

**Gender Relations and Women's Livelihoods in the Post-Mine Retrenchment era: a
Case Study in Mafeteng, Lesotho**

by

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Mini- dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters
Degree in Social Sciences specializing in Gender Studies in the faculty of Humanities

at the

University of Pretoria
Department of Sociology

MAGISTER SOCIETATIS SCIENTAE

August 2009

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Acknowledgements

I thank God first and foremost for without him this mini- dissertation would not be possible. I would not have had the strength, on my own to undertake this research project. To my friends and family in South Africa and Lesotho, for their encouragement and support and believing in my capabilities more than I did.

This study would not have been a pleasant learning experience were it not for the patient instruction of my supervisor, Professor Kammila Naidoo to whom I am extremely grateful. She and the lecturers in the Department of Sociology have guided me and contributed greatly to my sociological imagination. The Basotho women that I interviewed and spent time with during my fieldwork are the ones that enabled me to compile an insightful research paper. My utmost gratitude goes out to them, for their warm reception and willingness to take time to participate in my research. I would also like to thank the chief of Mafeteng as well as the chiefs of the villages that I visited, for allowing me access into their territory.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree of this or any other university or institute of learning.

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Abstract

Lesotho has been a source of migrant labour for many years, with men crossing the borders to work on South African mines. Men left their homes in pursuit of mine work, leaving behind their wives to look after the household. Women would receive remittances from their husbands, which they used to survive, and for the upkeep of the home while husbands were away. As Lesotho is an agricultural society, women were involved in farming for subsistence, with some women being able to sell their produce. Men were the breadwinners and women the housekeepers, according to prevailing gender norms. With the mine retrenchments that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, many men returned to Lesotho, with no job prospects due to the employment deficit in the country. Many women are no longer receiving remittances, and are now looking after their households with their husbands being at home, unemployed. This mini-dissertation delves into the livelihoods of these women whose life circumstances have changed now that their husbands have returned. It looks at the changed gender relations within the household as well as economic strategies of survival that women employ in these trying times, given their culturally determined positions in Basotho society.

Abstrak

Lesotho is al 'n bron van migrasie arbeiders vir baie jare, met mans wat die grense kruis om op die Suid-Afrikaanse myne te gaan werk. Mans het hulle wonings verlaat met die vooruitsig op mynwerk, terwyl hulle eggenote agterbly om na die huishouding om te sien. Vrouens ontvang finansiële hulp van hulle mans, wat hulle gebruik het om te oorleef, en vir die instandhouding van die huis terwyl hulle mans weg was. Aangesien Lesotho 'n landbou gemeenskap is, was vrouens betrokke in bestaansboerdery, met sommige vroue in staat om produkte te verkoop. Volgens die oorhoofs aanvaarde norm was mans die broodwinners en vrouens die huisopsitters. Hierdie mini-verhandeling kyk dieper na die veranderde lewensomstandighede van vrouens wie se mans teruggekeer het. Dit kyk na die veranderde geslagsverhoudinge binne die huishouding, asook die ekonomiese strategieë van oorlewing wat vrouens toepas in die moeilike omstandighede, veral in die lig van hul kulturele posisies in die Basotho samelewing.



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Chapter 1: Introduction to the study

Lesotho is a country that is entirely landlocked by South Africa. In the past, labour on South African mines was drawn from the black male South African population as well as from neighbouring countries such as Lesotho. The demand for labour from Lesotho has declined, leading to shrinking remittances at the domestic levels. “As the demand for migrant labour declined and unemployed migrant workers returned to Lesotho, remittances shrank from about 60 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the 1980s to about 30 per cent in 1999”(IFAD, 2007). This impacted on women in rural households who have relied heavily on these remittances to survive.

The economic strategies of these women have changed since their husbands have been retrenched. They now have to struggle for alternative means of sustaining their livelihoods, given the reduced or non-existent remittances. Many of the men are now at home, unemployed and only receiving a small amount of money for contract work or ‘piece jobs’. These are not permanent jobs and are often of short duration, therefore not bringing in stable income to the household. In the men’s absence they functioned as de facto heads; with the men present in large numbers, they continue to play key decision-making roles. “More than half of all households in Lesotho are headed by women” (IFAD, 2007). If this is the case, there needs to be adequate policies in place to ensure that women are given the opportunity to sustain their livelihoods. Women need to be involved in the process of development, alongside men, and most importantly, they need to be given the skills and the resources to do so. This is important because if women head more than half of all the households, and they are not employed, this not only becomes detrimental to them, but to the country as well.

Gender relations within the household are an important factor when looking at the role of women in sustaining their livelihoods as well as the livelihoods of their families, because women, who were homemakers and simply receiving their husbands’ remittances, can no longer survive on what their husbands provide. Their circumstances have changed, and this mini dissertation draws on ethnographic insights to illuminate how this has changed and how it affects women, taking into account their social and gendered positions in Basotho society.

1.2. Rationale for the study

Researchers such as Maloka (1997) and Sharp and Spiegel (1990), have shown that women displayed much agency and even turned to prostitution and beer brewing as ways of earning an income, in addition to drawing on the remittances that they received from their husbands. Women tended to hide these ‘alternative’ practices that were seen as taboo in Basotho culture, especially for women, but they did this to earn an extra income for the household without their husbands knowing.

A great concern of mine is that rural women in Lesotho have the potential to contribute a lot more to the household but are not allowed to do so, due to prevailing gender norms and relations, especially now that men are at home and reasserting themselves as heads of households. Literature suggests that women were a lot more autonomous in decision-making when their husbands were away, and would seem to have been “better off”, being able to earn some extra money (Mueller, 1977). When husbands were resident, the women were often reluctant to earn well (or admit that they earned money independently). Even if women could earn some extra money, they are not supposed to be earning more than their husbands as it is not culturally correct, mainly in the rural areas and is seen as undermining a man’s authority. When it comes to formal employment, women are also paid a lot less than their male counterparts.

Women’s subordinate position dictates every aspect of their lives. In instances where women move across the border to farm, they are still paid lower wages than their male counterparts. They move across the border to work on farms and probably work for less money than they would in Lesotho. “There are clearly more women than men working on Free State farms as seasonal labourers” (Ulicki and Crush, 2000:65). The reason given by Ulicki and Crush is that men cannot work on these farms and earn such a meagre wage. They interviewed a Mosotho district officer who stated that:

“Farmers do not pay wages that attract men. Men have been used to a higher wage. For instance, Deemster has promised to pay these people R8 per day, but our minimum in Lesotho for such physical work is 22 Maloti per day. The fact that women workers are the ones is because their population does not mind but men could not stand to work for such a meagre wage” (Ulicki and Crush, 2000: 66).

Here again it is seen as a norm that men are the ones who are supposed to earn a higher wage, and women are not to exceed this level. This is true, despite the fact that “women have...tended to have higher literacy rates than men, and play a predominant role as heads of households” (Sephomolo, 2002). They are however, as mentioned before, not given the opportunities to do something with their knowledge and skills, and this is mainly because of their position as women. Women should be given opportunities and shown how to use them for themselves and the country. Goebel and Epprecht believe that this should be the case, stating that: “Yet while Basotho women are on the whole, better educated than Basotho men, they continue to face systematic discrimination on the basis of their sex. If any country could benefit from a WID component in its Structural Adjustment Programme, it would surely be Lesotho” (Goebel & Epprecht, 1995:4).

The need for women to be empowered and afforded more opportunities on an economic and global scale is articulated by Moser and Moser:

“In 1995, governments across the world signed the Beijing Platform for Action. Along with their endorsement of the plan of action went a commitment to achieve ‘gender equality and the empowerment of women’. Gender mainstreaming was identified as the most important mechanism to reach this ambitious goal. Throughout the process, international institutions have provided a variety of support to governments and civil society alike, be it analytical, institutional, or financial in nature” (Moser & Moser, 2005:11).

In light of the above statement, it is clear that women have been put on the agenda worldwide, when it comes to development. But what does this mean for women in Lesotho? My intention in this research is to investigate the extent to which mine retrenchments have had an effect on the household division of labour, gender roles and women’s livelihoods. I aim to see whether or not mine retrenchments have had an effect on rural women, by hearing from the women themselves. Towards this end, I look at the linkages between the effects of mine retrenchments on gender relations and on women’s work and earning power. Gender relations in the country and the position of Basotho women in society, have an impact on women’s livelihoods and earning power. Before mine retrenchments, women relied on remittances, but may have also been involved in other income generating practices, despite

the fact that they are discouraged from being the sole breadwinners of the household and cannot earn (in terms of patriarchal norms) more than their husbands (Sweetman, 1999). With the decline of remittances and men now returning home from the mines, women no longer have a secure source of income for sustaining their households.

1.3. Problem Statement

In Lesotho, education benefited women more than men. “In the past, when males went directly from herding to working in the mines, there was little incentive for them to go to school. This resulted in a significant gender difference in favour of females” (IFAD, 2007). Momsen (2004) also highlights the fact that Lesotho had the highest female adult literacy level in the world at the beginning of the millennium. Although women had better access to education in Lesotho, there are still barriers to their earning power, and ability to take action towards improving and sustaining their livelihoods, due to patriarchal relations. Are women involved in income generating strategies and how effective are they? What do they mean to rural Basotho women who now have their husbands at home, constraining them and limiting their autonomy?

The broad objective of this research project is to investigate the livelihoods of rural women in Mafeteng, Lesotho. Previous research such as that done by Colin Murray (1981) in Lesotho, looked at the effect that migrant labour had on households. Now that most migrants have returned from the mines, I would like to look at the effect of the return of men on gender and power relations, and the extent to which this has affected women’s participation in economic or income generating activities in Lesotho.

1.4. Key Questions

Two key questions that I would like to answer are: 1) how, if at all, have mine retrenchments influenced changes in gender and power relations in rural Lesotho households? 2) How do rural women perceive their economic activities, and the ways in which their abilities to generate income have been affected in the post-mine retrenchment period? An in-depth investigation into the livelihoods of these women will enable a better understanding of the specific effects of mine retrenchments on the livelihoods of rural women in Lesotho.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

It is important to understand the historical position of women in Lesotho in order to understand the gender relations that are currently unfolding in the society. The migrant labour system played an important role in shaping gender relations alongside culturally constructed gender divisions of labour.

2.2 Historical Context

Labour migration from Lesotho to South Africa has a long history that stems from the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa. Cheap labour was required to feed the segregationist capitalist state that was characteristic of the South African government of the time. Because of Lesotho's dependency on South Africa, many men in the rural areas opted to migrate across the border to find work, leaving behind their families. Women were responsible for the upkeep of the household in their absence. Colin Murray (1981) has done extensive work in the area of migrant labour and gender relations in Lesotho. In his book "*Families divided*", he examines the way that the migrant labour system in Lesotho has contributed to changes in gender relations and the family structures of many Basotho people in rural areas. Carvalho (1988) who has done research on agriculture and economic development in Lesotho writes: "How long Lesotho can continue to rely on these income flows is uncertain" (Carvalho, 1988:35). This, he wrote in 1988, referring to the reliance that the country has on miners' remittances. Some 20 years down the line, I would like to research the impact of decreasing remittances for women in Lesotho, who previously relied heavily on their husbands' remittances.

As Colin Murray states, with reference to the past, "In their capacity as married women left behind by absent husbands, an extant conjugal relationship specifies a combination of heavy domestic responsibility with a variable degree of economic instability" (Murray, 1981: 156). Women in Basotho society were seen as subordinate to men and had very little earning power. The man was the head and the sole breadwinner of the household. Women were to depend on their remittances for household income. Much of the earlier work, which includes Colin Murray's work as well as work by Colin Bundy, "*The rise and fall of the African*

peasantry”, (1988) deals with the change in family structures prior to the 1987 workers’ strike, after which many miners returned home from the mines due to retrenchment.

2.3 The position of women in Basotho society

Traditionally, Basotho women look after the household and are the primary caregivers in the home. “Under traditional law, Basotho women were jural minors. They had rights of access to property, support, and the courts only through their male relations-fathers or husbands” (Eldredge, 1991:728).

Maloka (1997) explains how women are socialized in Basotho culture, from a young age:

“Female children were taught to sit ‘properly’, and in every way were prepared for womanhood, which principally meant being a wife and a mother. As minors, they had no role in the public domain, being denied any participation in the political affairs of the country. The only time they could enter the chiefs’ courts, the khotla, where village matters were discussed and court cases heard and tried by married men, was as witness or accused in a case, or when bringing food or beer” (Maloka, 1997: 103).

