural capital essential to the study and making them subject to social problems such as landlessness and food insecurity.

The financial capital is the fourth item. It emphasizes the value of financial reserves that people can access for either production or consumption, such as savings, credit, and remittances. Improved knowledge of how community-based development programs have promoted sustained access to credit provided by the state, the private sector, including microfinance institutions, and development partners for rural women in Lesotho comes from the application of this approach. The study also examines how these outside loans have helped Mafeteng's rural women's livelihoods, which has helped to foster internal savings and economic spillovers for the Rural Women's Assembly's members.

Physical capital comes in fifth. The emphasis on the importance of accessibility—and the consequent significance of basic infrastructure like roads, transportation, energy, and telecommunications—is a key component of this asset because it enables rural communities to attain, protect, and preserve their intended livelihood outcomes. The study's application of this idea helps to show how crucial this fundamental infrastructure is to the success or failure of community-based development initiatives as a strategy for improving rural women's lives in developing countries. For instance, Long-term empowerment requires access to markets for community production, whether it be agricultural or otherwise and poverty reduction among rural women, such as those living in Mafeteng area. Most developing nations have such markets, but access to them is typically hampered by a lack of funding for and sufficient road infrastructure between underdeveloped both reasonably developed metropolitan centres and rural places. Lesotho rural communities are no different in this way from rural populations elsewhere

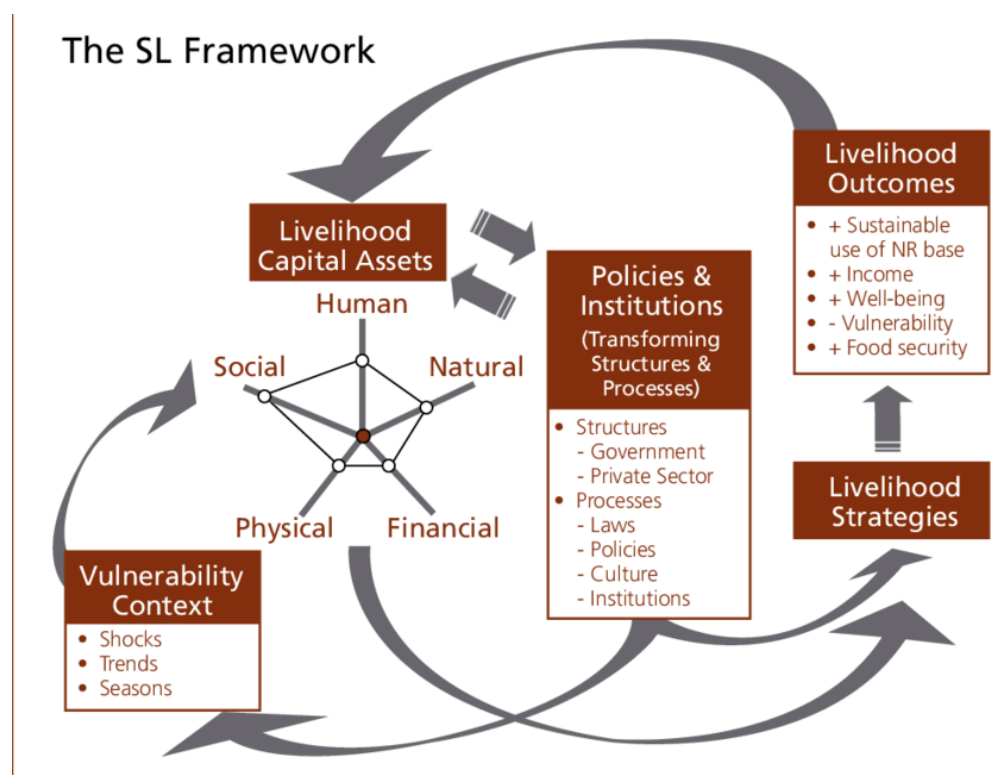
in underdeveloped countries. The strong urban-rural spatial divide in the majority of developing nations still has to be bridged, especially in Lesotho.

The evaluation of a variety of formal and informal institutional factors, policies, and procedures that either serve as obstacles for community-based development projects helping rural women have access to the five assets mentioned above to create sustainable livelihoods for them, is also a key component of the SLF framework (Krantz, 2001; Scoones, 2009). The study's use of organizational variables may also help to identify the role that institutional social standards and principles, such as decision-making procedures, gender, caste, and class, play in advancing or impeding the success of community-based development projects. For instance, it should be noted that in an effort to create long-term strategies that support rural women's empowerment and reduce poverty, community-based development programs must have supportive policies and a favorable working environment. Lesotho has plenty of policies, much like in the majority of other developing countries, however there are significant gaps in their implementation and accompanying monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The aforementioned conceptual framework allows for the following inferences to be made. Firstly, the selected conceptual framework demonstrates that assets can be both tangible and intangible, as well as both economic and non-economic. It is important to understand the connections between these different ideas. Second, once acquired, assets could provide psychological advantages by instilling feelings of security, control, empowerment, and independence (Dietz & Haurin, 2003) and subsequently offer solutions to escape poverty (Sherraden, 1991). This study's main focus is on the viability of the latter, especially in light of its empirical results on the attitudes of underprivileged rural women working on community-based development initiatives in Lesotho's Mafeteng area.

The following diagram summarise the sustainable livelihood conceptual framework discussed above;

Figure 2.1: Sustainable Framework Diagram (Source: DFID'S)



2.2 WOMEN AND CROP FARMING: EXPERIENCES OF RURAL WOMEN

In spite of the general discussion on female experience, specific attention will be paid to poor rural women in developing countries. As women make up almost half of farmers around the world, they are considered to be a key element in rural economies. Given that they provide families and communities with food and nutrition, this suggests that women play a key role in both. (World Bank, 2017; Cherly & SOFA Team, 2011; Ashfaq, 2008). Additionally, they work in agriculture to provide for the food security of their entire household and to branch out their sources of income (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2022). By placing crop farming and its various manifestations in perspective, it would be possible to appropriately contextualize the dire situation of poor rural women and the corresponding significance of community-based development projects. The term crop farming is defined by McMahon, (2022) and (Oksana et.al , 2020) as the cultivation of plants for food, animal food stuffs or of the commercial uses.

Buvinic & Mehra, (1990) assert that women involvement in farm work is traditional. That is, tradition has tasked gendered roles, women are involved in weeding and post-harvesting storage. Nonetheless, the situation has changed nowadays due to rural-urban migration that is dominated by men leaving women with all farming burden and forcing women to ascribed men's task in farming. Despite their skill in farming, women still have less access than males to contemporary agricultural equipment. As a result, their farm job is labor-intensive, produces little food, and results in low income.

2.2.1 FOOD INSECURITY AND RURAL WOMEN

For many rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa who depend and rely on agriculture as their primary livelihood of income, food insecurity has remained a significant worry. (Mutea et. Al., 2019). FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2017) acknowledges that it is very challenging to attain food security in the rural areas of Sub-Saharan. This acknowledgement does not exclude Mafeteng in Lesotho. Women contribute to food security ranging from cultivation to distribution of food and despite this contribution women still face less food security than men. And this is one of the focus of the study hence very critical to show the link between rural women and food insecurity. (UN WOMEN, 2022).

At the World Food Summit in 1974, the phrase "food security" was first used. This summit concentrated on the need for a global response to ensure food security (Dehrashid et.al., 2021). According to academics studying food security at the United Nations, food security is defined as the availability of sufficient quantities of staple foodstuffs around the world and at all times in a way that increases or stabilizes consumption and makes up for fluctuations in production and price. A broader definition of food security was developed by FAO in 1983, with the idea that everyone should always have physical and financial access to basic foods. This definition had three fundamental elements: accessibility, utility, and food availability. (Garnett, 2011; Diagne, 2013). This implies that in the twenty-first century food security is not about just production, but also about, is it available to the households, is food accessible and do people have enough income to access the food.

An estimated one-hundred and forty million (149,000,000) inhabitants in Africa face acute food security (Global Network Against Food Crises, 2022). Chronic food insecurity is explained as "when a person's inability to consume adequate food puts their lives or livelihoods in immediate

danger” (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2022). According to the numbers cited above, Africa has a far higher prevalence of food insecurity than other regions of the world. (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2017; Drammeh et.al., 2019 ; Smith, 2017). More than half of Africans are at risk of experiencing moderate to severe food insecurity. (Daugherty et.al, 2019). In the year of 2018, the highest level of food insecurity was recorded in East Africa (63% of the inhabitants or two-hundred and seventy-two million), followed by Southern Africa (54% or thirty-five million), West Africa (48% of the inhabitants or one-hundred and eighty-three million), and North Africa (30% of the inhabitants or seventy million) (FAO et.al., 2019). This implies that the majority of Southern Africans lack regular access to enough food that is nourishing and sufficient for a healthy and productive life. The factors contributing to this situation has been outlined by SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment & Analysis Programme, (2021), as Covid-19, reduced incomes, climate change, pervasive poverty, conflicts, gender disparities, diseases, pests and natural disasters.

According to the findings of the IPC(Integrated Food Security Phase Classification), acute food security analysis, about three-hundred and twenty-eight thousand (329,000) people in rural Lesotho experience high acute food insecurity. Of the ten districts in Lesotho, eight are designated as being in a crisis, and the district of Mafeteng is one of these eight districts. (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2022). The IPC's most recent report, covering the period from July t2022, and its projection to March 2023 still maintains that about two-hundred and twenty-nine thousand (229,000) are facing crisis of high acute food insecurity. The contributing factors according to this IPC report are waterlogging, hiking food prices economic decline-increasing inflation and reduced income opportunities (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, 2022). On the other hand Mphahle, (2003) and Mokati et.al, (2022), stressed that another major contributing factor is drought and these circumstances have negatively affected the ability of the households to obtain sufficient food from own production. Given the situation described above, Lesotho has to take immediate and substantial measures to close the food gaps and safeguard and restore the livelihoods of rural women.