The above statement is an indication of women’s position in Basotho society. They were not involved in any decision-making and were expected to serve their husbands. Their roles were as mother and wife. Safilios-Rothschild is also of the same opinion, she states:

“Whether a woman’s work and income contributions affect their power standing and allow them to become autonomous depends on the rigidity of the prevailing system of sex stratification in the society and the strength of the sustaining patriarchal values. When the system is rigid, powerful male supremacy norms dictate that a woman’s status be defined only through the men who are responsible for her: Father, husband, brother, or son” (Safilios Rothschild, 1985:299).

With regard to my research, it is important to know the position of Basotho women in society, to have a better understanding of why mine retrenchments had an effect on the women’s roles, and to ascertain the reasons for any changes in the livelihoods of rural

women. As Eldredge (1991) states, the traditional laws were the means rather than the cause of women's subordination. The fact that they were subordinate plays a role in, and offers insights into, how they go about their daily lives.

Mueller (1977) says that women in rural areas need to sustain their households so that they are ready and prepared for their husbands' retirement from the mines. This hints at what women are supposed to be doing while their husbands are away. But surely women cannot simply be bound to non-productive domestic responsibilities, as women cannot solely rely on remittances that they receive usually only once a year. This cannot be enough to sustain them and their families.

“Other articles demonstrate the variety of strategies women took to survive in a changing world. David Coplan's description of women from Lesotho migrating to South Africa in search of employment brings a different perspective to the lives of women who might more commonly be considered "wicked," as they became involved in selling alcohol, working as prostitutes, and making their way through associating with male gangsters” (Sheldon, 2003: 4).

This notion of “wicked women” suggests some resistance that women may have displayed whilst their husbands were away. This will be further explored.

2.4 Women in Development

The Women in Development (WID) policy framework which emerged in the 1970's “sought to ‘add on’ women-specific projects to existing activities” (Taylor, 1997:7) However, merely ‘adding on’ women to existing activities did not address gender inequalities, instead “this approach tended to view women as passive recipients of development assistance, rather than as active agents in transforming their own economic, societal, political and cultural realities. It was therefore usually gender-blind and ultimately biased against women” (Taylor, 1997:7). As a response to this, the Gender and Development approach came into being, “ It recognizes that improving the status of women is not a separate, isolated issue but needs to be addressed by taking into account the status of both men and women, their differing life courses and that equal treatment will not necessarily produce equal outcomes” (Taylor, 1997:7). A thorough understanding of gender in development is necessary in order for it to be implemented, and

this does pose a challenge, particularly when it comes to breaking down traditional and cultural gender roles to be able to place women as active participants in the country's development. This has been a challenge in many African countries.

As far as the Beijing commitment is concerned, "A March 1997 survey by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) found that only 10 African countries had drawn up action plans. A more hopeful indication was the September 1997 signing of a Gender Declaration by the leader of the 14 member Southern African Development Community (SADC) at their meeting in Malawi" (Manuh, 1998). Lesotho, being a SADC member state, was signatory to this declaration. I am curious to see whether, and in what ways this declaration has been adhered to. If the women have not benefitted from this declaration, what are the barriers that they face, and that may hinder their equal participation in the development of Lesotho?

Gender issues are extremely important for development and need to go hand in hand with development to meet transformation goals. Yes, gender policies may be put in place, but how effective are they and have they been properly administered and understood, especially for women at grass-roots level who also need to be targeted for development. There is no point having policies but insufficient mechanisms to implement them. "Integrating gender into poverty alleviation programmes requires a thorough understanding of gender relations and well crafted strategies by development organizations" (Monium & Osman, 2002:22). Barriers may exist, hampering progression towards implementing such policies, and there has been much criticism against governments in this regard. The process of integrating gender in development involves change, which cannot happen overnight, but takes time. This is especially the case in countries where women have been marginalized not only in terms of access to resources and education, but also due to cultural practices and tradition. Although women in Lesotho had better access to education in Lesotho, there are still barriers to their active involvement in development processes. In this mini-dissertation I also look at women's own experiences of gender and development programmes and whether or not they have given them the ability to use their knowledge and how this may or may not hamper the country's development. Being generally more educated than men, women should be able to put their knowledge into practice instead of it being clasped in the grip of patriarchy.

2.5 WID in Lesotho

Goebel and Epprecht (1995) attribute the failure of WID in Lesotho to three factors: Firstly, competition with South Africa in terms of entrepreneurship. Secondly, the political climate in Lesotho (WID projects associated with government) and the fact that foreigners, offer bribes to officials, and Basotho with connections often also get jobs through bribes in cahoots with foreigners. The capital is invested outside the country, particularly in South Africa without being invested into Lesotho. Third are the cultural factors that were previously mentioned, and the fact that rural women do not, or rather cannot have earning power.

In terms of entrepreneurship, South Africa may be way ahead of Lesotho, and people would rather buy South African goods of better quality at the same price as they would in Lesotho, given the currency equivalent. For example, vegetables grown on a large South African farm using good fertilizer and farming methods would be perceived to be of better quality compared to vegetables grown on a smallholding in Lesotho with less developed farming methods and technology. These goods will not only be bought by people within the country, but also foreigners who would rather purchase and invest in South African goods, especially consumables. In terms of supply and demand, international markets may favour South African goods over goods produced in Lesotho given their different economic statuses and levels of development. (SME Alert, 2006). This may also be a factor that prevents development programmes from adequately working in Lesotho. Women would stand a better chance of making money outside the country than in Lesotho.

Harris (1993) also writes about a change in focus from donor agencies that are now concentrating on urban rather than rural development projects. She says that:

“A re-emphasis has been made in support to urban, capital intensive projects instead. However, this might in part be reflective of a change in emphasis from rural development to urban, industrial development by the World Bank and other donor agencies. Nevertheless, there are alternative views on the current development emphasis” (Harris, 1993:176).

With the urban areas becoming more developed, how are rural women in rural areas helped out in terms of development? If this carries on there will be competition with not only South Africa, but also more industrialized areas in Lesotho, leaving the rural areas impoverished,

and women seeking jobs in town where they believe they are better off. If the urban areas are the ones that are constantly benefiting from development strategies and the rural areas are left out, this in a sense defeats the purpose of the country's development, because the rural areas are the ones that need to be worked upon. Women in the rural areas are the ones who are hardest hit by poverty, and need to be given the necessary resources in the rural areas, to help themselves and gain adequate skills to do so. South Africa is seen as the land of milk and honey, and I set out to find out from Basotho women whether this is true or not, by looking at the opportunities they see for themselves, and how they view their position in terms of access to resources in Lesotho. This was done in an attempt to try and understand how they view empowerment strategies.

The political climate in Lesotho also has an effect on development strategies. "WID-type projects, for example have suffered arson and women have been ostracized, or worse, because of their association with the government" (Epperecht: 1992 as quoted by Goebel and Epprecht, 1995:4). This is why many NGOs are headed by foreigners, as many women would find it difficult to trust one of their own. The problem with this is that foreigners are somewhat distanced from the realities of the lives of Basotho women. Issues of gender and development for them may be different in meaning to the Basotho. One cannot just try and implement such policies without the people fully understanding what it means. This would then become a lost cause because it would not be adequately suited to the people that such policies would be administered to. As Goebel and Epprecht state, "Clearly, the fact that the owner of a business is not a Mosotho means that Basotho entrepreneurship is not being directly fostered" (Goebel & Epprecht, 1995:10). If Basotho people tend to trust foreign aid more than aid from Basotho themselves, then how are women who come up with their own initiatives supposed to encourage other women to do the same? In this instance, government initiatives are also then mistrusted. Integrating gender issues into development, which is a governmental policy, may also not be adhered to due to this factor, and this is one of the challenges that governments might face. "Despite the strong cause for public action, even well- intentioned policy makers can find it difficult to implement unpopular policies" (World Bank report 2001).

Wendoh and Wallace see this differently, stating that many Basotho would rather stick to their own, than take heed of foreign aid. They state that given the patriarchal structure of African societies, "At the heart of the perceived hostility to gender equality work as being

‘foreign’, ‘threatening’ and a plan to usurp men’s power’ is the sense that it is external and not relevant. Indeed the approach [of gender equality] is seen as misunderstanding the essence of African societies. Such views can be found inside governments, even while they openly espouse the need to work on gender inequalities” (Wendoh and Wallace, 2005: 72). In this case both government, civil society and NGOs need to be on the same page, understanding gender relations and adapting it to the specific context, as there is no point in one group saying one thing and the other saying something else, both in the hope of achieving gender equality.

The problems with integrating gender issues into development are “the lack of staff capacity, (exacerbated by the frequent set of –junior-consultants); organizational culture and attitudes, including resistance to the notion of gender equality; the treatment of gender equality as a separate process, which marginalizes rather than mainstreams the issue; and a lack of feeling of ownership of the policy” (DAC 1998; Derbyshire 2002; Valk 2000, as quoted by Moser & Moser, 2005:15). Gender mainstreaming seems to have become a ‘buzz-word’ and this may mean that it is not fully understood, and countries, particularly Lesotho are implementing something that isn’t their own. They cannot lay claim to the policy that is of Western origin, and does not necessarily take into account cultural practices, etc. which may be barriers to the policy actually working in an African context.

“Rethinking the role of women is one of the challenges Africa faces at the start of a new century. Across the continent, men hold most of the political, economic and social power and traditional female subservience is limiting opportunities for economic and social progress” (Chicago Tribune, 2004). If men hold most of the political power, integrating gender in development also becomes a challenge as men may resist gender policies and have them as “cover ups”, without properly implementing them. Power struggles in a gender context are a major barrier to implementing gender in development across many countries in Africa. On the other hand, “ultimately gender mainstreaming is a process rather than a goal. Therefore it may not make sense to argue that mainstreaming has failed” (Moser and Moser, 2005:15). When one thinks of how various institutions have taken gender mainstreaming as a goal, believing that once it is in place they have fulfilled the requirements of gender equity, it is clear that what Moser and Moser say, is true. There is no point in placing women in positions that they previously could not occupy, and expecting things to work out towards gender equity and equality. It is a process, and the process needs to be sustained. With more women

taking seats in government, things may change in African societies as is already happening. It may take time to break cultural barriers, but as Carvalho says:

“In Lesotho, considerable work needs to be done to derive a more comprehensive development strategy, or plan. Even if the government policy making bodies were able to provide the necessary structure and channels for formulating consistent policy, research would still not be able to provide quantitative framework for addressing important development questions” (Carvalho, 1988: 64).

It is one thing to say that men who have been retrenched from the mines should be provided with jobs and so should their wives, but how does this then affect household gender relations? How does this change their mindsets with regard to what men and women can do to support themselves and their families?

2.6 Women’s work before retrenchments

Before the mine retrenchments, rural women in Lesotho were involved in a number of activities to support themselves and their households, although they still relied on their husbands’ remittances. The activities that Sharp, Spiegel and Maloka write about are that women were involved in prostitution and ran shebeens from their homes where they brewed beer. Sharp and Spiegel (1990) focus on these activities, showing that women had no real alternatives, and these were the two ways that they could earn enough money for themselves and their children, as an add-on to their husbands’ remittances. Farm work, according to Maloka (1997), Sharp and Spiegel (1990), was not a stable source of income for these women in rural areas; however, Sharp and Spiegel (1990) do suggest that women were expected to be involved in agriculture when their husbands were away. This is part of their duty as wives and as evident from the way that rural women in Basotho society are brought up, (to be the subservient wife, taking care of the household) women had to comply. This is supported by Mueller who talks about women who were involved in working on communal gardens. “The absence of men has left them in charge of subsistence production, which is in turn carried out with the aid of others. The garden, besides yielding some money, is an arena in which women have learned to organize and work together toward a specified goal” (Mueller, 1977:158).

Ulicki and Crush (2000), in their study, say that women earned some income from working as seasonal workers on farms in the Free State, some farmed on their land (subsistence farming) and others engaged in informal sector activities such as selling vegetables, beer-brewing, piece work, carrying parcels, herding or sewing. Also contrary to what Sharp and Spiegel (1990) and Maloka (1997) affirm, Gordon (1994) quotes “the absent men have such authority that forward looking well-educated wives are afraid to innovate for fear their husbands will disapprove” (Gay, n.d as quoted by Gordon, 1994:438). This suggests that some women may have complied with their husbands wishes while others may have not, but still had the fear of non-compliance, perhaps because of the taboo nature of women trying to bring more income into the household. This mini dissertation looks at women’s work before their husbands were retrenched, why not or why women complied, and how it benefited them. The literature suggests that women, despite their husbands’ remittances, still needed more money to survive, so many of them sought out avenues to do so. This is an indication of women’s agency. Eldredge sees women’s production, however small it may have been, as being very significant and contributed highly to the household income. She states:

“Male control over resources meant that women’s share of the household resources was limited, and the only way women could increase their resources available to them for consumption was to increase the total resources of the household. Under these circumstances, women were motivated to produce surpluses (through the sale of handicrafts) with the goal of contributing to the overall wealth of the household. Women’s efforts to improve their own material position represented an important internal dynamic generating income growth and change in 19th century Lesotho” (Eldredge, 1991:43)

This suggests that when husbands were away at the mines, women were driven to do something about their circumstances. Women were actively involved in trying to reduce their dependence and vulnerability.

2.7 The effects of mine retrenchments on rural women’s work

According to Mueller (1977), men who have been retrenched from mines are involved in work such as building houses, but this earns them a scant and irregular wage. This wage is less than what they would have earned on the mines and is not necessarily enough to support

a family. Women are not encouraged to be the sole breadwinners of the household, yet they have some earning capacity, because it is evident that while their husbands were away they managed to do some work to bring in household income. The burden on women who are the home-makers may become more in this regard, as they have to sustain the family, but seem to be restrained from doing so. Safilios-Rothschild (1985) says that men who returned from the mines, did not do much work and women were still primarily involved in agriculture and looking after the household. “The available data however, show that the 2-2 ½ months of home leave are spent mainly on livestock-related tasks or simply relaxing, while little time is spent on farming” (Safilios-Rothschild, 1985:303). With this in mind I set out to understand whether the same pattern persists in recent cases of male retrenchment. From this information, one can see whether women’s workload increased when men returned or not, and how this has an effect on women. Safilios-Rothschild also mentions how although women were primarily the ones involved in agriculture, the men still had a say in terms of decision-making when it came to agricultural activities. Any effort that women make towards contributing to the household would have to be monitored by the husband. Sweetman takes a different stance on women’s work during the period in which men worked on the mines. She states:

“When I asked women about what they did each day when their husbands still had a job in mining, I was prepared for accounts of overworked women, their multiple livelihood strategies, but not for the very different response that I got. When I asked one respondent what activities she undertook in addition to childcare and housework, she stated: ‘nothing-I just sit on a rock’ (Sweetman 1999).

This may be an indication that women did not want to reveal their productive activities because they generally were not allowed to bring income into the household as it was traditionally the job of the male to do so. This is evident in what Sweetman further states: “It seemed that Basotho women’s productive activities, for example, the sale of crops from their gardens-were hidden” (Sweetman, 1999). Women would not want to reveal that they were going against customary law, even if they were merely trying to make ends meet, they should rather be doing housework, or “sitting on a rock” which is the disguised response that Sweetman got from the woman that she interviewed. This is what women were to be doing

while their husbands worked hard on the mines to provide for the family. This may however be a survival strategy that women employ, as Pearson also states:

“In rural sectors of many low- income countries, both men and women often report to census enumerators and researchers that women do not do any productive agricultural work, or they are just involved as family helpers or they carry out only domestic work. In fact most rural women spend the majority of their waking hours on a series of diverse activities including weeding and harvesting, collecting animal fodder, water and fuel wood, food processing and marketing of agricultural produce, all of which make a direct economic contribution to the household income” (Pearson,1992: 386).

In marriages where couples spent long periods apart, women needed to put on the façade, that they were completely dependent on their husbands. This was to maintain “harmony” in the household, as it was a cultural expectation (Sweetman, 1999). Even though women had their own ways of earning income, this was hidden. Goebel and Epprecht, however, are of the opinion that “...Workers [women workers were implied] tended to lack the work ethic that produces dedication and consistency in work...” (Goebel and Epprecht, 1995:13). They attribute the lack of women’s participation in development and income generation, as their general lack of a work ethic. Could this possibly mean that women relied too much on their husband’s remittances because they were not used to working hard for money?

Because of their position in Basotho society, women may not necessarily want to be seen as taking a ‘man’s role’ which is to be the provider of the household. This further augments Sweetman’s conclusions on women’s productive activities. Now in 2009, with the decrease in migrant labour and men returning home from the mines, men are around to enforce their dominance, therefore women, although they could contribute to the household, possibly more than men could, continue to be discouraged from bringing income into the household. Francis is of the same opinion, stating, “Men resisted the idea of their wives’ earning money outside the household. According to the prevailing gender ideology, ‘Sesotho tradition’ dictated that a husband should provide for his wife. Men should control cash” (Francis, 2002: 182). These were traditional customs that had to be adhered to. “These customary laws were the means for, rather than the case of, Basotho women’s subordination” (Eldredge, 1991:728). In a situation like this, which is typical of many African societies, women themselves may

contribute to their own oppression by resisting emancipatory initiatives. This may be a disruption to what they know and have been taught for generations, which is a great barrier to their earning capacity. “Women negotiated a delicate balance between increasing contribution to the household’s income without challenging prevailing gender norms” (Francis, 2002: 182).

Another reason why women would want to hide particular kinds of income generating activities would be, as mentioned before, that they are taboo in the Basotho culture. If women were involved in beer brewing and prostitution as Maloka (1997) and Sharp and Spiegel (1990) suggest, they would have had to stop these practices when their husbands returned or continue with them clandestinely as these may have been crucial sources of income. They could not produce other than for subsistence, and as Mueller (1977) writes, that although subsistence farming is necessary for the families survival, in order for this farming to be sustained, cash is needed for its upkeep, and how are women supposed to plant crops without money to buy seeds and tools? Women want to bring an income into the household but cannot do so easily. They cannot solely rely on agriculture as land deteriorates and natural disasters happen. Mina (1994) also mentions the fact that women didn’t have access to proper farming implements and that the mechanization of agriculture served to marginalize women.

Rural women in Lesotho’s agricultural practices seemed to be limited to subsistence production. This could be part of the reason why Basotho women chose to leave the country and work on South African farms. Even the small amounts of produce that women accumulate, are still not enough to sell on the market as there really is not much of a market to sell their goods. What they produce may be a lot less in comparison to goods that can be bought just across the border from South Africa. Ulicki and Crush suggest that “[g]rowing poverty, failing per capita agricultural production, and rural differentiation in Lesotho, coupled with increasingly limited local employment opportunities, are thus driving migrants from Lesotho to Free State farms as seasonal workers (Johnston, 1996 as quoted by Ulicki and Crush, 2000:74).

2.8 Economic and income generating strategies for Women in Lesotho

Safilios- Rothschild (1985) suggests that women’s groups or associations contribute to making women’s working and economic activities visible. These organizations portray

women's efforts to improve their lives and be independent of men. However, these organizations are often turned away when it comes to getting them registered as cooperatives. Women also lack the necessary skills, such as bookkeeping and marketing which would be of help to their organizations. This will be further explored, as the literature suggests that women in Lesotho are the more educated ones in comparison to their male counterparts. Perhaps the error in literature relates to the overrepresentation of urban women, and the underrepresentation of rural women. In addition to the fact that women lack necessary skills to start up these cooperatives, Safilios-Rothschild mentions that it is still preferred that women join mixed sex cooperatives instead of "striking out on their own" (Safilios-Rothschild, 1985). This may well be the only reason that women are turned away when registering their organizations. Saying that it is because women lack the necessary skills may be a cover-up to the real reason. Women also face the barrier of a lack of resources even if they were allowed to register their organizations, as they have no access to credit. These are some of the reasons why women cannot go beyond subsistence farming. This further perpetuates their role as homemaker. Safilios - Rothschild (1985) states, that although women are highly involved in agriculture, this does not necessarily improve their status or their livelihoods.

Involving women in income generating initiatives may be time - consuming and may add an extra burden to women who have no microwaves, dishwashers and washing machines as aids to everyday housework. They may not want to be involved in these initiatives because of their household duties, which are more important given the subordinate role of women in Lesotho. "Given the subordinate position of women in Basotho society socio-economically and politically, it seems surprising that women would initiate changes that increased their workload. I suggest that this occurred precisely as a result of their marginalized position in society" (Eldredge, 1991:726). For example, Sharp and Spiegel (1990) say that women are also restricted from door-to-door hawking, as their husbands would regard this as "wandering around" instead of staying at home. Their position in society is restrictive on rural women's ability to work and sustain their livelihoods. With regard to their own aspirations, a debate exists on the question of women's changing household roles and their desires (or not) for gender equality in Lesotho. I will seek to provide in-depth insight on this issue by way of a case study examining rural women's insights on (changing) gender relations and livelihoods in Mafeteng.

2.9 Conclusion

Migrant labour in Lesotho was a major source of income for families in Lesotho. This source of income has diminished over the years, and poses a threat to the livelihoods of many families. Women are the ones who look after the household needs, and men take care of the family financially. With reduced finances coming into the family, this becomes a problem especially for women who remain constrained and unable to act as sole breadwinners, despite the fact that their husbands are no longer working.

The position of rural women in Basotho society restricted them from fully carrying out their income generating capacity, and when husbands were away, literature suggests that there was some resistance to this. Women did find alternative means of bringing money into the household, although this was to an extent hidden.

The failure of WID programmes in Lesotho is attributed to a number of factors that need to be addressed on a number of different levels in order to successfully implement programmes geared at development, as it is evident that there is a need to utilise the skills of both men and women, and break down the barriers that prevent this from fully manifesting towards development. Foreign aid has its benefits in Basotho society, but can also pose a threat to the goal towards achieving gender equality. On the one hand, foreign aid is trusted because people want to see change and assistance in the country, and would rather take heed to NGO assistance because it is distanced from the country's politics, but their assistance may also be seen as a threat to already existing cultural norms, and irrelevant to Basotho people from a cultural context. It is important therefore to have integrated systems amongst government, NGO's and civil society, with an understanding of gender issues in light of the needs of the country.

Literature suggests a need to encourage and empower women to start up their own cooperatives and associations and the point of registering these cooperatives, there needs to be an understanding of the importance of women's contribution on an economic scale. Women should not be seen as "striking out on their own", but the importance of their contribution needs to be understood. Women may have the necessary skills for development, and this needs to be enhanced.

Gender norms dictate the lives of both men and women in Lesotho, who have to adhere to their gender roles in every sphere of society. Thus, income generating strategies may be hampered due to these gender norms. This holds implications not merely for the reproduction of households, but for the success of broader development initiatives that seek to empower women and create the conditions for gender equality.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Given the nature of my research topic, I made use of ethnography in terms of a naturalistic approach. “The key element of naturalism is the demand that the social researcher should adopt an attitude of ‘respect’ or ‘appreciation’ towards the social world.” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:6). This involves viewing the social world in its natural context, and trying to understand certain phenomena in the social world without disturbing natural processes. I looked specifically at the livelihoods of rural women in Lesotho, by observing and interacting with them in their natural settings. The area of study is Mafeteng in Lesotho, which is an area where there is a high concentration of miners and ex-miners and their families. I observed the interactions between men and women and their gender roles and asked questions relating to their work before and after the mine retrenchments. I selected as subjects of my study, 12 women, one from each village, whose husbands have been retrenched from the mines. I went around with them and interacted with a number of women in their villages who were in the same situation.

I employed a qualitative design, as I needed in- depth accounts on a specific issue. Kritzing (1999) states that: “The method is particularly useful for exploring people’s knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think, but how they think and why they think that way” (Kritzing, 1999:10). I studied the way in which people make sense of their world, and this is a key element of qualitative research. The way in which people interpret and construct their lives is important in understanding and answering the key questions of my research. Using a qualitative approach allowed me to get a holistic view of the issues that affect them, at a personal one-on-one basis, as well as what affects the larger community.

3.2 Research area

Mafeteng lies on the western border between Lesotho and South Africa. Mineworkers from this area did not have to travel that far to get in and out of South Africa (see Fig. 1.1). The town is divided into twelve wards, which are in the town itself and some stretch onto the outskirts. Each ward has a chief, and they report to the chief of Mafeteng.

The different wards, in which I conducted research, were:

Lifelekoaneng

This was the first area I visited; it was not too far out from town, and was close to where I was staying.