2.2.2 LAND ACCESSIBILITY AND WOMEN

Women’s access to assets including land in Africa had always been an issue of plight. Even though, this is because rural women contribute abundantly to agriculture in impoverished

countries like Lesotho, they lack a voice and access to resources like assets and land that are productive. (Mokati et.al, 2022). Chu, (2011) indicates that women typically do not have the same access to land as males have, whether through traditional or legal land rights systems. For Food and Agriculture Organization, (2010) For women to battle poverty, food insecurity, and maintain their livelihoods, their access to land must be increased. However, it has also been emphasized that, irrespective of their state of development, the inequities in land access continue to be a bottleneck in the majority of rural Sub-Saharan African countries. Claassens, (2009) and Sonjica, (2004) shows that another effect of unlawful regulations and procedures that place women in a disadvantageous position is that they make up the bigger portion of people who experience asset shortages, which affects socio-economic results.

In accordance to a report on the issues surrounding women's land rights and the difficulties in changing policies, women are typically only given secondary land rights, which prevent them from owning or controlling land but allow them to use it, typically through male family members. If their spouses leave them for another woman, become widowed, or move to an urban area, women run the risk of losing their rights to land. As a result, patriarchy is strengthened since women are reduced in authority and become more dependent on men (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2010).

Joireman (2008), Bunch (2009), and Songelwa (2009) declare that it is exceedingly troublesome to assume that governments will address women's land rights. In these systems, women's rights are precarious, and when the base of available land decreases there is less land available for women to use, access, and manage as a result of rising demand, heightened competition, and environmental deterioration. Particularly, Food and Agriculture Organization, (2010) warns that the growing commercialization of agriculture has the potential to exacerbate gender disparities since it solidifies the concentration of land ownership, which often benefits the male leaders of bigger households. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2010), and the ICRW (International Centre for Research on Women) (2011), have also drawn attention to the significant and continuous gender disparity women's land ownership and asset ownership typically being of lesser quality and smaller size.

The barriers resulting from the social injustices connected to the absence of enforcement and application of new land laws and policies that aim to reduce discrimination against women,

customary and traditional tenure structures, have made it difficult for women to access and control land in rural Sub-Saharan Africa. Prejudice against women is acknowledged even in private property systems, and it is most obvious in the predominance of male inheritance patterns. In Sub-Saharan Africa, customary tenure systems continue to be the most common type of rural land tenure, and they are heavily influenced by patriarchal customs. (Moodley et.al., 2007).

New Agriculturalist, (2010), demonstrates that women make up between sixty and eighty percent of the agricultural working force in Sub-Saharan Africa, which highlights the significance of their economic contribution. Additionally, they are becoming more and more important in resource management and food production, producing over eighty percent of the food in rural Sub-Saharan Africa. In rural Sub-Saharan Africa, women own just under one percent of the land, despite playing a crucial role as food providers (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010) . According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, (2010) sowing seeds, weeding, applying fertilizer and insecticides, and harvesting and threshing of crops were among the duties carried out by women that were important for household food production. In traditional African civilizations where men are seen as the leaders of houses, women's crucial task as cultivators, producers and suppliers of food is sometimes overlooked. Because of this, rural women typically lack power over decisions involving the land or household resources that their labor produces, even whether they work on communal or household land. N.Jung et.al (2017), has highlighted the connection between household food (in)security and gender (in)equality by describing the paradoxical food insecurity in the home is a challenge that women are continually compelled to grapple with, and it is a problem that is directly tied to insufficient control and use of land. Women's inability to take advantage of economic possibilities and their ability to escape poverty by increasing their means of subsistence are both hampered by their precarious access to land.

2.2.3 WOMEN LIVELIHOODS

Women's livelihoods depend on the natural resources which mostly exacerbate the risk of food insecurity and livelihood (Women's Resilience to Disasters Knowledge Hub, 2022). In developing nations, using their farm labor as a source of income, women support rural economies. (Scoones, 2009 ;Vercillo, 2016), and this is further sustained by Hapke (2004), Kristjanson et.al., (2014),and Mutopo (2014) , as they also assert that women are primarily

responsible for generating money and ensuring household food security in rural areas. “Activities and resources” used to earn a living are referred to as livelihoods. The most popular definition of a livelihood includes all skills, possessions, and activities used to make a living. The continued existence of livelihoods depends on livelihood resources, which are the production instruments accessible to people to produce the material resources they need to survive (Vercillo, 2016; Chambers, 1992).

The livelihoods that can adapt to and bounce back from weaknesses are the ones that are sustainable, without having a negative impact on the natural resource base, these should be able to preserve their current and future capacities, structures, and assets. The process of sustainability strongly depends on rural livelihoods' ability to withstand various difficulties for the empowerment of rural women. (Davies et.al., 2013). Garikipati (2010), explains that among the many and varied restrictions include a lack of sufficient technology, unequal access to productive resources and services, a lack of adequate or accessible infrastructure, restricted access to credit, a lack of access to health care and education, world food and economic shortages, and the impact of climate change. Rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa mainly depend on farming as their primary source of food and other varied non-farm livelihoods as their source of income. (Mutopo, 2014). As a result, any project that helps rural women attain their full potential would not only help rural women but also spur communities' socioeconomic development. (Ellis, 2004; Campbell, 2007; Scoones I., 1996; Kristjanson et.al, 2014).

In Lesotho, agriculture is very important to the livelihoods of many Basotho living in the rural areas of Lesotho where about sixty percent of the population resides and eighty-five percent of whom engage in smallholder farming (Mamello et.al., 2021). Many smallholder farmers use mixed agriculture, which involves raising both livestock and crops. Cattle, goats, sheep, and pigs are the principal livestock raised, while the local people also grow maize, sorghum, and beans (MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY, 2018).

2.3 EMPERICAL EVIDENCE ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This section will look into the studies carried out by other academics in the global world and in the continent of Africa and discuss them in this part, along with how they differ from or resemble the study that I am conducting.

2.3. 1 INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Sarker et.al ,(2017) in their study also discussed crop production and livelihoods of rural people in Bangladesh but they single out the particular crop that they were focusing on which is lemon. This study discovered that lemon cultivation benefits farmers' livelihoods with regard to social connections, access to land, education, income level, and saving habits. Lemon production is found to have a significant role for women. However, this study since it single-out a particular crop will differ with my study as is covers generally crop production and focusing on rural women in Mafeteng district.

Further, Paris (2002) conducted a study that was based on ‘crop-animal systems in Asia: socio-economic benefits and impacts on rural livelihoods’. In this study Paris found out that specific technologies can increase productivity and household incomes and the on-farm activities reflect only the financial returns (Paris, 2002). This study does not cover diversification of livelihoods brought by these financial returns so as to say that in Asia their household livelihoods are sustained. And this is the gap my study tends to also investigate as the study is carried out.

2.3.2 AFRICAN STUDIES

The study of Ubisi et.al., (2017) about “smallholder farmer’s perceived effects of climate change on crop production and household livelihoods in rural Limpopo province, South Africa”, studied how smallholder farmers in South Africa's Mopani and Vhembe districts were affected by climate change in terms of crop production and household livelihoods. This study is good but differs to this study in that it looked into smallholder farmers and not focusing on women specifically. As a result, this study did not go further into how climate change may affect women's livelihoods in the Mopani and Vhembe districts' reliance on crop production.

Secondly, the methodologies used by Ubisi et.al in their study did not cater for the deeper experiences of smallholder farmers as it used only questionnaires in collecting data and failed to delve deeply into the livelihoods based on agricultural production experienced by smallholder farmers in Mopani and Vhembe. The current study uses the qualitative method approach to try and fill the gap of information that research like the one published in 2017 by Ubisi et al. left several gaps unfilled. Again, their study used ‘Multinomial logit regression model’ to analyses data collected which also did not give many facts affecting peasant farmers' livelihoods as it placed a lot of emphasis on the alleged consequences of climate change.

2.3.3 STUDIES IN LESOTHO

Rantso (2000) conducted a study on ‘Asparagus Production and Sustainable Rural livelihoods’ and in this study Rantso depicted that Asparagus production in Lesotho was one of the strategies the government of Lesotho utilized to combat rural poverty and indeed the project made the farmers achieve sustainable livelihoods but later on as the project encountered problems, the farmers were in the pool of poverty again (Rants'o, 2000). Nonetheless, this study also picked-up a particular crop and did not pay much attention to how Asparagus production contributed to the livelihoods of women especially the ones in rural areas and this is where the current study takes advantage of Rantso’s study as it will focus on the contribution of crop farming generally on the rural women livelihoods.

2.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has shown that the conceptual framework of sustainable livelihoods serves as the study's foundation. According to sustainable livelihoods, the quantity of livelihood resources that underprivileged individuals may access and acquire is what determines whether they can achieve favourable livelihood outcomes like food security. Secondly, women are regarded as the backbone of rural economy as globally they are almost half of the farmers. Despite, women continue to have less access than do men to modern agricultural equipment. Thirdly, for many rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa that depend on farming as their primary source of livelihood, food insecurity has continued to be a significant worry. Despite their contributions to food security, which range from food production to distribution, women still have less access to food than males. Fourthly, women access to assets including land in Africa had always been as issue of plight. Rural women contribute more to agriculture, but they lack a voice and access to resources like assets and land that are productive. As a result, patriarchy is strengthened since women have a lower status in authority and become more dependent on men. Lastly, this chapter also discussed other similar studies conducted by scholars internationally, in Africa and in Lesotho. Next chapter presents study methodology for the study.

CHAPETE THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The research paradigm, research technique, research design, population and sampling, research tools, data collection processes, data presentation procedures, validity and reliability of the study, and study-related ethical considerations are all covered in this chapter.