Khubetsoana

Khubetsoana is the next village after Lifelekoaneng. I had originally thought they were one area, but was later told that they were two separate wards with different chiefs.

Matholeng

This area was situated in a large flat area of Mafeteng, speckled with houses that ranged from mud huts to large face bricked houses. There were a lot of houses that were half completed some with no window frames or no roofs. It was a modern looking area that had a small shopping centre with a general store and a paraffin or gas outlet. I noticed that there were a lot of young people in the area with lots of people moving about. It seemed quite busy.

Ha Seithleko

Ha Seithleko is a smaller area compared to Matholeng. This area has no brick houses, many of them were small, either stone houses or mud huts. It was very different to Matholeng, as there was nothing modern about it at all. The village stretches up the side of a mountain.

Ha Lebenkele

This was a sparsely populated area without much grazing land for livestock or agriculture.

Ha Sekoati

Ha Sekoati is a quiet little village, with houses that are fairly spaced out. I went to get permission from the chief of the area, who told me that he won't be there the next day, but there would be someone at the house, who would be able to take me around. There were not that many people around the area either, as it was very quiet, with nobody moving around. There was just a herd of cattle that was grazing nearby.

Thabaneng

Thabaneng means "place of the hills". A very apt name for the area, as it was quite hilly. I arrived at the chief's house, panting, after the climb. He lives alone, and has pigs and cows that he looks after. I sat a while with him as we talked about what I was going to do in his area. He said that there were quite a few ex-miners in the area but he would delegate someone who would accompany me and show me the various households that I could visit.

Ha Matsepe

This was a fairly small area overlooking the town. It is named after the current chief Matsepe.

Ha Qhobete

Ha Qhobete is an area just close to Ha Matsepe, it's quite sparsely inhabited. On the first day I asked the chieftess about the demarcation of the area, and realized that it is quite large, but there very few inhabitants. On the first day, I arrived at the chieftess' house; she was sitting outside addressing a group of people. She had cows, sheep, chickens and a huge pig in her yard. There were a lot of animals grazing in the area, and not many crops being grown there. The fields were further out from the village.

Mafeteng Reserve

Mafeteng Reserve is the area round the Mafeteng hospital. It is a fairly well established area, not like the other little villages around Mafeteng. This area was close to town, and residents of the area are mainly doctors, nurses and teachers. I was fortunate enough to be living at the chief's house during my stay in Mafeteng. Many of the men and women there were professionals or their husbands had not worked in the mines.

Matlapeng

Matlapeng is also an area that is close to town, almost like a township, unlike the villages that were a bit more rural. There were no fields close by or animals grazing. It was an area where there were quite a few shanties, and it was quite populated, compared to the other areas I had been to. People were walking around and everybody was busy. It's quite a bustling area with more young people than older ones. The scenery was quite different to the scenery on the villages I had visited before. The houses were close together and there was very little space for people to grow vegetables in their gardens.

Ramokhele

Ramokhele was the last area in Mafeteng that I visited. It was also right in town, and stretched all the way up the hill, overlooking Mafeteng. It felt like a completely different area, and was more of a slum area, with more shanty dwellings compared to Matlapeng. In this area however, there were road works going on, and community members were helping to build tarred roads. This was the first residential area in Mafeteng to have tarred roads, but they were still incomplete. The whole of the area close to town, which is Matlapeng, and Mafeteng reserve, was to be tarred. There were also a lot of people in this area, and many of them were young people.



Base 801441 (B00980) 2 90



= MAFETENG DISTRICT

Fig 1.1 Map of Lesotho indicating location of Mafeteng

3.3 Data Collection Method

Ethnography is a qualitative research method that is employed when a researcher seeks to understand human relations and directly study the human lived experience. The role of the ethnographer is to obtain as much qualitative information from the society or people whom he or she studies, by having first-hand accounts of their experiences and by observing aspects of their daily lives. Qualitative methods allow researchers to get close to the subjects in order to gather meaningful information and to derive concepts from the data that are gathered (Burgess, 1984:2).

Qualitative research requires in-depth accounts of the participants lives, “In most characteristic form, it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives, for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions-in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1995:1). One may look at a particular society or group of people, and make certain observations with regard to their behaviour and interpret them in one’s own way, without getting the true meaning of why people behave in a certain way, as the reasons may be totally different from the reasons that one has conjured up. This is particularly apt when it comes to understanding different cultures. For example, a westernized view of African society may be portrayed in literature without getting true accounts of the way that the society operates. Ethnographic research is done by trying to obtain information about a certain culture or society, by observing and interpreting their lives. Living within the specific society under study is common, so that one can directly experience what the participants are experiencing. Thus ethnography involves becoming a part of the society under study, for a long period of time in order to get a maximum understanding of their lives. It involves interaction between the community under observation and the researcher. Prus (1996) illustrates the way in which the researcher needs to understand the community, substantiating the necessity for the researcher to become involved in the community as part of the community:

“Central to the interactionist approach is the notion that human life is community life; that *human life is thoroughly intersubjective in its essence*. At its base is the recognition that humans (and human behaviour) cannot be understood apart from the community context

in which people live. *Humans derive their (social) essences from the communities in which they are located, and human communities are contingent on the development of shared (or intersubjectivity acknowledged) symbols or languages.* This means that there can be no self without the (community) other” (Prus, 1996:10).

I set out to research the lives of rural women and their experiences in order to understand their day-to-day experiences in light of the gender relations between women and men returned from the mines. I spent some time interacting with them for a maximum period of four months. In this way I was able to find out how these women go about each day, and what activities they perform. This enabled me to understand whether and how, their workloads have decreased or increased with men returning from mines, as well as the gender relations that are in play in the community. I was also able to understand the restrictions or opportunities that they have towards sustaining their livelihoods.

There are also strengths and weaknesses regarding the researcher being an insider or an outsider in the research process. In many developing countries, the researcher may be working amidst internal conflict in the country or community, and this may hinder the research process, especially if the researcher is not aware of the political tension or does not subscribe to the values of society. Conflict may arise, when an outsider is not aware of such a situation. Outsiders can however “stand back and abstract material from the research experience” (Burgess, 1984:23). The researcher does not have the obligation that comes with being a part of society and is thus “free of commitments to those who are studied and therefore more likely to be objective” (Burgess, 1984:23).

I regarded myself as an insider, because I grew up in Lesotho and speak the local language. I was also in a sense, an outsider as well, because the community that I studied is not a community that I am presently a part of. Even though I grew up in Lesotho, I have some understanding of the lives of these women, but I have not had the full-lived experience of being a woman from the rural areas. I saw it as an advantage that I was not a total outsider, and had some understanding of the life and culture of these women. Being a woman as well made it easier for me to interact with these women.

I collected data using field notes. This enabled me to take notes of the events I encountered throughout the day. Being fluent in the local language Sesotho, enabled me to write down

what the women would tell me, and translate it into English. The various activities that we were performed throughout the day, and pertinent issues that were raised; were written down as they happened.

I took field notes of my observations of people's everyday routines, to have written accounts of these women's lives. I believe that this approach was effective in capturing their accounts and was useful to reflect upon when constructing the analysis.

Taking notes allowed me to formulate the stories of these women's lives, looking at what activities may be hidden in the community. I also took notes, capturing what these women told me as I interacted with them, informing them that I will be writing down important issues that they tell me about. This enabled me to have a broader view of these women's lives, the way they live, and the conditions that they may live under. I was also able to make interpretations from what I saw and what I wrote about which gave me a wider view of what is happening in the community

Since the community of Mafeteng is relatively small, I used a snowball sampling method by visiting each village chief in the 12 villages and finding out about women whose husbands have been retrenched from the mines and interact with these women. I was able to gain access to the small villages in Mafeteng. I thought that focusing on each village separately would allow me to narrow down my focus since in villages, the women would have common meeting places and activities in a smaller area where I would be able to interact with them. I found out that there were no "common meeting places" and that people just knew one another, so women that I visited were able to refer me to other women who were in the same situation as they were. I identified a specific family in each village that I would spend most of my time with. I spent a week in each village and went around with the women of each of the households in the village that I had identified. I lived amongst them and observed the work they do and their relations with each other, other community members, husbands and their livelihoods in general. This enabled me to make comparisons between their livelihoods, and those of women who are not in a similar situation to them, viewing how they see themselves in relation to them. I spent a period of one week in each village to get an overall sense of the experiences of the women in Mafeteng as a whole. The ages of the women ranged from 35 to 55.

I spent most of my time with one family per village, and the woman of the household would introduce me to other women who were wives of ex- miners, while going about her day. Men were very sceptical about my intentions. At the beginning of each week, I would visit the respective chief of the village, showing him my consent form that was signed by the head chief of Mafeteng. I sat with each of the chiefs, explaining to them what exactly my intentions were. If the chief was a female, I was always asked about the benefits of my research, as they seemed a lot more interested in how my research would benefit the women. The men were a lot less interested in this, and were much more interested(as I already stated) in why I'm only speaking to women instead of the men themselves, since they are the ones who had worked hard on the mines and would know a lot more about the mines than women who were at home. It took a while for the men to understand that I was not conducting research on mineworkers, but on the livelihoods of ex-mineworkers' wives. I found it a lot easier talking to the female chiefs, but they wanted incentives, as they would talk about how women are really struggling. I explained that my research was solely for academic purposes, and that it may have benefits for them in the long run because there would be information on their livelihoods, and that nothing can be done about their situation if there is no information to go by, in order to provide aid.

After speaking to the chiefs, they would take me to a specific household where I could spend the week. It was of great benefit to be entrusted to these families by the chief of the village, because I believe they trusted me a lot more, as opposed to if I had come to the households on my own. I always made sure that I spoke a bit about my background in order to make people feel a lot more open and at ease, disclosing information to me. There was a couple who thought I was South African, and the husband spoke to me in Afrikaans that he had picked up from the mines. The chief had told him I was from the University of Pretoria. His wife did not say a word to me, perhaps because she thought there would be a language barrier. I replied to the husband in Sesotho, and he was shocked. He told me that he had assumed that since I was from Pretoria, I was an Afrikaans speaking coloured, and he was trying hard to recall his Afrikaans! His wife was also quite surprised, but felt a lot more at ease. The fact that I speak Sesotho made it a lot easier, and I explained to them that although I lived in Pretoria, I was born and lived most of my life in Lesotho. I believe that it made a significant difference to the way that people communicated with me, more so because they were quite happy about the fact that I had chosen to come back to Lesotho to conduct research and in a sense, "hear them out" and listen to what they had to say about their plight.

I also noticed how in each household I visited; we would speak to the husband first, and in a sense get permission from him, to speak to his wife. One cannot just go directly to the wife as she is not the head of the household. This was especially the case when I arrived at the house with the village chief.

Each morning I would start off at the home of the identified family, start the day with them, being involved in the woman's daily activities. She would then take me around to see other women in the village, and spend time with them. As we chatted I would take notes and ask questions about their lives, and do a lot of participant observation.

3.4 Data analysis

Field notes were taken throughout the day as I spoke to, and interacted with the women. Through careful observation and speaking to the women I was able to gather data and as issues arose, I would take note of them as they happened. This helped me at the end of the day to recount the day's events, and remember important issues that came up in our discussions. From the notes taken, themes were picked up, which I grouped, coded and used to formulate my analysis. I uncovered trends that occurred amongst the respondents, which were relevant to my research questions as well as sub-themes that emerged.

I divided my research into themes that will address the key questions that I aimed to investigate, and analyzed my data by making comparisons between my field notes and observations, in order to obtain rich data. The analysis involved bringing order to the data, by coding and organizing it into descriptive categories for interpretation.

While going through the field notes I sifted out information that was relevant to my research and the research questions that needed to be answered. This was done in depth and in detail to capture as much of the women's experiences as possible, without deviating from the main research questions, but at the same noting sub themes that emerged from my interaction with the women.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

A common obstacle that one may face is that of gaining access into the communities as one may be seen by other men or chiefs as an intruder or trying to disrupt gender relations. The difficulty of getting access to informants may determine who will and will not be interviewed, which may somewhat skew the results of the research. I needed to get permission to do research in the community, and approach community leaders and inform the local police and counsellors about my four month fieldwork trip in Mafeteng. I managed to do this without any opposition.