3.1 PARADIGM

Research paradigm is explained by Abbadia (2022) as “a pattern for conducting research within which theories and practices can function”. Abbadia adds further that a paradigm examines how information is understood and investigated and that it explicitly states the purpose, motivation, and anticipated results of the investigation. There are three types of paradigms, namely positivism, interpretivism and pragmatists. This study will follow interpretivism which believes that because human behaviour is complex, pre-defined probability models cannot accurately predict it. Other than genes, environmental factors also have an impact on it, and it can fluctuate depending on the situation. The way people behave is considerably different from a scientific variable that is simple to regulate. Human conduct is subjective in nature and is influenced by a variety of circumstances. Therefore, interpretivism prefers to observe human behavior in the actual world rather than in a lab setting (ReadingCraze, 2017).

The belief of interpretive researchers is that people’s subjective perceptions of the outside environment make up reality. They could accept an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological view that reality is socially produced as a result. According to Willis (1995), Interpretivists who reject foundationalism hold that there is no one right way to learn something, are anti-foundationalists. There are no 'right' or 'incorrect' hypotheses in the interpretive tradition, according to Walsham (1993). They ought to be evaluated instead based on how 'interesting' they are to the researcher and others working in related fields. By carefully analyzing the phenomenon of interest, they try to glean their constructs from the field. Interpretivism believes that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation; hence there is no objective knowledge that is separate from the thoughts and judgments of living thinking beings (Gephart, 1999). According to Myers (2009), interpretive scholars work on the assumption that social constructions like language, consciousness, and shared meanings are the only ways to access

reality (whether it is predetermined or created by society). The foundation of the interpretive paradigm is observation and interpretation. Accordingly, to observe is to gather data about happenings, and to interpret is to give that data meaning by making conclusions or determining whether it fits with some abstract pattern (Aikenhead, 1997). Through the meanings that people give to occurrences, it seeks to explain them (Deetz, 1996).

According to Reeves and Hedberg (2003), the "interpretivism" paradigm emphasizes the necessity of contextualizing analysis. Understanding the world as it is from people's subjective experiences is central to the interpretative paradigm. They employ approaches that focus on meaning rather than measurement, like participant observation and interviews, which depend on the researcher-subject interaction. Interpretive research focuses on the whole complexity of human sense-making as the situation develops rather than predefining dependent and independent factors (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). This is the interpretive method, which seeks to clarify the arbitrary motivations and connotations that underlie social behavior. The goal of interpretivists is to examine, evaluate, and improve interpretive theories rather than to develop new theories. Walsham (1995) outlines three distinct ways that theory is used in interpretative case studies: as a design and data collecting guide; as an iterative process of data collection and analysis; and as the result of a case study. In the present study, the theory has been used as an iterative procedure between data collection and analysis.

The following traits are typically present in research that follows the interpretivism paradigm:

- The realization that understanding society from an individual's perspective is impossible.
- The conviction that there are several, socially produced realities.
- The understanding that interactions between the researcher and his research respondents are unavoidable.
- The understanding that context is essential to knowledge and understanding.
- The importance of comprehending the individual rather than general laws.
- The idea that causes and effects are interconnected; and
- The conviction that any methodical quest for understanding must take contextual considerations into account.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the line with the interpretivists' paradigm the methodology for this study was qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is a type of study in which the researcher is actively involved in the research process while also gathering and interpreting data (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). Furthermore, Neuman (2014), Amaratunga et.al (2017) and Hancock (1998) describe that data from respondents' real experiences is obtained through qualitative research. As a result, researchers learn about the research environment firsthand. Hancock (1998) further explains that this implies that researchers are given the opportunity to fully experience the individuals or events they are researching. As a result, gathering data for qualitative studies typically entails direct contacts between the researcher and the respondents, either one-on-one or in a group. This demonstrates how a qualitative approach allows researchers to evaluate instances within their social context through close interaction with a subject and a real-world scenario. This shows that qualitative research can be used to investigate the variety and diversity in all facets of social life (Amaratunga et.al, 2017; Kumar, 2011).

In order to gain a greater knowledge of the RWA crop farming on the livelihoods of rural women in Mafeteng District, this approach concentrates on how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences and events in their natural environments. Observations, interviews, and case studies are some of the methods used in qualitative research projects to collect information since they emphasize the individual (Taylor, 2005). Focus groups and one-on-one interviews proceeded until the data reached data saturation, which is the point at which further data no longer produced any new insights.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study research design was adopted for this study. A research design, according to Kumar (2011), is a technique of investigation used to develop a plan, structure, and framework for answering the research questions. Thus, a research design is a technique that researchers use to create a procedural, in-depth plan on how to carry out their research study. This means that a research design focuses on how data will be gathered from respondents, how respondents will be chosen, how data will be analyzed, and how data will be disseminated. However, several academics have varied explanations for how a case study research design works. Magwa & Magwa (2015), explains a case study as an aspect of research that concentrates on a specific

contemporary event in the setting of real life. Amaratunga et.al., (2002), describes a case study design as a research approach that concentrates on comprehending the interactions of the investigation in a specific environment. Over and above, Kumar, (2011) purports that, the case that is chosen for the study serves as the foundation for a full, comprehensive, and in-depth investigation of the topics that the researcher wishes to look at. As a result, for the sake of this study, a case study is defined as a research strategy that was employed to produce a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of the complicated challenges relating to rural women's crop farming in the Mafeteng district.

3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

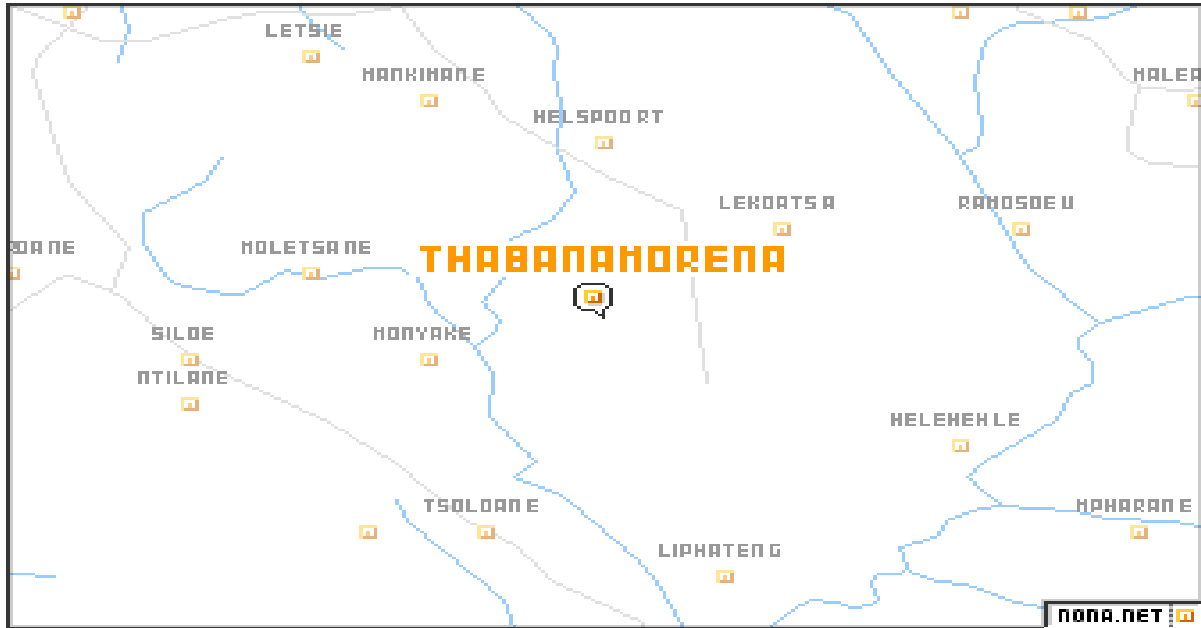
When examining a phenomenon in social science research, not all members of the community can be involved. Therefore, it is extremely important and critical for the researcher to select a sample from the study population in Lesotho's Mafeteng district. Gibson et. al (2001) and Neumna (2014), notes that the study population is a subset of the population of interest, it contains sizable groups of people who are accessible to the researcher and to whom conclusions may be legally applied. This suggests that the researcher can extrapolate the sample's findings to the entire study population. Further, Patricia (2017) shows that the sampling frame-a term used to describe the group of constituents in a population from whom the sample is actually drawn-is frequently used to refer to the study population. It is therefore impractical for a researcher to draw a sample from a relatively wide and diffuse community, so a sample is taken from the study population.

In this study, the participants were rural women of Mafeteng who members of the Rural Women's Assembly are, key informants such as the chiefs, councilors and the chairpersons of Rural Women's Assembly projects and the chairperson of Rural Women's Assembly in Mafeteng. These study's key informants were chosen to ensure the study's dependability because they were qualified to offer in-depth descriptions and explanations of how Rural Women's Assembly Crop Farming works to combat poverty, enhance these women's livelihoods, and empower in particular rural poor women in Mafeteng district.

As argued by Ritchie et.al (2013), the researcher must then select a suitable sample set from which to gather and acquire the sample after defining the study population or constituency. The sample for this study came from Thabana-Morena constituency which is made up of ten (10)

villages and out of these, three villages were randomly picked; Majakaneng, Boleka and Machafela and out of each village, fifteen (15) households were used to collect data which added to forty-five (45) as part of the sample size. Figure 2 below is the image that shows the location of Thabana-Morena in Mafeteng District.

Figure 3. 1: *Thabana-Morena Map in Mafeteng District (Source: <https://nona.net/feature/map/placedetail.2231628/Thabana%20Morena/>)*



3.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The study, categorized as qualitative research, was conducted using a qualitative strategy that involved data-gathering processes that produced open and non-numerical data, which was then, analyzed using non-statistical techniques. It has been highlighted that the majority of studies involve focus groups and in-depth interviews as part of a qualitative strategy (Dornyei, 2007; Hancock, 1998; Norton, 2009). Focus groups with women who were the Rural Women's Assembly members chosen for the study and in-depth interviews with key informants were two of the qualitative data-gathering techniques employed by the researcher to get the necessary data. Thus, the researcher used three different data collection techniques to ensure the study's reliability by gathering trustworthy, a variety of experiences and realities. A conversation known as an interview is held with the sole purpose of gathering information from the respondent(s) (Borg and Gall, 1990). An interview is a conversation between people, typically face-to-face, whenever the interviewer seeks to learn about the participants' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs

(Kumar, 2011). The researcher employed a voice recording application from a cell-phone to make sure the opinions shared by numerous key informants during the in-person interviews were faithfully preserved. This allowed the talk to flow naturally as the researcher was able to concentrate on listening, investigating deeper, and replying to the interviewees as needed (as per the consent of each key informant and participant). Additionally, interviews were done in a conversational tone to encourage interviewees to open up and prevent the researcher from coming out as authoritative and interrogative.

The researcher was also able to follow up on comments that he thought were too ambiguous thanks to the utilization of interviews. Additionally, the researcher was discouraged from deviating from his pre-selected set of questions by the use of interview schedules where predefined questions were asked using the same wording and order of inquiries. In the above opinion, (Kumar, 2011) purports that, the use of interviews is more widespread. The researcher can elicit detailed information from the interviewee, and the results of the researcher's observations of the interviewee's nonverbal behaviors can be added to the information gleaned from the interviewee. In light of this, doing interviews was advantageous since it allowed the researcher to get data from a variety of adult and illiterate groups, particularly from chiefs and members of the Rural Women's Assembly.

Additionally, because the researcher began by outlining the scope and goals of the study to the participants before the interview, the interviewees felt comfortable and were able to speak openly throughout the interviews. Additionally, this assisted to lessen the researcher's prejudice. Interviews, especially ones that include open-ended questions, are important for giving in-depth information as well as removing the chance of researcher bias because respondents are given the freedom to express themselves freely (Kumar, 2011). Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that interviews can yield incredibly detailed data, it was noted during the fieldwork that the procedure of conducting interviews required a lot of time to carry out, transcribe, sort through, and analyze the data acquired. Interviews are tedious and costly, especially if potential respondents are dispersed over a larger area of coverage (Kumar, 2011).

Data from focus group discussions was complemented with data from in-depth interviews with key informants. However, exactly like with the interviews, voice recorders from cell phones were used to record the focus group conversations. The captured material was kept safe and

secure on a laptop protected by a password. It is also important to remember that the majority of these focus group conversations were held at the participants' homes of Rural Women's Assembly who volunteered to provide the researcher with their homes as venues. The chairpersons of the RWA groups that took part in the study were also used by the researcher to organize the participants for the focus group talks. In order to stay on topic for the study, a focus group discussion schedule was also used to direct the conversation at these meetings. After the researcher found RWA groups with people who had common traits, focus group discussions were used in the study since it was important to document the opinions of a number of people within this particular population subgroup of RWA members. This was carried out because the researcher thought that group interactions amongst participants would result in the formation of deeper insights. Instead of attempting to achieve participant unanimity, focus groups are effective at capturing a wide range of opinions. Focus group discussions are so frequently employed in qualitative research to examine the views, experiences, and understandings of a group of people who have a common experience in relation to a certain scenario (Kumar, 2011; Norton, 2009).

Additionally, secondary data sources were used in the study to gather knowledge about crop farming activities, including online journals, documentary reviews, and publications.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

In order to guarantee the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings, the acquired and analyzed data required to be done so in accordance with the proper research procedures. An overview of the many methods and procedures utilized to collect information from each participant is provided below;

Using the qualitative research approach, the researcher at National University of Lesotho obtained a letter of authorization to perform a study from the department's head in February 2013 before he could resume collecting data and also seek permission from District Administrator of Mafeteng district. This was done since the respondents were an important component of the research and not merely a way to get data. The protection offered by ethical review extends to the researcher as well as the responders. The researcher shows that he conformed to the recognized ethical norms of legitimate research project by seeking ethical approval. (Nchasi, 2021).

Respondents have a right to information about who has access to and uses their data. The individual researcher is personally liable for any claims made if ethical permission has not been obtained.

The following are the guidelines for doing ethical research:

- Participation that is informed, voluntary, and free from force or unfair influence.
- Worthwhile and offering benefits that surpass any risks or negative effects.
- Respect for respondents' rights and dignity, particularly their right to privacy and anonymity.
- Independent (with any prejudice or conflicts of interest being made clear).
- Clearly defining accountability and duty lines.

On the 1st of March 2023, the researcher began to collect data at Boleka, on the 15th March at Majakaneng and on the 18th March collected at Machafela. The researcher gave participants instructions on how the interviews would be conducted and requested that they sign a consent form as evidence that they would not be coerced into participating and that they were aware of the entire data collection process before getting started. The researcher said he would ask a series of questions, giving the respondents a chance to respond, and when appropriate, would follow up with further questions to elicit more information. It was anticipated that each interview would run between 30 and 45 minutes. The researcher was available at any moment for the participants to ask him or her any questions about the study. The researcher also told the participants that if they had any concerns or needed any additional information about the study after the study, they may get in touch with him. Finally, the researcher requested and received consent from the participants to audio record the interviews in order to verify that all data was gathered verbatim. The researcher also let the participants know that all information would be kept private.

Thereafter on the 20th of March Focus groups were conducted in these villages consecutively. The focus groups took about 2 hours each. And here the researcher was having an assistant to help him with the recording of the focus groups sessions using a cellphone recording app.

3.7 DATA PRESENTATION PROCEDURE

According to Denscombe (2007) qualitative data analysis is “the process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to the mass of collected data”. Hancock, (1998) asserts that

summarizing the vast amount of data gathered throughout the study and presentation of the findings in a way that communicates the key findings are essential components of data analysis. Thus, data analysis is a technique that enables researchers to organize and summarize their data to produce understandable accounts of their findings. Interpretation is done to give collected data significance (Patricia, 2017). The researcher used content analysis to examine the qualitative data collected during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions using a voice recorder. Transcribing all sets of qualitative data obtained during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions came before such analysis.

The main method used to analyze qualitative data was thematic analysis. According to Norton (2009), in the process of thematic analysis, researchers look for data patterns to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter from the viewpoint of the respondents. For this particular study, the coding of words and phrases that functioned as labels for data sections was necessary for thematic analysis of the data. In order to identify patterns and trends from data collected in the study that are related to issues of livelihoods and crop farming and the empowerment of rural women through RWA, verbal data collected from the study was summarized and tabulated using the thematic approach.

3.8 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Researchers must then indicate what steps will be taken to ensure the quality of the findings emerging from the investigation, despite the shortcomings mentioned above, after having clearly recognized and established a research problem and further choosing a research methodology for the study.(Bless et.al., 2013). This is a reference to the notions of validity and reliability in the field of social sciences, each of which has unique properties based on the research design used for a specific study. Unlike quantitative studies, which invest in trustworthiness when assuring validity and reliability, trustworthiness is broken down into various components that can be applied to the study process and findings (Neuman, 2014).

The use of a standard questionnaire during participant interviews will help maintain consistent observations throughout the data collection process, which is the first element to be used in the study to ensure **dependability** or consistency of the findings. Neuman (2013) and Stahl and King (2020), argues that this is one of the strategies employed by qualitative researchers to establish credibility, as they emphasize consistency in their methods for making observations

across time. As previously mentioned, the researcher used focus group observation to determine the participation pattern of women.

Stahl and King (2020), goes on to assert that qualitative researchers place a strong focus on the use of **triangulation**, which entails employing a number of sources of data or methods from the field to repeatedly build recognizable patterns. Multiple triangulation techniques exist, including methodological, data, investigator, theoretical, and environmental triangulation.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Before, during, and after fieldwork, this study complied with a number of fundamental research ethics principles until the results were written. Ethics is the study of right and wrong. Ethical considerations are crucial in all research because they preserve the respondent's rights and ensure the study's validity. Abed (2015), emphasizes that ethical issues have to do with morals, culture, and conventions and that the researcher must take into account matters that may have an emotional or bodily impact on the respondents. Frankel and Wallen (2003), emphasizes that it is the researchers' essential duty to take all reasonable measures to protect the respondents from any harm or discomfort that may result from the study process. As a result, it was essential that all ethical principles were not only taken into account but also strictly followed in this study.

Norton (2009), purports that consent, privacy, secrecy, and protection from damage are listed as the fundamental principles of research. In addition to additional ethical considerations, these were the main considerations that the study adhered to throughout. It is significant to remember that before beginning the actual fieldwork, the researcher first received approval from the head of the development studies department at the National University of Lesotho. This approval was then utilized to ask for consent to perform the study from the key informants. Second, the researcher sought the letter of approval from the District Attorney's office that served as an introductory or must be allowed admission into the designated study wards inside the district where the actual fieldwork was done.

In addition, the respondents gave their informed agreement to participate in the study without being threatened with financial incentives or subjected to any other sort of coercion. This further demonstrates that after the researcher thoroughly informed them about the nature, purpose, and intended use of the study's data, the participants freely agreed to participate in it. Norton (2009),

stresses that obtaining respondents' informed consent requires providing them with sufficient information to enable them to make educated decisions about the potential effects of partaking in the study. Furthermore, Blanche et.al ,(2014), purports that on research ethics, “researchers must provide the potential participants with clear, detailed and factual information about the study, its method, its risks and benefits, along with the assurance of the voluntary nature of participation and freedom to refuse or withdraw without penalties”.

The researcher made sure that participants in this study may participate freely and without any group cohesion. By creating a permission document that the respondents all consented to before the study began, the researcher also ensured the respondents' rights to leave the study at any moment. Blanche et. al, (2014), observes that maintaining privacy for individuals and institutions is a crucial ethical concern in research. As a result, the researcher used pseudonyms to disguise the identity of respondents in the discussion and analysis of the study findings in the text to protect the privacy of the study's respondents and to ensure that all direct quotes obtained during interviews with key informants, including some common remarks made by participants during focus group discussions, were included in the text. The participants were also given the assurance that the researcher would maintain their confidentiality and that the information they provided would only be used for the study's purely academic goals. The researcher entered the data into a computer with password-controlled access to save and keep it secure.