The community members were also made aware and briefed on what I was doing, and what my research is about. As a researcher it is my responsibility to ensure that my research or my presence in the community does not in any way, directly harm anyone or cause a disruption to the community's normal way of life. I briefed the community members that I spoke to, on issues of confidentiality and anonymity, and informed them that they have a choice as to whether or not they want to take some time, disclose information and answer questions that I had. I also let them know that they may refrain from answering questions that they may not want to answer.

I first started by giving out consent forms on entering people's homes, but this proved to be ineffective. The minute I pulled out a paper for people to sign, they thought that I was asking them to write their names down so I can submit their names to authorities who would help them. They thought I was registering them for a benefit scheme, so they would ask me to also allow their friends to sign so that they would also receive benefits. I told the women that this was not the case, and they asked me why I am "picking" people when everybody else is in the same needy situation. Even after I had explained what the consent forms were for, some people did not understand and would complain to me about their lack of finances, and how they are struggling, in the hope that I would offer some aid.

On the other hand there were also some women who thought that I was working for the government. They were angry about the fact that government officials always come around and ask them questions and then disappear with their empty promises of bettering their situations. Many women were tired of being ignored by government and were quite adamant that they were not going to give out any more information or sign any papers. It took quite

some explanation for them to understand where I was coming from and why I wanted to conduct research. Other women just thought that I was taking a general census and were also not so keen on speaking to me. I decided to do away with the consent forms and rather asked the women if I could spend time with them for research purposes. They were quite willing, as I explained to them that I am not guaranteeing that anything will be done about their situations but my research may contribute to the knowledge of the lives of women whose husbands have been retrenched from the mines. I mentioned that the only way that anything can really be done is if there is knowledge about it and that I'm hoping that my research would make a valuable contribution.

Doing away with the consent forms made people trust me a lot more. Some women could read but not understand English that well, so they would not want to sign something that they did not understand. I went on by getting verbal consent from these women and told the chiefs about it in case someone said that they had not given me permission to write about them, the chief would bear witness to this.

3.6 Limitations to the study

A limitation of the study was the reliance on a snowball sampling method. For this reason, these findings cannot be generalized to the broader community based on this study alone. I relied on the members of the community who would refer me to women they know, who's husbands were retrenched from the mines. Although I spoke to women in each of the villages or wards in Mafeteng, there is the possibility that I may not have spoken to all the women who were in a similar situation, and did not spend enough time with each of them. I spent a lot more time with some women, which I may not have spent with others,

The study can also not be generalized to Lesotho as a country, as research was conducted in the district of Mafeteng alone, and there are other areas in Lesotho where there are also a number of women who's husbands are retrenched mineworkers.

The argument that woman's workloads had increased and men are now asserting their gender roles upon returning from the mines is hard to dispute, with the exceptions of women who were working and earning some money while their husbands were working on the mines, and continued to do so after their husbands' return. There were also some men and women who

worked together pre and post mine retrenchment. For the majority of the women, they were in positions where their husbands were not working, and they had to try to make ends meet somehow without great difficulty, given their positions in society. In most cases women bore the brunt of their husbands' retrenchment.

Chapter 4: Reflecting on the study's findings

4.1 Introduction

The two main questions that I set out to investigate are: 1) how if at all, have mine retrenchments influenced changes in gender and power relations in rural Lesotho households? 2) How do rural women perceive their economic activities? And an additional interest was to examine the ways in which their abilities to generate income have been affected in the post-mine retrenchment period. A secondary question probes the effectiveness of, and women's involvement in, gender and development programmes.

On arrival, I was greeted by the fresh crisp mountain air. Although Mafeteng lies in the lowlands of Lesotho, it is just as fresh and beautiful as the rest of the country. There are a lot of open fields where one can see herds of cattle and sheep grazing. Agriculture is a main activity in the area. The town itself is small, with many little villages surrounding it. There is a lot of farm land in Lesotho and one can see animals grazing on the outskirts of the town as well as in the town itself. There was quite some activity in the town, with people selling vegetables and small goods at the side of the road. There was a shopping centre, a bank and some ATM's but most of the small shops were owned by people of Chinese or Indian origin. There were a few Basotho owned businesses, and quite a crowded market place. It seemed as if the number of vendors exceeded the number of buyers.

I was staying at the home of the chief of Mafeteng reserve which is close to town. He knew all the other chiefs so it was not difficult for me to locate them and gain access to their homes and villages. I spent 12 weeks in Mafeteng, one week in each village spending time with the women in their homes and taking part in their daily activities. They were all very welcoming and enjoyed having company, as many of them stay at home the whole day, looking after the household, and doing house chores. This gave me ample opportunity to get to know them, and know more about their livelihoods. As we spoke and interacted, I took notes, and asked questions in order to get proper accounts of their lives. Through a lot of observation, as well as partaking in daily activities, I took note of the lifestyles that these women led as wives of ex-mine workers. Being particularly interested in gender relations, and how they pan out in this new era of women's lives, I observed interactions between the women and their

husbands, to find out what has changed in their lives, and how this change has an affect on their livelihoods as women.

The broad themes emerging out of the fieldwork are discussed under the separate sub-headings that follow:

4.2 Gender and power relations

4.2.1 Women's reliance on remittances before retrenchments

I met with women who were heavily reliant on their husbands' remittances and others who were only partly reliant in the period before retrenchment. The women who were heavily reliant were mostly restricted from working outside the home. These women had no extra income besides the money that their husbands sent home. They could not find jobs because of the job scarcity in the country, but also because as women, they were to stay at home, and be homemakers. These women were satisfied with this, since they were performing their traditional roles, and were supported by their husbands' income. As long as they were receiving money at the end of the month, they were happy. They had their autonomy since they could in a sense "pamper" themselves, and also buy clothing and gifts for the children, as well as pay their school fees. They were heavily dependant on their husbands' remittances as they had no other income. Since the retrenchment of their husbands, these women found themselves in a dire situation.

On the day I went out to the fields where women were ploughing, I spoke to Me' Malomile who was clad in work gear (wide rimmed hat, boots, and hoe in hand). When I asked her about her life pre- mine retrenchment, she said that life was definitely better when her husband was away although she received very little in remittances, and suspects that he had another family in South Africa. She says that when their husbands go to the mines, they cannot wash clothes and take care of themselves, so they marry South African women who will perform these duties for them.

For women like Me' Malomile, their husbands' remittances were all that they had to survive, and sustain their livelihoods, and they enjoyed the lifestyle of not having to work, but rather

fulfil traditional roles. This meant that they were not supposed to work to earn an income, and were reliant solely on their husbands' remittances.

Me' Malerato said there was no real need for her to find work because her husband was working. He worked on the mines for 10 years and only left the mines in 2006 and is currently unemployed.

Me' Makhasane, told me about how great life was when her husband was working on the mines. She had a smile on her face as she exclaimed: "Oh, life was good back then!" She did not have to work as her husband was the one bringing home the money. She and her children always had food to eat; they went to school using public transport everyday, which is a luxury that they do not have right now. They had a tap outside the house, and they could easily pay for the water bills. Her husband sent home money at the end of the month and to her, they were rich. She even had a bank account at the time. All seven of her children were able to complete high school.

Because of their heavy reliance on remittances, these women's livelihoods were drastically changed without them, as they had no other means of survival. Some husbands would stop bringing home remittances, altogether as was the case with Me' Mamolefe:

Me' Mamolefe's husband stopped coming home when he was working on the mines. He stayed on the mine compound and stopped sending remittances home to his family. At the time she was not working and had 5 young boys, 2 of them passed away. Her children could not continue with their studies when her husband stopped sending home remittances. She sent one of her children to visit their father in South Africa and found out that he was married and had another family. The only thing that he did was build a house for his son. The house that he built is the very same house that she lives in now, with her sons. Her sons are also not working but they have children. Me' Mamolefe now lives with her children and her grandchildren in the house. She washes clothes for other people, at M20 per wash load. This is all that she lives on. When she told me this, there was a moment of silence and she burst into tears. She told me that she was really struggling, and sometimes she and the children go to bed hungry. She does not have anything, the wall units in the house were donations, they were from people who were deceased, and were given to her. She mainly lives off hand-outs from people and often has to beg for food from her neighbours, but she cannot beg all the

time. Her son, used to help out when he worked in a factory, but now he has passed away. She does not even receive anything from her ex-husband as he now has his own family to look after, despite the fact that he is also unemployed after being retrenched from the mines. He left her with nothing, and she now has to suffer on her own.

Women, who conformed to their traditional roles while their husbands were away, seemed to be a lot worse off in the long run. By this I mean that they lived a more luxurious life a decade or so ago, and were also fairly laid back in their positions and were not actively pursuing other means of enhancing their livelihoods. This would then have more of an effect on their livelihoods when there were no more remittances to rely on. These women enjoyed the remittances without realizing that they may not receive remittances forever. When the life of “luxury” ended, they had nothing to fall back on because they did not have alternative means of income. On the other hand, there were women who did not rely solely on their husbands. They were autonomous, and a lot less controlled compared to those who relied heavily on remittances. These women used their autonomy to actively enhance their lives, believing that they shouldn’t rely only on their husbands, but they need to also try and do something for themselves and the household.

The women who were partly dependent on their husbands’ remittances, made use of the money they received, to earn an extra income. They would buy goods and sell them at the market. They would also buy farming implements that they would use for farming and often rent them out to people. They were partly dependant on their husbands because they had a means of survival other than relying on their husbands’ money. These women had a lot more autonomy compared to the women who would go hungry if their husband’s did not send enough money.

I spoke to a woman named Me’ Ntlhama. She was a chieftess, and she told me that when her husband was away, she worked in the field, planting and ploughing crops, she also used to sew dresses as she had taken needlework classes at a school called Holy Cross. She was one of the women who had used her husband’s money to try and earn some extra income. Her husband was not opposed to the idea, as it did not take her away from her household duties. She still fulfilled her traditional role as a Mosotho woman, and made some money from performing a gender specific task.

Me' Matebello said she lived a fairly well-off life when her husband was away on the mines, but she also had a job to bring in some extra money. She worked in one of the stores in town. She has three children; all of them went to school, as the remittances she received from her husband were mainly for school fees. Her husband's remittances and the money she earned from working were not as satisfactory, especially because sometimes she would only receive remittances after two months. Her husband did not come home that often, only when he was on leave.

Another woman, Me' Mampho said that when her husband worked on the mines, life was a lot easier. She received remittances, and some of it went to finance her husband's brother's education. They had 2 children who were not in school yet at the time. She was working as a clerk, so she received remittances and had her own salary and no school fees to pay. She says that she did not earn that much and she also did not receive that much from her husband's remittances, but at least they managed to live a somewhat comfortable life.

On my last day in Mafeteng, I met the first woman that had a job at present and so did her husband. In all the areas I had been to, both husband and wife or at least one of the spouses was unemployed. I arrived at the house just as she was about to leave for work. Her daughter was sitting outside the house, basking in the sun. The house stood out in the area, it was not very large, but it was a solid structure with white washed walls unlike the shacks and run-down buildings. The woman's name is Me' Malesea. When her husband was working on the mines, she says her children never felt the effects of a "hard life". Life was never really tough for her. She worked in town, as a cashier at KFC. Her children went to school, as her husband allowed her to work. He used to come home from the mines at the end of every month.

In 1994, her husband was retrenched from the mines and two years later, he was able to get a job with the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. He was employed on a contract basis and when the contract ended he was unemployed for six years. During this time however, he was actively seeking employment. After some time, she was also unemployed, and this for her was the most difficult time for them, but they managed to survive on money savings. Her husband was then able to find a job in Johannesburg doing administrative work. He sends money to his family on a monthly basis. She is also working as a chef at the Mafeteng Hotel.

Me' Malesea has three children, one of them is at a technical college in South Africa, one is in high school and the other is still in primary school. She has no complaints about her livelihood, as things have gone back to normal after both she and her husband were unemployed for a period of time.

I told her that she was the first person I had met, who is currently employed and has a husband who is also employed. She told me that her husband was fortunate enough to have been able to study, which is why he had better opportunities than most people in Mafeteng. She also told me that women are taught not to work, but rather to be good housewives, and this is why women do not have a "work ethic". She says that she could also have been in the same situation, but her husband allowed her to work, he's educated and knows the importance of education. He was able to study when he worked at the mines, and this for him, was a great opportunity that he took. After spending some time with Me' Malesea, I was glad that I had at least come across one person in the whole town, whose husband didn't see mine work as a dead end and decided to do something to enhance his family's livelihood.

Although women who were partly dependent on their husbands' earnings were able to do a lot more on their own, and had their autonomy, they were still bound by gender constraints, as some of them had to keep their activities secret and not tell their husbands. Those, whose husbands did not oppose their wives working, allowed this because the work did not take them out of the home. The jobs that women performed were also stereotypical jobs like sewing and selling vegetables, which were domestic jobs. Although these women were working and earning some money, they did not deviate much from their gender roles. The women who had stable jobs, like Me' Mampho and Me' Malesea, were earning less than their husbands, and their husbands did not mind them working. Both of them said that if they were earning more than their husbands, their husbands would not be too happy about it. Me' Manamolo was a nursing assistant when her husband worked in the mines, so she was to an extent financially independent and she earned more than her husband. She says that her husband didn't mind but he would have preferred it if he was the one earning more than her.

Me' Malesea was the only woman I had met, who was currently working, and who had a husband who was working too. This was a rare case, and it is a rare case because her husband sought education and took the opportunity without seeing mine work as an only option. This shows that it was a matter of different mindsets that allowed people to make decisions as to

what they wanted to do with their lives. Mine work was seen as a prestigious job, it symbolized masculinity, as it involved toiling underground, which was not a job for women according to gender stereotypes, men were the macho ones who could endure such hard labour and opted to work on the mines. It is almost as if mine work was a qualifying factor for masculinity. Not all men are the same however, and Me' Malesea's husband seemed to be an exception to the norm and decided on education as well as mine work.

For women like Me' Matebello, having a job was a safety net, since her husband's remittances were often irregular. This was an issue that many women faced, as some even believed their husbands were unfaithful and had other wives in South Africa. These women would stay at home, reliant on their husbands, but their husbands would not always provide for them. Living off their husbands' income and not being able to work on their own had great effects when their husbands were retrenched from the mines. Thus, whilst there was general reliance on the monies of mineworker husbands, some women strove for independent earnings through formal work or subsistence farming etc. It is this latter group (the active earners) that fared better in the post mine retrenchment era because they laid the basis for building of livelihoods.

4.2.2 Knowledge of husband's earnings

Many of the women I spoke to did not even know how much money their husbands were earning. They were simply sent remittances, with amounts being inconsistent every month. Women had no say in their husbands' financial affairs. The general impression was that the man is the one working, and earning money for his family, and as the head of the household, he is entitled to do whatever he wants with his money, without being questioned. Many of the women also mentioned the suspicions they had, about their husbands having other wives while on the mines. They believed that that is where a portion of their husbands' remittances went to. There were cases where this was true.

When I asked Me' Mathabiso about her life pre- mine retrenchment, she said that she does not even know precisely how much her husband earned, she just took what was given to her, especially for her children's school fees. She does not even know whether or not he was given a long-service package or any money after having worked in the mines. She said maybe her husband himself didn't even know, as she doesn't think he could even read so he

wouldn't know how much he was earning either, and could have possibly just received the money not knowing the amount. She says that this could have been the case, however she does not know. She did not interfere with her husband's affairs, but merely took what she was given and didn't ask questions even though the amounts she received were not consistent. She didn't even know what a pay slip was, until now, so she had no say in money matters or her husband's affairs, this is noticed as she also casually says "you never know, perhaps he had another family in South Africa and this is where all the money went to."

When her husband was working in the mines, Me' Mathabiso says that her workload was heavier, since she had young children to look after. Now her children are older, which makes life a lot easier as they have now moved out of the house. The money that her husband made was not her money, but her husband's. Her husband's income was not satisfactory, or reliable and as she had mentioned before, she just had to put up with the inconsistent amounts she was given.

I also spent some time with Me' Masethabele. She has five children and they all managed to complete their primary school. It became difficult to pay school fees when they went to high school, as they are not fully subsidised. She told me that she had to go to collect money from her husband at the mine compound otherwise he wouldn't send money, and he wouldn't come home. She used to get frustrated and would go and collect money from him whenever she could as he was not sending money home. He would send money to his parents, brothers and sisters and not to his wife and children. She also did not know what her husband was earning.

When Me' Masethabele and her husband got married, he was already working on the mines and sending remittances to his parents and siblings. This seemed to carry on after he was married and had his own family to support. He did send some money to his family (new family) as well as his parents but in 1966, he stopped sending money and his wife had to go to him to collect remittances. She went and reported to the mining association about her husband not sending remittances and they would get him to send money to her. Her husband was retrenched from the mines in 2004, and only then, did he return home after all these years. When he was on leave from the mines, he would not visit his family, but rather his parents.

Women had no say in money matters in the household both in past and in the present. Money seemed to be not only as a means of living, but also a power mechanism that men had over their wives. Despite the fact that they were far away, men controlled the money that they earned, as it was theirs and not their wives. If a husband refused to give his wife money, she had no say. Me' Masethabele reported her husband's behaviour because she would not stand for it, but other women had no choice but to tolerate it, as they could not say anything, they relied on the money, but were grateful even though at times, the amounts were inconsistent.

Even if women's husbands had other families to where most of their money would end up, their wives would not know how much money they were supposed to be receiving nor how much the "other family was receiving because they did not know how much their husbands earned. I asked some of the women, why they never asked their husbands how much they earned. Many of them believed it was not their place to ask, since they were on the receiving end, and were not the ones who were earning the money, and therefore the money did not belong to them.

Presently, there are women who are still not knowledgeable on money matters, like what a reasonable wage means, as long as they have some money to buy basic maize meal to make pap. Pap is also a luxury to some households.

4.2.3 Women's activities to sustain households

While their husbands were away, most of the women were involved in agriculture, as is the culture of the Basotho people who are agriculturalists. The money that their husbands sent home was spent mostly on children's school fees, clothes and household luxuries. Some women were able to buy farming implements, which enabled them to yield more produce to sell. Agriculture was their main activity, and not necessarily a means of survival because there was an income into the household, in the form of remittances. Many of the women also said that they would always have money to spare, because in those days, during the 70's and 80's one could buy commodities at very cheap prices. Money was never an issue for them. Many of them used the money to generate more of an income, and in a sense, used it wisely. One thing that I noticed was that even though these women were sent money, they did not invest it. They used their money for personal as well as their children's needs. It is almost as

if they did not think that there would be a time when their husbands would not send home remittances, or that one day their husbands will be out of work.

Me' Mamososana told me about the good old days when their husbands were in the mines. Women would spend the whole day in the field working together. At that time, crops were plentiful. She said it was fun, they would laugh and have a great time while working and when the time came for them to leave, they would all leave together, and have interesting conversation along the way. For them it was a time where they could get together as women and would enjoy each other's company. This is how it was for them during the days when their husbands were away on the mines, and she thoroughly enjoyed it. Women would have enough money to meet their basic needs, children would be in school, and the women didn't have such a heavy workload. They enjoyed working in the fields, and farmed for subsistence which was enjoyable, as they would spend the whole day there.

Me' Malebohang told me that before her husbands' retrenchment, she used to farm and sell her produce. She also relied on her husband's remittances. She did have a lot of work to do, as she worked hard on the plantations, but she said life was a lot easier, because she could afford running water as they had a water pump in the yard, their children could go to school, except for one of them. One of her sons came back from initiation school, and refused to go back to school now because he felt that he was a man. He would rather herd sheep. Her other three children managed to finish high school, they are all married, all girls and one of them is working at the nearby clothes factory. Her daughters also went to a needlework school, so they can sew and sell what they sew. Life for her, before her husband's retrenchment, was a lot better than it is now.

Me' Matokela was a domestic worker while her husband worked on the mines. She only worked as a domestic worker for a while until she was expectant with her child. From then on, she was a housewife, and looked after her child at home. She was also involved in agriculture. She had six children, and they were all put through school with fees paid from her husband's remittances. She says that the money he received was not really that much but at least it managed to pay the children's school fees.

Me' Matokela used to farm as they could afford to buy land, and could even give some of their crops away to those in need because they had such abundance. She even paid people to

plough the fields for her. I asked her why she did not sell some of the produce, and she says there was no real need to.

Some women brewed beer while their husbands were away. They brewed beer without their husbands' knowledge, and said that their husbands would not be too happy if they found out. The reason for this is that having a shebeen or brothel would attract a lot of men to the house, and often when men would drink, they become rowdy and mischievous, and husbands would not want their wives to be in the vicinity, for their safety. They still went ahead with beer brewing, but would not publicize it for fear that they may attract the wrong crowd, or would have too many customers.

I asked a woman named Me' Mapalesa, what her husband thought about the beer brewing and why it's usually women who don't have husbands that brew beer, as I had heard from someone that nowadays, it's mainly widows who brew beer. She told me that the reason why some men do not allow their wives to brew beer is because they do not want drunken men hanging around the house when they are not there. It is not proper for a bunch of men to be drinking at a woman's house when her husband is not there. I then asked her why she brewed beer even when her husband was on the mines. She responded by saying that men would not get drunk and bother her because they knew she had a husband and if anyone bothered her, the neighbours or other community members would not allow it. In a sense, people would not bother her as she was a married woman, and her husband knew this, he knew that she was safe, and that there were neighbours around who would look out for her. Now that her husband is at home, she is protected, and people know that there is a man in the house, so they do not misbehave.

Another woman, Me' Mamosieoua, told me that she brews beer to sell. I got the impression that she did not think of this as work as she did not mention it previously, but they do earn some money from this. She brewed beer even when her husband was working on the mines, and she says he did not have a problem with it. From my observation, it did not seem as if her husband knew about her beer brewing when he was working on the mines, as she answered the question quite suspiciously.

I went on to ask her again about whether or not she was working during her husband's time on the mines, and she then said that she was a lot more autonomous and able to do what she

wanted to do, but her husband didn't want her to work outside the homes. Her husband subscribes to the traditional gender roles, which made me wonder whether he really knew about her beer brewing, especially because she said she was a lot more autonomous then.

I spoke to another woman, Me' Maletsatsi. She stays out in one of the surrounding villages but has her own little "shebeen" close to town in an area called Ramokhele. She is renting her house in the village, so that she can brew beer and to make some money. She also did not consider her beer brewing as work, just something she does to earn some money. As we chatted, she told me that the area of Ramokhele is known for its beer brewing, and almost every household sells home brewed beer. I inquired about the situation before mine workers were retrenched, and whether women still brewed beer when their husbands were away. Many women in the area brewed beer even when their husbands were away, but because it was done away from the home, some husbands never found out. They would not like the idea of their wives being in an area where there were men drinking. Nowadays, husbands understand that there are no jobs and the family needs some kind of income. Her husband also does not mind her brewing beer. He is just at home, and is not actively looking for a job. Her children are also not doing anything at the moment, and the family survives on the money she earns from beer brewing.

Me' Mathabiso says that women have a way of sustaining their livelihoods. They work extremely hard for their families, especially when it comes to farming. Women definitely work harder than men.

4.2.4 Accounts of women's financial situations in the past

All the women I had spoken to had spoken about how they were in better financial situations in the past. This is not surprising, as they all no longer receive an income from their husbands. Women had a lot more financial freedom which is something that they all missed.

When I arrived at the house of Me' Matho, her husband was also at the house. They were both just resting, when I got there. The house was quiet. Me' Matho works from home, she has a pay phone in the house, and this is their source of income, as well as the money that her husband receives as pension. They have two children, one is married and the other works. They help out with the finances now and then. Otherwise, they have no proper source of

income. Me' Matho emphasized that her life has changed drastically since her husband returned from the mines. She can no longer buy what she wants, and have some kind of financial freedom. She was not working when her husband worked on the mines. She was also not involved in any agricultural practices.

The very same day after spending time with Me' Matho I met another woman named Me' Mapule. She told me that her husband was earning 15 cents per day at the mines, and then it was increased to 25 cents and then later 50 cents. Nowadays people cannot live off that kind of money, nor can they really buy anything. At that time, they managed to live off this sort of salary, which paid school fees for five children. She says that things were not as expensive in those days.

Another woman was Me' Mashia. I arrived at her house and sat with her after telling her about my research and getting her consent. Me' Mashia had always been a housewife. Her husband was on the mines, and she looked after the children and farmed for subsistence. She says her husband always supported the family unlike many of the men who neglected their families at home after they started new families in South Africa. She says that many of the men did that, but her husband was faithful and always came home at the end of the month. She had no problem with the amount of money he received because it was enough for her family to live on, she was never disappointed. Sometimes they would sell their produce from farming, only because they would yield so much extra, that it could be sold. They didn't really need to sell their produce on a larger scale because they were satisfied with what they had. Me' Mashia had seven children, five of them passed away.