3.10 SUMMARY

The chapter covered the study's research methods as well as the decision-making criteria, including the justification. The justification for the technique choice, where the qualitative research approach has been judged to be pertinent, is also crucial to this chapter. It allowed the study to accomplish its goals of examining how Rural Women's Assembly Crop farming functions as a vehicle for improving rural women's livelihoods and empowering them in the Mafeteng district. Communities and research participants were also introduced, and the reasons for choosing them were explored. This chapter also covers the sampling strategies utilized to choose different research participants for the study, as well as how the study complied with all the fundamental ethical standards. The discussion and analysis of empirical data obtained through the practical implementation of the research methods, procedures, and designs described in this chapter are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The study's results and analysis of those results are presented in this chapter, along with a discussion of how they relate to the study's goals and the previously studied literature. Sections of this discussion have been created based on the study's goals. The study's participant demographics are covered in the first section. 'The Rural Women's Assembly Crop Farming and Rural women livelihoods in Lesotho: The Case of Mafeteng' is the research question that is the basis for the second section, which presents research themes based on those issues. The third section presents of the extent to which crops selected for crop farming support improvements in food and nutrition security for all household members of the assembly. The fourth section discusses the accessibility of land to rural women members of the assembly. The fifth, discusses the the impact of crop farming on rural women household members livelihood security. Summary is included in the final section.

4.1 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Household studied: In three villages-Majakaneng, Boleka, and Machefela-of the Koti-Sephola Community Council, forty-five homes participated with women who are RWA members. The Koti-Sephola Community Council is situated in Mafeteng's rural regions.

Educational level of the RWA members: The RWA women are women who had not attained high educational levels. Seventy-five percent of them had attained only primary level education while twenty-five percent of them had gone through secondary level. Thus, all of them had no professional occupation except for farming.

Table 1: *The Respondents' Household Categories (Source: Primary Data)*

AGE	FEMALE-HEADED	MALE-HEADED
18-25		6
26-35	5	
36-40	10	4
41-45	12	
46-55	1	3
56-65	4	

The household categories above had been the members of RWA since the year 2014 and some members now have achieved ten years as the members of this group which had become their livelihood from its inception in 2014. The research themes based on the study questions will be discussed in the next section.

4.2 THE EXTENT TO WHICH CROPS SELECTED FOR CROP FARMING SUPPORT IMPROVEMENTS IN FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY FOR ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

More than seventy percent of Lesotho's population relies on agriculture for both food and revenue, making crop farming a significant source of employment and income. This sector of agriculture has the potential to increase food security, reduce rural poverty, and provide opportunities both on and off the farm. (World Bank, 2022). However, the study's findings show that this statement of the World Bank is just general as to the most of rural women of Mafeteng in Thabana-Morena; crop farming had not reduced poverty as such. One respondent claimed that most women in their groups had left as other job opportunities knocked in their lives and the reason was that the crops that they are growing are not improving the food security in that sustained manner as sometimes the crops fail due to harsh weather conditions (Personal interviews, March 2023).

Nonetheless, the crops grown are from the seeds that are not genetically modified and this way they are helping women to save their money to meet other household needs instead of buying

expensive seeds that also require artificial fertilizers that are also expensive in prices. One respondent from Majakaneng village said:

The seeds that we use are original seeds and they save us a lot of money as we carry out our crop farming, so the food that we produce helps us to put food on the table and save us some money to buy seeds as we get seeds from our production. Many of us we are no longer sleeping with empty stomachs because of RWA project in our village as we produce green pepper, tomatoes, potatoes, spinach which we use as vegetables on our meals. (Chief 1, March 2023).

4.2.1 THE NEED FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT TRAINING

Buhler, Vollmer, & Wimmer (2022) assert that education and skill development gives women a foundation for societal reform and constructive change. Women who are skillfully equipped may think creatively and understand how to improve both their surroundings and themselves. Rural women's empowerment programs can help economically disadvantaged areas by teaching them how to manage resources and take advantage of chances to generate value at both the family and societal levels. The study's findings demonstrated the importance of rural women's livelihoods for generating income and jobs in the Mafeteng district. However, the incapacity of rural women in Mafeteng area to make business decisions that will increase household income effectively poses a threat to their ability to sustain their way of life. Despite the fact that Mafeteng's rural women's primary source of income was agriculture, they had little knowledge of how to enhance their farming practices or deal with droughts and flooding. In the Mafeteng district, the absence of vocational institutions that can educate and train women in entrepreneurship and business management are obstacles to women's economic independence and empowerment. One of the respondents that were questioned stated:

“No organisation has provided training to us on how we can grow our businesses. Only in agriculture, RWA brought the Agricultural Extension officer once but we were not given enough education on how to grow cash crops which can increase our household income. Our limited knowledge is a barrier as we venture into less attractive livelihood programmes.” (Interviews, March 2023).

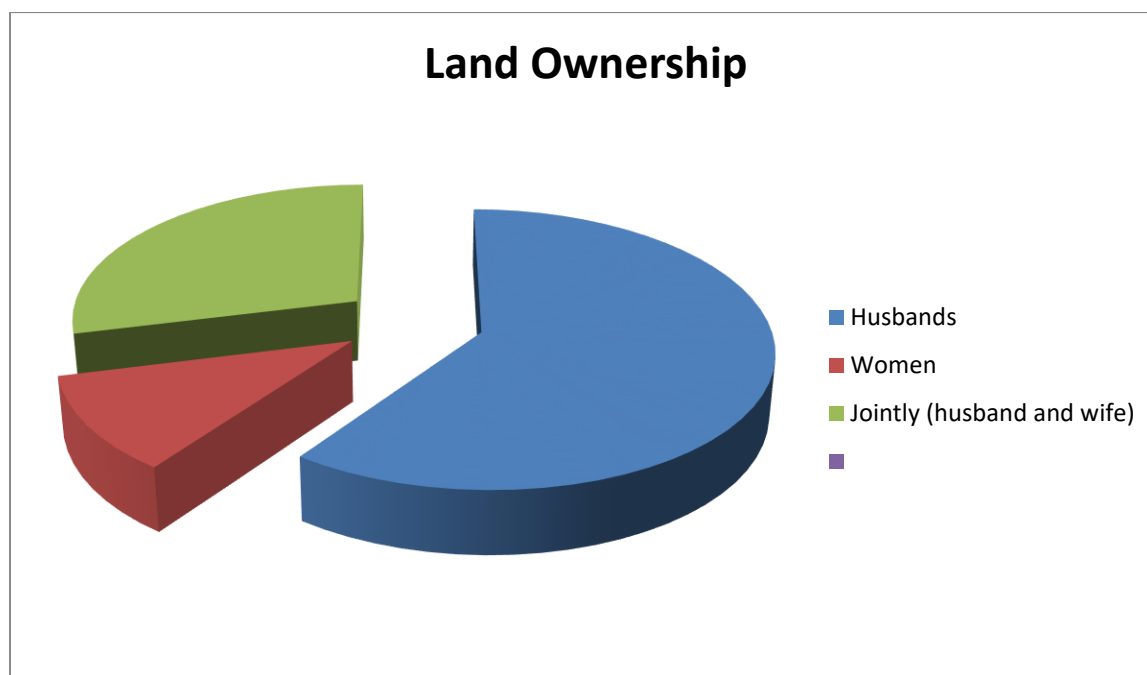
If Lesotho wants to accomplish women's financial independence, it needs to implement a comprehensive plan to enhance the agrarian and entrepreneurial education of women. A study by Stromquist (2015) demonstrated that women's lack of education and training prevents them from achieving financial independence. The results of this study have led to the conclusion that education is crucial for women because they may use it to improve rural women's livelihoods and economic empowerment in Mafeteng district. Other study by Pebane, Kuriansky, & Berry (2013) confirms the claims that vocational training for young women is essential for boosting women's economic empowerment in rural areas. Young and economically engaged women have the will to create sustainable rural livelihoods that will drive economic development since they are better equipped to make wise judgments. Women gain confidence through education, which can be crucial for socioeconomic change and networking in rural women's livelihoods.

4.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF LAND TO RURAL WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE RWA

As shown in the literature review in Chapter Two women still do not have land entitled to them although enough efforts had been done to give women land and land resources are crucial to rural women. The data pertaining to women and land reveals the male-dominance over land ownership. Ninety percent of the households interviewed, believed that household owned the land. In most cases it was felt that the land was either acquired through chief's allocation and others have bought it.

Figure 4.1 shows how the households see their ownership patterns. The majority of respondents believed that husbands owned the land, with the exception of five women who claimed to own the land individually and thirteen of the respondents who believed they own the land jointly with their husbands.

Figure 4.2: *Perception of Land Ownership Arrangements (Source: Primary data)*



This case demonstrates that, despite the fact that many gender-based rules require women to own land, most households presume that the husband does. Thus, women beneficiaries do not necessarily regard themselves as land owners even if they are listed as such. This scenario therefore seriously hinders against household food security in the long-term. Additionally, women who own land are typically widows or single mothers. The decision-makers for land usage in the household are shown in the table.

Table 2: *Responsibilities for Decisions Regarding Land Use*

DECISION MAKER	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Husband	35	78
Women	5	11
Jointly	5	11

Vividly, At the household level, men predominately make decisions on how to use land. According to one of the responses, *"my husband's word is final most of the time, though we*

occasionally make decisions together." If adult males are present, they usually decide how much of the land they directly control will be used for different purposes, such as commercial and survival crops. From male family heads or traditional figures, infringement rights (chiefs) are often the basis on which women cultivate their plots.

In Mafeteng, as previously mentioned and in line with other research findings, nearly all women reported that access to tiny garden plots intended primarily for subsistence-level farming rather than huge fields or stretches of grazing land was their top priority. Women's attitudes regarding arable land, particularly their desire for homestead gardens, are a reflection of the gendered division of labour and household responsibilities. The lack of fertile land and adverse weather conditions, however, have prevented women from putting their newfound RWA abilities to use. This has detrimental impacts on women as a result. One of the biggest threats to household food security, according to participants is this issue. Seventy-five percent of women said that their top two demands from RWA were for food security and the requirement to engage in crop farming as a source of income. Many homes have so far been unable to achieve the latter goal.

It should be highlighted that the relationship between women and crop farming has its paradoxes from a gender standpoint. Crop farming is solely a woman's responsibility, which perpetuates patriarchal gender norms. This obligation adds significantly to the already heavy workloads of women because it is frequently time-consuming and physically demanding. This prevents women from engaging in other, more profitable and dependable sources of income. Women are more burdened than benefited by the obligation to engage in food production without adequate water supplies, financial support, or equipment in RWA crop farming programs where support mechanisms and service provision are insufficient. One respondent from Machefera said:

"The challenge we are facing here at Machefera is that of lack of water to water crops and this affects a lot of our production. Secondly, we are still owing this land as the owner requested M15000.00 which they have not yet paid as they are not working to rise that amount of money though they are already using the land" (Interview, March 2023).

Table 3 summarizes the respondent's views on the benefits and drawbacks of land rights in general. It is evident from the table that the people who participated connected land access and

rights to improvements in meeting practical requirements, namely the opportunity to engage in subsistence farming and create revenue. Additionally, it appears that property rights, in particular, have the potential to give women tactical advantages connected to a better sense of security and confidence. This is related to the notion that women have more control over their life, which frequently results in stronger safety nets and decision-making roles for women.

Table 3: *Advantages and Disadvantages of Land Rights*

	ACCESS TO LAND	OWNERSHIP TO LAND
Merits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for crop farming: in this regard they are able to support their families • Opportunities to earn an income by selling their crops • Empowered to sustain their livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to the issues presented regarding getting to the property, the following ones regarding land ownership were also brought up. • A woman expressed her happiness at being able to provide for her family. • Independence and decision-making autonomy were emphasized
Demerits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Said they felt powerless • Women claimed that because their land may be taken away, they did not feel secure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised concerns over maintenance of the land

The findings show that, because of the continued division of labor, RWA has not significantly lessened the constraints on rural women. Results from Mafeteng case study suggest that some women have not obtained security of tenure. They may have obtained land access; however some

women undoubtedly do not feel that their land rights, in terms of ownership and control, have been sufficiently guaranteed. This is also strengthened by Manthatisi, (2022) purporting that Lesotho is one of the forty-four nations still seeking to provide women the same rights as men despite a lack of practice and the need to finalize modifications to the Inheritance Act that would allow women to inherit their husbands' land without consulting male family members.

The gendered activity profiles show that a lot of women are in charge of crop farming, and because it is clear that almost all of women who participated in the study are independent farmers: the majority tend to garden plots and work on commercial farms. The study unequivocally demonstrates that even though women in rural regions are not typically thought of as farmers, they nevertheless actively engage in agricultural activities and make important contributions to household and community food security and livelihoods. But the majority of women hardly ever described themselves as "farmers," instead identifying as housewives. It's vital to note that this gender identity does not equate to women prioritizing 'housework' over agricultural-related work. As Beyene, (2008) asserts that agriculture is seen by rural women as an integral component of being housewives. Additionally, men are stereotyped as having the position of a farmer who cultivates crops for income and/or status. For rural women, this identity formation does not automatically diminish their authority. There are, nevertheless, a variety of informational, governmental, and developmental ramifications. First off, despite the fact that many women work in agriculture, especially commercial agriculture, they do not identify as farmers, according to official figures based on surveys. Second, women and men engage with the natural resource base in different ways, which is why the interaction between women and land resources demands special examination.. Resources rights, interactions with land through employment patterns, and knowledge of land policies and programs all heavily favor one gender over the other. The foregoing discussion suggests that it is becoming increasingly obvious that women's access to and control over land remain marginal despite efforts by many nations and organisations to address women's inequities. It is obvious that land resources are critical for rural women and households throughout the country considering the fact that ownership systems frequently restrict women's access to and control over these crucial resources. The most fundamental resource for agricultural production is land.

4.4 THE IMPACT OF CROP FARMING ON RURAL WOMEN HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS' LIVELIHOOD SECURITY

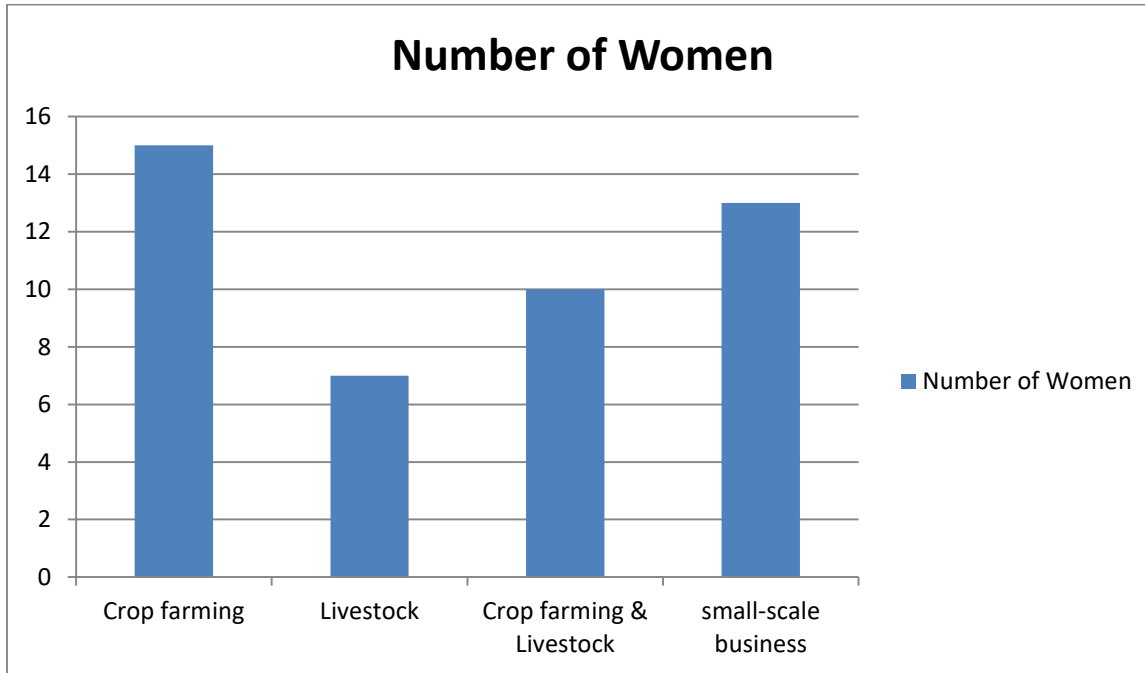
From the answers obtained 71% of the women rely solely on agriculture, while 29% work in both small-scale agriculture and business. While some women thought small-scale business was time-consuming since they spent most of their time on the farm from dawn until evening, 71% said it could not create income like agriculture did. They believed that starting a small business would be impossible since they would return from the farm late and that their household responsibilities, such as catering and providing food for their family, would prevent them from doing so.

Twenty-nine percent of women who work in agriculture and small-scale farming emphasized the need for livelihood diversification in order to raise living conditions and escape poverty. (Peng et.al ,2022). The main issue may be related to not having enough financial means to either rent or buy land for agriculture as the majority of these women do not possess enough property. (Chen, C., 2020).

It is significant to recall that most women who work in small businesses and agriculture are between the ages of 30 and 45. According to them, this age group has ample time after farm work to run a small business to supplement their inadequate food production. Even though most women are eager to start their crop farming businesses, they are upset by the fact that they do not have the same access to and control over land as males. The World Bank (2016), claims that customary laws and practices frequently have restrictive effects on women, restrict their access to crucial resources like credit and land and have an impact on household food security and nutrition. These women are also impacted by the fact that they are unable to own land because it is against their customs and traditions, which hurts their lives. This is further strengthened by Habitat For Humanity Lesotho (2018), that the coexistence of the legal structures that control land distribution and inheritance results in a complicated environment that presents both opportunities and difficulties for women's land tenure.

4.4.1 RURAL WOMEN AND LIVELIHOOD ACTIVITIES

Figure 4.3: *The Distribution of Women Numbers in Livelihood Activities (Source: Primary data)*



From the results, in Mafeteng, rural women either actively participate in crop farming or do not. They also raised pigs and chickens as a source of revenue because they needed to implement certain techniques to raise their level of living. 38 percent of women believe that raising animals like sheep, pigs, and chickens helps or contributes in some manner to their ability to make a living and have access to food. Majority of these women sell eggs and hog meat to pay for household improvements, medical expenses, children's education costs, and sometimes even clothes for their children and spouses, as well as other crop-growing supplies including gardening equipment and non-produced food. Food and Agriculture Organization,(2022), identified a connection between food security at the family level and poverty found poverty, climate variability, and COVID-19 as the key drivers of food insecurity - not food availability. Since these women engage in sustainable conservational agriculture, they claim that mixed farming offers a solution to the issue of fertilizer shortages because they now use organic manure from these animals to fertilize their crops.

According to majority of the women, the only way they could meet their needs for a living and their issues with food security was through crop farming. For their whole source of income,

majority of these women are crop farmers. Even yet, they offer their goods for sale at lower prices so that they may pay for other essentials and provide for the food demands of their families who are forced to live in South Africa due to employment. Some of the women chose to focus on crop growing as a means of income and ensuring the security of their household's food supply because they are unable to afford the financial resources required to engage in mixed farming.

4.4.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT RWA LIVELIHOODS AND FOOD SECURITY

According to the study's findings, women did not generally possess or exercise control over important resources like land and agricultural inputs in the Mafeteng region. In this area, women did not own land, but the majority of them worked in agriculture because it was their primary source of income. The general output of agricultural items was severely harmed by this issue, which also had an adverse effect on local livelihood and food security. According to the study's findings, there were many women in Mafeteng's rural areas who had limited access to financial aid from the government or financial institutions.