Me' Moreme is a housewife. She has always been a housewife, who stayed at home, and was involved in farming for subsistence when her husband was working on the mines. She recalls the amount of money that her husband was paid in those days, which was R18 per month. She says this was a very long time ago, and it might not seem like much, but in those days, things were a lot cheaper than they are now. Life was so much easier back then.

The women's accounts of their financial situations in the past show that they believed that they were quite well-off. I heard about how they were able to stretch their finances, because commodities that are bought now, are a lot more expensive compared to a decade ago. Mineworkers did not receive large amounts of money, but a decade ago, they were able to

live fairly comfortable lives with their husbands' earnings. It seemed as if people were comfortable in their financial situations then. People saw themselves as rich in those days and in a sense they were disillusioned, thinking that because they are rich, they can only become richer, but economic situations change, and the value of money changes as well and this didn't seem to be taken into account when planning for the future.

4.2.5 Abilities to support children (expenses in the past)

Basotho people do not have exceptionally large families, but the households I came across had an average of three children. Some of the children were already out of the house and married, while others were still at school-going age. Nevertheless, there were fewer who completed high school after their fathers were retrenched from the mines.

Women then had to be the ones to try and earn an income because their children's school fees needed to be paid. Due to the lack of jobs for women to do, many children dropped out of school and either stayed at home and helped with the household chores or looked for 'piece job's that they could do. Many of the children were not accustomed to a lifestyle that meant that they would have to work hard, and as a result, many of them were pulled into the cycle of poverty that their parents were in because of a lack of a "hard work ethic". This "hard work ethic" is based on values and diligence towards work, which was not evident amongst many of the families who were not actively trying to find work or recognised the importance of working hard as a core value.

Primary school children do not pay school fees in Lesotho as the schools are government funded. When the time came for children to go to high school, there was no money for them to complete their studies. Many of the children I came across started high school shortly after their fathers were retrenched from the mines. There were very few children who actually did complete their studies, given the financial situations of the households after the mine retrenchments. Women mentioned that those who completed high school were in high school while their fathers still worked on the mines, or had their school fees were paid by the money that their mothers earned from doing 'piece job's.

One thing that I found is that there is really not that much of drive for education amongst the families I had spoken to. Although everybody believes that education is important, women do

not seem to fully grasp its importance or believe it to be very beneficial to them in the long run. Women in Lesotho are more highly educated than the men, but they have no opportunities to put into practice what they had learned. Many of the women believed in the past that even though they were educated it would not really lead them anywhere. They would still have to be housewives and could not earn more than their husbands. Men were either to become herd boys or miners so there was also not much of an educational drive for them either.

Me' Malebohang's son dropped out of school to become a herd boy, after he had been to initiation school. He refused to go back to school because he felt that he was now a man and no one, least of all his mother, could force him to go to school. As a result, he herds cattle all day.

There were some women who used the money from remittances to earn an income, as mentioned before, these were women like Me' Mathabiso. The money she received was mainly to pay for school fees. She has three children and two of them were able to complete high school and work in South Africa. She stays with her son that's 22 years old. He was unable to complete school due to mental disability. She now lives with him at home. . With the money that she was getting, she was also able to buy herself a sewing machine, which is what keeps her going at the moment. Her daughter sells the clothes that she makes, for her, in South Africa when she comes home.

The lack of financial literacy amongst many of the women , which may have been the result of them not being in charge of their own finances , may be a reason for them not saving funds for their children's school fees and not financially planning of the future. After all, they did not have much say in their husbands' finances, but they were "in charge" of making sure that school fees were paid. Women then had to struggle selling vegetables or doing 'piece jobs' to try and pay for their children's school fees. If they could not do this, their children would have to find 'piece job's for themselves and contribute to the household or join in the household division of labour.

4.2.6 Women's co operatives

Some of the women that I had spoken to mentioned that they were at some point involved in women's cooperatives which kept them busy for a while, but ended due to financial constraints.

Women said that there were communal gardens in those days, but now people grow crops on their own and for their own families, because they do not have farming implements and would rather have their own gardens in their yards. The government had also given people a hectare of land to plant on, but a hectare is too small and often the crops get trampled on, especially by grazing animals. "Why don't the women whose husbands have been retrenched from the mines, work together?" I asked. "Why could they not form a support group on their own and pull together resources?" I was told that this is because the women don't work together anymore, each person has their own little garden, and women work for their own households, everyone for himself. No one would want to star up an initiative for fear of it failing because everyone now just cares for their own household.

Me' Matakelo told me that she can no longer rear chickens due to a lack of funds. She used to sell chickens, but cannot afford to buy them, let alone keep them. She was also involved in a "mokhatlo" which is similar to the South African "Stokvel", where a group of women contribute an amount of money at the end of each month, and keep it till the end of the year when they buy goods, especially food, in bulk and divide it amongst themselves. This however ended because people had no money, and could no longer contribute. Women also got together to rear chickens, but this did not work either because people do not have enough money to buy them. They would sometimes buy the chickens on credit but could not pay back on time or some did not even pay back. The women could not make a profit in this way, especially when they had to use the money to pay for their children's school fees, so this was a problem. Many of the women would like to start up such cooperatives, but no one had the money to start off in the first place, and without money they cannot sustain such initiatives. Women also tried to stay away from government initiatives due to political issues, as people would be seen as being affiliated to a certain political party if they join the initiatives that they provide, especially for women. If women do join these initiatives, this would be as a form of support towards political campaigns and many did not want to be involved in this. Their husbands would also not allow this as many of them were involved in politics.

In the past, women believed that they could work together quite well. Each one had their own family's interests at heart, but they also felt that working together was not only for their own benefit and the benefit of their families, but to the benefit of their communities as well because when they worked together and cooperated in something, they did so as a collective with no selfish interests. They would all work hard to in order for them to yield as much produce as they can. Whatever crops they would grow, would be of better quality and quantity if they all lent a helping hand.

There were also initiatives that were started with men being brought on board, but the women believed that it was better to work with women only, as men do not have the same compassion that women had towards each other. This kind of motherly love and compassion is what enabled them to work together. They missed being able to work like that as nowadays everyone had no choice but to look out for themselves, as no one has money to help out their neighbours. This is not done out of selfish ambition but rather just because people no longer have the means to do anything else but look after themselves and their families.

4.2.7 Sexual division of labour

When women get married, they prepare themselves to become housewives and mothers. This was the expectation that many of the women had, and knew that their roles were set for them. They knew that they were to be subservient, obedient and respectful to their husbands, and that he was to be the sole breadwinner. Although some women were working, selling vegetables or doing domestic work, they knew that the husband should be the one earning most of the money. He should be the one that looks after his household.

The women that I spoke to in Mafeteng were well aware of their gender roles and did not dispute that. This was the way that life was for them and they had grown up being taught how to perform their gender specific tasks. They did not however feel inferior to their husbands as they believed that they each had their specific roles in the household. When their husbands were working on the mines they were raising children, farming and looking after the household, preparing a home for the family. Their children also grew up performing gender specific household tasks, as the boys were always outside with the animals, and the girls would help with the cooking and the cleaning.

There were women who told me that they had jobs before getting married and had to leave their jobs when they got married. This was normal for them as it meant that they were now taking on a new role as a wife and mother.

I spoke to a woman who told me that before she got married she was working at one of the stores in town, and became a housewife after she got married. She did the housework as well as the typical “men’s work” like, herding livestock. She felt that she had quite a heavy workload because she also did “men’s work”. Besides that, she looked after the household as she should, as a housewife. She says that her family lived a traditional lifestyle

Me’ Mapule said that when her husband was on the mines, she did not work, nor was she involved in agriculture. Her husband did not allow her to work, and wouldn’t even agree to her starting her own business even though she would have wanted to. He was strict about that and wanted her to be a housewife, and for him to be the sole breadwinner. He’s a very traditional man, who believes strongly in traditional gender roles.

4.2.8 Esteem/ respectability in the eyes of the community

Men who worked on the mines were well respected in the eyes of the community. These men were seen as those who went out to make a living instead of becoming herd boys. Women were proud that their husbands were working in the mines as it was seen as a respectable, “manly” job. Even though there were no other avenues for men to take, or rather limited avenues, mine work was still highly regarded. This is evident in the responses I got from some of the women who told me about how their husbands seem to have lost some of their esteem and respectability after being retrenched from the mines. They also told me about the way the community views them after the retrenchment.

When their husbands were working, their households were well fed; their wives could buy goods for the household that would make their neighbours jealous. The community members knew who was better off than others, as women told me that they would buy all kinds of things that they could afford with their husbands’ income. Women told me about how their husbands felt ashamed after returning home. This could possibly be why they are said to be “resting” rather than being unemployed. They also mentioned that it was okay for their

husbands to be unemployed because in a sense they have a right to stay at home after working for all these years. This is how many women justified their husbands' unemployment.

Me' Malomile told me that her husband does not want her to go out and do 'piece jobs' because it would require her to travel and be away from home. I then asked her why her husband won't take these 'piece jobs' himself, and she said that it would be too embarrassing for him to do so, he is too proud to do this. He even said that his friends or other people would look down on him saying "look, he worked on the mines and now he's digging roads". He would say that she should rather go instead of him for fear of embarrassment. Me' Malomile said that many husbands do that. They would not want to do odd jobs like fixing the roads as this was too embarrassing for them. They would rather have their wives go out and do such jobs, especially more so if the jobs were closer to the home. Many men would refuse to allow their wives to work far away from the household. They want to give the impression that they are being rewarded after their work on the mines. They want to be seen as reaping the rewards of their labour, but unfortunately this is not the case.

Me' Makhasane told me that she feels ashamed now that people look at them and see their poverty. She says it is embarrassing to go from wealth to nothing, as people knew that they were, in a sense well off when her husband was working. She recalls a time when the police arrived at their house suspecting that they had stolen goods because of the amount of goods they had in their home, but it was all bought from the remittances her husband brought home from work on the mines. Now they do not have such luxuries.

Me' Mamojela, says that her husband has become a bitter person ever since his retrenchment, he feels as if he has lost some dignity, not being able to provide for his family. He is no longer the friendly happy man he once was, and he tends to keep things to himself. I noticed that this was the case with men who had not worked on the mines for a very long time. The older the couple, the more satisfied they were with their situation. Husbands, who had worked on the mines for a long time, seem to feel as if they have paid their dues, according to what their wives said. As mentioned before, they are "resting" after their hard labour. Younger couples where the husband had only spent a short period of time on the mines, felt a lot less secure. The husbands do not have a long history of employment that they can be

satisfied with, and they do tend to feel more insecure as they have only been breadwinners for a short period of time and now they are in dire straits.

Me' Matho says that her husband, though unemployed, seems quite fulfilled because he worked till his retirement age. Despite the fact that the family no longer has the luxuries they could afford. He seems quite fulfilled, his children are older now, and are no longer dependant on their parents. Me' Matho says however, she's not satisfied as life has really taken a turn on them for the worst since her husband returned. He can no longer work because of his age, but she at least has the phone business that keeps them going somehow. Even though life is tough now, she says there is no need complaining because he just has to be content.

There is a sense of loss of respectability amongst the households where husbands had been retrenched from the mines, but it was mostly with those who had only been on the mines for a short period of time. This did put a strain on some relationships. Woman had to deal with their husbands' loss of esteem in the community, as well as their own, as many of the women were proud of their husbands and the remittances they received from them. Post mine retrenchment, the families can no longer afford certain luxuries, and do not want to be perceived as struggling to make ends meet.

Men are supposed to be the providers of the household and now that they are no longer in that position, they may look to other avenues of reasserting their gender roles, and being 'strict' so to speak, on the running of the household. More so in restricting their wives capabilities, as is evident from the way many of the women mentioned that even if they were allowed to have 'piece jobs' , they were not allowed to work far from the home, as they needed to be close by to perform their household duties as well.

4.3 Changed Circumstances

Women's livelihoods had changed considerably after their husbands were retrenched from the mines, and this had an adverse effect in all spheres of their lives. It changed the household division of labour, gender relations, women's earning power and also added additional burdens to women who were used to some autonomy and receiving remittances from their

husbands. This section looks at women's accounts of the effects that were brought about as a result of their changed circumstances.