The absence of ready marketplaces in the Mafeteng district prevents women from being economically independent, despite the programs' stated goal of doing so. For instance, favourable markets are concentrated in metropolitan areas, and a shortage of transportation prevents farmers from delivering their produce to markets in a timely manner, which impedes women from achieving economic independence.

This problem was made clear in an in-depth interview with one respondent when the woman said that:

“When I grow vegetables, most people who buy are from Mafeteng town and the major problem is to carry the vegetables in bulk to be sold in town and I end up selling on the road and also rely on the villagers to come and buy or send to nearby school to sell to teachers” (Interview participant, fifty-three years, March 2023).

The World Bank contends that to achieve economic empowerment, women must be given the tools they need to compete. This is crucial for bridging the pay gap between men and women in the workplace. Therefore, to accomplish women's financial independence in rural areas, the

exchange of knowledge about the presence of readily accessible markets among rural women in Mafeteng ought to be promoted and boosted to prevent them from selling their crops and farming products or outputs in domestic markets at a lower price due to a lack of market access. Women must therefore receive education and information on how to use contemporary technology so they may gain access to additional advantageous and successful marketplaces to boost the competitiveness of markets.

4.4.3 THE REQUIREMENT TO INCREASE CREDIT FACILITY ACCESS

According to findings from Majakaneng village, women in Mafeteng district have limited access to credit institutions that can help them finance their livelihoods. The cause stemmed given that they are rural women, they lacked collateral to persuade banks and other financial institutions to grant them loans. According to respondents, this has been an issue for a while because women's clubs frequently struggle to remain viable due to a lack of access to financing facilities.

One RWA respondent from the Majakaneng focus group stated:

“We do not have access to loans to support our small business as many of us are very poor and do not have assets to approach banks or financial lenders. As a result of our poverty, we are afraid to borrow money since we do not have the collateral security needed by the financial institutions for them recover their loans in the event that we fail to pay back their money. This is a huge challenge to us which disadvantage us to improve our household income and reduce poverty”. (Focus group respondent, March 2023).

According to this perspective, Mafeteng's rural women's access to financial facilities is limited, making economic empowerment difficult. Women in the agricultural sector do not have enough support to sow and cultivate their crops on schedule. This is a result of the lack of government-sponsored lending options. Because of this, rural women's livelihoods are unsustainable due to a lack of money.

4.4.4 ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

According to participants during the interviews, the Mafeteng district is seriously affected by climate change since it impacts rural women's livelihoods like crop cultivation. The respondent

claims that agricultural growth is badly impacted by scorching temperatures brought on by severe global warming. Inadequate information and early warnings that can be used to develop resiliency in the face of climate change are frequently not provided to women. One respondent in Boleka said that:

“The major problem is that as women we do not know anything about climate change and how we can prevent it. When floods and heat waves occur, our agricultural production is affected. Most families rely on past season yields for seeds and have to scrounge for money to buy fertilizers. It is quite sad because we have continuously lost hard earned produce to erratic climate conditions either water will be too much and drown our plants or the sun comes and burns everything” (Interview, March 2023).

The results of this study showed that climate change also has an impact on water and sanitation. This is because dry spells have an impact on the water levels needed to support crop farming in agriculture, which is the primary source of income for rural women. In Mafeteng, climate change has a severe impact on rural women's livelihoods because the majority of women are unaware of how to avoid the risks it poses, which frequently leads to subpar agricultural yields. These findings are in conjunction with a study conducted by Ashrsfuzzaman, Carla, Dias, & Cerda (2022) that demonstrated that rural women face challenges because they are unaware of the threats and adaptation strategies associated with climate change due to a lack of knowledge about its causes and effects. These results highlight the need of educating rural women about climate change.

4.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the results of the focus groups and interviews were presented. Some of the conclusions contradicted the literature, while other conclusions supported it. For example, from this study it proved that the concept of livelihood is not only about individual but even the community in attempt to meet their basic needs and food security. According to this study, crop farming in Mafeteng's rural areas has the potential to improve women's economic status and standard of living. However, a variety of problems interfere with rural women's economic empowerment and have an impact on their way of life. This study notes the extreme absence of market competition that has reduced rural women's profit margins. Although there are plenty of

opportunities for crop cultivation in these rural communities, the lack of accessible marketplaces has forced rural women to hunt for unprofitable local markets. The study finds that the main cause of poverty among rural women in the Mafeteng area is a lack of access to credit services. The study found that even though these women had achieved some partial success, such as improved livelihood and food security, they still had to deal with significant obstacles, such as poor road networks connecting their villages to Mafeteng town and limited access to credit and financial aid. This had a significant impact on their crop farming products due to the entry of middlemen who bought cheaper from them and sold in the town for higher prices, keeping rural women in poverty. A further issue was a lack of available land for farming. The majority of them were landless, and those who did work on their husbands' properties were still having insufficient land. As a result, they had to pay rent, but given their financial situation, they could still get together. They also had issues with technology, contemporary agricultural cultivation methods, and inputs for agriculture. There are currently few financial institutions prepared to support rural women to help them better their living conditions. Lack of training in crop farming is a problem since rural women do not experience outside markets, which makes networking difficult and prevents economic empowerment. Rural women can self-sustain by using crop farming as a livelihood strategy to increase household income and food security if they are given the appropriate skills. Next chapter presents summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The study's primary goal was to look into the contribution of Rural Women's Assembly Crop Farming on the livelihoods of rural women in Lesotho and the study used Mafeteng district as a case study. The study determined the degree to which crops selected by RWA for crop farming support improvements in food and nutrition security for all household members of the assembly. The studies also investigated how accessible is land for agriculture to Rural Women's Assembly members. The study further investigated the impact of crop farming on rural women household livelihood security. This chapter offers an overview of the findings, along with conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into four pieces. The first portion includes an introduction, followed by a summary, conclusions, and suggestions. The third section includes advice, and the final section identifies topics that need more investigation.

5.1 SUMMARY

Chapter one discussed the background of the study, the problem statement, the study's objectives, the research questions that matched those objectives, the study's significance, the theoretical frameworks supporting it, and the methodology of the study, which includes the research design, data collection, delimitations, study assumptions, and data analysis.

Chapter two discussed that the study is grounded on the conceptual framework of sustainable livelihoods. Sustainable livelihoods demonstrate that the number of livelihood resources that underprivileged people may access and acquire determines their achievement of favourable livelihood results, such as food security. Secondly, women are regarded as the backbone of rural economy as globally they are almost half of the farmers. Despite, women continue to have less access than do men to modern agricultural equipment. Thirdly, for many rural households in Sub-Saharan Africa who depend and rely on farming as their primary source of income, food insecurity has remained a significant worry. Women contribute to food security ranging from cultivation to distribution of food and despite this; contribution women still face less food security than men. Fourthly, women access to assets including land in Africa had always been an issue of plight. Rural women make a greater contribution to agriculture, but they lack a voice and

access to resources like assets and land that may be used to generate income. As a result, patriarchy is strengthened since women are reduced in authority and become more dependent on men. Lastly, this chapter also discussed other similar studies conducted by scholars internationally, in Africa and in Lesotho.

In chapter three, the study's research methodology was covered along with the decision-making criteria, including the justification. The justification for the technique choice, where the qualitative research approach has been judged to be pertinent, is also crucial to this chapter. It allowed the study to accomplish its goals of examining how Rural Women's Assembly Crop farming functions as a vehicle for improving rural women's livelihoods and empowering them in the Mafeteng district. Communities and research participants were also introduced, and the reasons for choosing them were explored. This chapter also covers the sampling strategies utilized to choose different research participants for the study, as well as how the study complied with all the fundamental ethical standards.

In chapter four, the researcher examined the findings from the interviews and focus groups and some of the conversations have validated the literature while some findings say the reverse of what the literature is stating. According to this study, crop farming in Mafeteng's rural areas has the potential to improve women's economic status and standard of living. However, a variety of issues limit rural women's ability to become economically empowered. This study notes the extreme absence of market competition that has reduced rural women's profit margins. Although there are plenty of opportunities for crop cultivation in these rural communities, the lack of accessible marketplaces has forced rural women to hunt for unprofitable local markets. The study identifies the primary cause of rural Mafeteng district women's poverty as being a lack of access to credit facilities.

The study found that even though these women had achieved some partial success, such as improved livelihood and food security, they still had to deal with significant obstacles, such as poor road networks connecting their villages to Mafeteng town and limited access to credit and financial aid. This had a significant impact on their crop farming products due to the entry of middlemen who bought cheaper from them and sold in the town for higher prices, keeping rural women in poverty. A further issue was a lack of available land for farming. The majority of them did not own land, and those that they did labour on were still insufficient, so they were required

to pay rent. Considering their financial troubles, they were able to do so. Inputs for agriculture, contemporary farming methods, and technology were other issues they had to deal with. There are currently few financial institutions prepared to fund rural women to help them better their living conditions. Lack of knowledge on how to succeed in crop farming and draw in outside markets is a drawback because rural women are less exposed to other markets, which makes networking difficult. If given the proper training, rural women can maintain themselves through crop farming as a means of livelihood, increasing household income and food security.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This academic study produced empirical evidence, which is indicative of how RWA particularly to rural women in Mafeteng district is contributing to household livelihoods security. In view of the above, it has been found that RWA is a means to sustainable rural women livelihoods. In light of this, the study's main empirical findings are presented below.

The main purpose of this study was to comprehend the contribution of RWA Crop Farming to rural women livelihoods in Lesotho, and to establish how accessible is land to this group of rural women who are into crop farming in this district of Mafeteng that is hit more by climate change as is claimed by Sekaleli & Sebusi (2013). And to investigate the impact of crop farming to the livelihoods of these rural women. Crop farming is particularly vital to the livelihoods of these rural women in Machafela, Boleka, and Majakaneng in the Mafeteng district since it provides food and occasional income. It is even more crucial for those who have no other sources of income.

RWA women tend to depend on husband's income but ever since RWA became part of their lives in 2014, rural women are increasingly becoming more independent. Women's participation in crop farming has been extremely important in ensuring the food security of their households. In addition, they are able to meet other demands, such as funding their children's education and being able to purchase equipment for their crop farming activities.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

To reduce the challenges RWA members face and other self-help groups of rural women in Mafeteng district the following is what the researcher recommends:

- As more rural women struggle to make ends meet, they are unable to purchase agricultural services. The government should find ways to reduce the cost of these services;
- extension officers should be monitored to be more in the field work to communicate their skills to rural women who are engaged in crop farming so as to encourage more women into agricultural production;
- there should be government compensation for crop failure and financial losses that protects rural women farmers against severe yield reductions due to climate change.
- • The study indicates that rural women appear to lack marketing abilities, thus it is crucial that the Ministry of Agriculture train women who are engaged in crop farming in marketing. This would enable them to find markets before deciding what crops to cultivate; and
- the government should supply these rural women initiatives of crop farming with floppy irrigation systems to mitigate climate variability.

5.4 AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The study investigated the contribution of RWA crop farming and rural women's livelihoods in Lesotho and used Mafeteng district as a case study. Below are some possible future research topics to be explored in future;

- How self-help organizations might continue to reduce poverty among rural women;
- Rural women and land ownership,
- Current policy shortcomings and difficulties faced by rural women in promoting community development; and
- impact of rural development programmes on rural women.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION WHEN CONDUCTING A RESEARCH

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24 / 01 / 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter serves to confirm that Mr. ~~Mr.~~ ^{Mrs./Ms.} Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli is a student with the university reading for a Masters in Development Studies degree Programme. In this degree, research is a compulsory component of the programme. Please help her / him in this research endeavour.

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

Yours Sincerely

Prof. Maxwell Musingafi



APPENDIX B: PROOF OF PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli
P.O. Box 298
Mohale's Hoek 800
1st February 2023

District Administrator
Mafeteng 900
Lesotho
Dear Sir

Re: permission to conduct a research

I write to seek permission to carry out my research in Mafeteng district. I am a Master's Degree student with the National University of Lesotho and carrying out a research on the following topic: *The Rural Women's Assembly Crop Farming and Rural Women Livelihoods in Lesotho: The Case of Mafeteng.*

Your cooperation in this regard is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli





Approved
M.S. MOSINYANE
03/02/23

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

I _____ have received the letter of information and understanding that the information sought by Mr. Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli is for his Master’s Degree in Development-Studies at the National University of Lesotho. As such, excerpts from the interview and field discussions may be included in the study. I understand that I have the right to revoke this authorization and withdraw from this study at any time. Further, I do understand that:

All information pertaining to this study will be treated in strict confidence and there will be no disclosure of my/ our names or identity as respondents;

The information obtained from this study is for the sole purpose of this study and proffering of contribution of Rural Women’s Assembly for improving the livelihoods of rural women of Mafeteng; and

During the interview, I / we will be asked to answer a series of questions related to the study.

In this light, I hereby volunteer to participate in the study and grant the researcher permission to interview me/us for the purpose of data collection.

Respondent’s Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher’s Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Researcher: Mr. Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli (cell: 59040931/63760098; email: chabeology@gmail.com)

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHAIRPERSONS

Interview questions for Chairperson of Rural Women's Assembly Groups

Introduction to the participants

My name is Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli and I am Master's student in the department of Development-Studies at National University of Lesotho. The purpose of this study that I am carrying is to understand the contribution of RWA Crop Farming to the livelihoods of rural women and their empowerment. It is important for me to have an interview with primarily because of your leadership position in your group. I should point out that the information you provide will be kept in confidence and that your name will remain anonymous throughout the analysis and presentation of the study findings. I therefore ask you if you are free to participate so that we can resume the interview discussion and if not, we can just end here.

Questions:

Research question 1: To what extent do these crops selected for crop farming support improvements in food and nutrition security for all household members?

1. What is the name of your group?
2. In which year was the group formed?
3. How many members you had when started your group? And how many do you have today? What was responsible for this stagnation or growth or decline?
4. What initiated this project of crop farming in your project?
5. Which crops have you chosen to producer and why?
6. Are the crops you have chosen ideal and marketable to sustain or improve household food and nutrition security? If yes, please explain why? If no, please explain why?
7. Is there any financial support you are giving to these groups involved in crop farming? If yes, please explain how?
8. Is it relatively easy or difficult to access local market for your products? Explain your answer.

Research question 2: How accessible is land for agriculture to rural women assembly members?

1. Whose land are you using for these crop farming projects?
2. Explain how the land for these projects was acquired?
3. Is the land enough for your crop farming? If not, please explain how you are going to extend it.
4. What are the average acres of land you are using in these villages?

Research question 3: What is the impact of crop farming on rural women household livelihood security?

1. In your view, how did the participation of rural women in this crop farming helped in improving their livelihoods and alleviating poverty?
2. In your opinion, did the participation of rural women in this crop farming helped in empowering them including yourself?
3. In your view, what are some of the challenges still facing rural women groups operating particularly in agriculture?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR COUNCILORS /WARD CHIEFS

Interview questions to Ward Councilor/ Chiefs

Introduction to the participants

My name is Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli and I am Master's student in the department of Development-Studies at National University of Lesotho. The purpose of this study that I am carrying is to understand the contribution of RWA Crop Farming to the livelihoods of rural women and their empowerment. It is important for me to have an interview with primarily because of your leadership position in your group. I should point out that the information you provide will be kept in confidence and that your name will remain anonymous throughout the analysis and presentation of the study findings. I therefore ask you if you are free to participate so that we can resume the interview discussion and if not, we can just end here.

1. In brief, outline the history of women group formations in your community.
2. What role do you play as a councilor in promoting the growth and development of rural women crop farming projects and others in your area?
3. In your view, do you think that RWA crop farming project has improved the livelihoods of rural women?
4. Are there any challenges you think rural women participating in agriculture are facing? If yes, please explain them.
5. Before RWA arrival in your ward, what livelihood activities did women depend on?
6. Traditionally, women did not have access to land. What role have you played in supporting this RWA project in accessing land for their crop farming?
7. With practical examples, explain how RWA crop farming project is contributing to the overall community development in the ward?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR RURAL WOMEN

Interview questions for rural women

Introduction to the participants

My name is Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli and I am Master's student in the department of Development-Studies at National University of Lesotho. The purpose of this study that I am carrying is to understand the contribution of RWA Crop Farming to the livelihoods of rural women and their empowerment. It is important for me to have an interview with primarily because of your leadership position in your group. I should point out that the information you provide will be kept in confidence and that your name will remain anonymous throughout the analysis and presentation of the study findings. I therefore ask you if you are free to participate so that we can resume the interview discussion and if not, we can just end here.

Research question 1: To what extent do the crops selected for crop farming support improvements in food and nutrition security for all household members?

1. What crops have been specializing with? And what are your reasons for choosing these crops?
2. Where do you get seeds/seedlings of the crops you are producing?
3. Is there any financial support you have for this production? If yes, from where? And how accessible is it? If no, state means of finance for the project?
4. Are the crops that you have selected for production really improved your household food security? If yes, please explain, If no, what do you think is the hindrance?
5. Have you ever received information or training about sustainable agricultural practices? If yes, who provided the information or training?
6. Which of the agricultural assets do you own?
7. Before your involvement in the RWA crop farming project , how was your household been coping to maintain household food and nutrition security

Research question 2: How accessible is land for agriculture to rural women assembly members?

1. Do you own the land you are using for this crop production? If yes, how did you acquire it? If no, how did you get to use the land?
2. What are the measurements of the land you are using?
3. Is the land enough for your crop farming intensions? If no, how are you planning to get the enough land?

Research question 3: What is the impact of crop farming on rural women household livelihood security?

1. Do you think that RWA crop farming has impact on your household livelihood security? If yes, explain how, If no, elaborate why?
2. Before engaging in RWA crop farming, what were your other livelihood activities?
3. After harvesting, where do you take your crops to? And why there particularly? If not, what do you do with your harvest?
4. How much have you been able to make in RWA crop farming, ever since you indulged in it?
5. What do you use the money for?
6. Do you think the accumulation is enough for your household needs?
7. Are there any other sources of income in your household? If yes, please explain the sources.

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Interview questions for focus group discussions

Introduction to the participants

My name is Thaba-Bosiu Chabeli and I am Master's student in the department of Development-Studies at National University of Lesotho. The purpose of this study that I am carrying is to understand the contribution of RWA Crop Farming to the livelihoods of rural women and their empowerment. It is important for me to have an interview with primarily because of your leadership position in your group. I should point out that the information you provide will be kept in confidence and that your name will remain anonymous throughout the analysis and presentation of the study findings. I therefore ask you if you are free to participate so that we can resume the interview discussion and if not, we can just end here.

Questions:

1. When did you start your Rural Women's Assembly Group?
2. When did you start your crop farming project?
3. What are some socio-economic circumstances that led you to come together?
4. Indicate how you were selected (criteria) to become members of the group at this inception?
5. How many were you at inception and how many are you today?
6. Did you receive any form of training after the inception? If so please explain the kind of training that was given.
7. What is your main source of income to help sustain your crop farming project?
8. Which seeds have you chosen for your crop farming and why?
9. What agricultural assets do you own?
10. Why do you think that crop farming is the best to improve your livelihoods?
11. Has the crops you have selected improved your household food and nutrition security?
12. Explain how you have acquired the land you are using for your crop farming.
13. How many acres of land are in use now for your crop farming? Is it enough for your intentions? If not, please explain why.
14. After harvesting what do you do with the crops you have produced?

15. Are there any business entities you are working with? Please mention them and explain how you are working with them.
16. What are your challenges in your crop farming? And whom do you think is responsible or in a better place to resolve them?
17. Since its inception what are your three best achievements by your crop farming project?
18. Has your livelihoods really improved after engaging in crop farming?
19. What are the other needs that you still have as rural women?
20. In your opinion, do you think that RWA has succeeded in improving your livelihoods and empowering you as rural women? If yes, please explain.
21. What are some of gender-based challenges you are still facing as rural women?