4.3.1 Views on economic activities

Women that I spoke to are not really involved in any collective economic activities, as mentioned before, everybody seems to be preoccupied with sustaining their own family's needs, and not so much contributing to the wider community. I talked to some of the women about government initiatives to try and bring these ex-miners or their wives to contribute on an economic scale. Women and men complained about the lack of job opportunities in the country.

I asked Me' Mathabiso about the economic activities that women see for themselves in Lesotho and she said that for many women, such initiatives may be a heavy burden, as women have to look after the household. After sitting down and chatting to Me' Mathabiso, we walked outside, just took a walk as she had nothing else to do. Many women in the areas visit each other, and sit and chat when they are done with their household chores. She locked the door and made sure that things in her kitchen were locked away, because when her son comes back he usually gets up to mischief. We paid a visit to Me' Malebohang.

Me' Malebohang wishes she could work, but there are no job opportunities in Lesotho at all. Sometimes there are opportunities that come up, where women can go and help to build and fix roads, but she says the roads that they work on are so far away, she can never afford to pay for transport just to get there. If there were job opportunities, she would definitely take them because she needs it. She was also involved with a support group for the sick in the area, but then it was started up by some men who were heading it. Many women, including her, left the support group because they did not work well with the men. She says they were actually young boys. She would rather work on her own, and take care of and provide aid to the sick. "Men don't help out other men" she said, and that is partly why the support group was a failure, the men didn't have that compassion for the sick and were not running the support group properly. She mentioned that it's better for women to do that kind of job. Personally, I thought it was a good idea that there were men that were taking the initiative, especially seeing as there is not much for them to do. Perhaps it would have worked out if there was some kind of arrangement or negotiation between the men and the women. Some

women are however involved in support groups but they are not supported by government, and these women often have to pull their meagre resources together. Me' Mathabiso is one of these women.

As Me' Mathabiso goes about cleaning her house I offered to help her with some chores. She was boiling water and then went to the bedroom to have a wash. She was done with her house chores so now she could wash. As she was in the room, she told me a bit of what it is that keep her busy now. She is part of a support group in the area, and what they do, is provide food and aid to the ill, usually those people who are HIV positive. They provide aid in terms of cooking for them, and helping them with everyday household chores, sweeping and cleaning the house or giving them baths etc. She was complaining however, that the government does not help these women who are part of support groups, as they do everything out of their own will and out of their own pockets as community members, however they may need some assistance sometimes as the government does not offer aid to these people who are ill and the community members then take on the task of caring for the ill.

Me' Malerato is quite young, 35 years of age, and can still work, so I asked her why she doesn't find something to do. She responded by telling me that there is no work in Lesotho, she can't even work at the nearby factory or any other factory, because factory owners employ younger women, aged between 18 and 30. She cannot find a proper job because she is uneducated. They own a "4 plus 1" which is a mini taxi or a cab, and this is where their income came from. The cab is now stationary, ever since it broke down a while ago. They do not have enough money to buy the parts that are needed for the car or to pay for a mechanic to fix it. Her husband is trying to fix it with the help of some friends

When speaking about other income generating strategies, Me' Malerato said that she worked at a shop in Mafeteng which was owned by Chinese people, however, nowadays, they do not employ Basotho people as much as they used to, many are employed mainly for security. They employ other Chinese people or have family members that work there. It then becomes difficult for Basotho people to find jobs. She also spoke about the road construction and maintenance that many women spoke about. Often the place where this work is done is so far out, and one cannot get there due to transport costs. At the same time, these contracts end, so they are not stable.

Me' Mapaballo also says that the main reason why her shop isn't doing so well is because of the competition with the Chinese shops in the area. They do not get that many customers as they would rather buy cheaper goods from the Chinese. During the day when there are no customers, she does the housework. Her husband now realizes that he needs to look for work because the shop is not doing so well. Me' Mapaballo says that her workload is not heavy, even before her husband returned home from the mines. She just needs to buy stock for the shop. A day in her life involves housework and waiting for customers at the shop if she is not out buying stock. Her husband hires a car, and they transport goods for people. They both help each other out whether it's with the shop or transportation.

Another woman, Me' Manthabeleng also complained about the fact that Chinese people are taking over when it comes to owning and running shops in the area. The family now lives off the money they make from selling items in their little shop. Me' Manthabeleng complained that the shop wasn't doing all that well, because there was a lot of competition with the Chinese shops in the area. Most of the shops, including the factory in Mafeteng, are owned by Chinese people, who sell their goods at much cheaper prices because they can afford to. Most people buy goods at these shops that are much cheaper than goods sold at shops owned by local Basotho. She mentioned that her shop is empty during the day, and people only buy from her after about 8 o'clock in the evening as this is the time that the Chinese shops close. She would have to open her shop until 12 midnight sometimes in order to sell her goods, and at least make some money for the day.

When I left the house, I thought about Me' Manthabeleng's situation. She at least has some work to do, working in the shop, but even that does not bring in very much, as her business is choked by competition with the Chinese shops in the area. These shops have a lot of stock, and I was told that even when the goods expire, they are sold at very cheap prices and people would buy them because they are so cheap. The women believe that they really cannot afford to sell their goods a lot cheaper, and they do not receive stock from the same stockists as the Chinese who often get their goods from China. I was told about another woman who is in a much worse position in comparison to Me' Manthabeleng's, and when I thought about it, Me' Manthabeleng's situation was even better than any of the women that I had spoken to, in a sense that there was some income generating activity, and her husband and children helped out with it.

I walked into town with a woman named Me' Malebeo. We walked around looking at some jewellery that was being sold at the side of the road. She admired some lovely beadwork, necklaces and bracelets. The vendor tried to persuade her to buy them. When we left the stall, she told me that she was looking at them because she wanted designs to copy! I told her that she would definitely make a lot of money, especially if she can sell them in South Africa. She says that there isn't such a big market for them in Lesotho. She loves beadwork, and can make lovely jewellery, but no one really buys them. She would make some money if she sold them in South Africa. She would have to have some capital in order to buy the beads in bulk and make jewellery. Another problem would then be to transport her goods to sell them in South Africa. I advised her that she could at least get just a few beads, and make something small to sell and from there she can buy more beads from what she sells. She has the hope of doing something like that in the future, but she needs to have some money first. At the moment whatever money she has is for food.

I sat in the home of Me' Mathabiso and spoke with the women that were visiting her for a while. They did not have work to do, and were just chatting to one another. This is how they spend their days. They complained about the lack of job opportunities in the country and told me that it would be pointless to try and start up a business because they have no capital, and even if they did, no one has money to buy anything anymore. They all survive on the little they can grow in their gardens, and as long as they have food to eat, they seem content.

Me' Maletsoa told me that since her husband has been retrenched from the mines, life is a lot more difficult. He has been out of work since 1996. She helps out with a school feeding scheme, and cooks for school children, which enables her to earn some money, even though it's not much.

Most women are not "economically active" in a sense that they really are not involved in any proper income generating activities. Some may have ideas but they do not have the means and proper backing to put their ideas into practice, and have other things on their mind which need their attention, and that is to look after the household and somehow try and make ends meet for their families. Being involved with economic activities seems to be an added burden to many of the women, but at the same time, their only burden is housekeeping, as there seems to be nothing else that they do.

4.3.3 Daily routines in aftermath of retrenchments

As I went around with the various women and spent time in their households, I realized that many of them have fairly routine lives. They may have ideas about things that they would like to do but they do not have the autonomy to do what they would desire. As mentioned in the previous section, there are women who would like to be a lot more involved in economic activities. I realized this, and that they may be restricted from doing that, by their roles as homemakers.

Daily routines dominate these women's lives, and my visits seemed to be something out of the ordinary, which they enjoyed, as spending time with me allowed them to do something different. This could have very possibly contributed to the fact that they were so willing to talk to me, and take me around the villages. Each time I walked into a household early in the morning I would know what the woman had to do next, and they would relay to me how routine their lives had become. They had to do work in the household for their husbands and children.

When we arrived at the house of Me' Mathabang, she was lying down on her bed and the children were playing outside. She says she was just resting as she had nothing to do. She does her house chores, cooks, cleans and then has nothing else to do so she lies on the bed. The whole time I was there, she was just lying on her bed and this is her daily routine.

I went with one of the chiefs to the home of Me' Malebohang. We arrived there and I had to introduce myself to her. At first I wasn't sure whether or not I should speak since I was with the chief. I thought he would introduce me, but he didn't say anything so I did. I explained why I was there and what I would like to research. She then said to me, that she didn't know if I could, and could only allow me to spend time with her if the chief agreed. I told her that the chief had agreed. So I was left in her capable hands. Chief Mabona asked her to help me, as well as to introduce me to other ex- miners' wives. He then left and we sat together in her kitchen. She didn't seem busy, and just sat with me, but I insisted that she carry on with whatever she was doing because I didn't want to disturb her. She said she didn't have much to do in any case, the house was clean and she had already had breakfast. She was there in the house with a little boy who was 4 years old, she told me that she was baby sitting while the child's mother went to work.

Me' Matokelo spoke about how tough her life was, as a woman not knowing what the day holds for her family, how to start the day and how it will end, but she is used to this. She does not have a job, and always thinks about her children, whether they will get enough food for the day. Usually she wakes up and the children dress up and go to school after eating the little food she prepares, she goes out to work on the fields very day. She has cows, she always had them even when her husband was on the mines, but now they are being sold to pay for the children's school fees, they sell one at least at the end of every year. She also has a garden where she has planted vegetables, but it's not much, sometimes the children eat only pap with salt as a meal, this was usually the case during the drought season.

Not having the amount of money that they used to have, Me' Masechaba says that she feels lazy, and doing the housework is just one of things that she has to do. Nothing is enjoyable anymore, like it used to be when she used to receive money from her husband. A typical day in her life involves doing the housework, and resting. She says that there is not much for her to do. She was busy washing clothes when I arrived at her house, and she said that she was going to carry on with the washing and cleaning the house, as was her daily routine.

Me' Mabokang and her husband both have 'piece jobs' that keep them going. Her husband left the mines in 1998, and he now works for the public works committee, where he does paint jobs as well as plumbing, this is on a part time basis. He receives an amount of money at the end of the month, but it is still less than what he was earning on the mines. They are struggling financially since his retrenchment. She is also working at the moment, at the nearby factory, and works the night shift. During the day, her children help out with the household chores. They have two goats that her son looks after. Her two children went to school when their father was working on the mines, but they had to discontinue when he was retrenched. Her daily routine is different to many other women in that she has something to do and both she and her husband are happy with this. Both of them are earning a little bit of money, but it is not enough to pay for their children's school fees and only goes towards buying food for the family.

Me' Malerato's husband was not in the house when I was there, he had taken the wheelbarrow into town to try and get some money for transporting goods. She was busy with her household chores as we talked. She had already cooked for the children and given them a

wash so all she had to do was hang out the washing. She was done for the day, and would just sit around in the house, looking after the grandchildren. She does not visit that much either, because she has to be around the house with the children. We sat and talked for a while, about the country and how there are really no job opportunities. Most of the jobs are for people who are educated, and many well educated people move to South Africa to find jobs. She mentioned how working in the mines was a prestigious job for Basotho men who were less educated than others.

Me' Mapitso said that her husband does go into town occasionally to try and find a job, or a "piece job" which he gets now and then, and this is what they survive on. She just stays at home and does the housework. They also have someone who herds the cattle they have, and he only gets paid at the end of the year. The herd boy however is fed by them. He gets breakfast and supper when he returns from the fields with the animals.

Me' Masello and her husband live off the crops that they grow in their garden. Her husband does cook occasionally. He enjoys being at home compared to when he was working on the mines, because he is able to rest. Life has become a lot better for him, despite the fact that they do not have as much money as they did before, but he's quite content, since he is also old and retired, and can no longer work, at least he receives pension money.

Me' Mapakiso sells food at the market. I arrived at her house early in the morning before she left. She sells bread, chicken feet and porridge at the market, to make ends meet. There are times when she comes back home in the evening with just enough money to buy supper for the evening.

I met quite a tenacious, ambitious woman who had a different story to tell. Her name is Me' Maling, the woman who introduced me to her said I could get quite a bit of information from her. We got to her house, and she told me that she was in a hurry and had a lot of work to do. She was extremely busy and did not like the idea of me, hanging around. She said it was just by chance that we found her at home. She and her husband have a system going, they have cows as well as fields. She and her husband share household responsibilities. When he was on the mines, she was the one who was busy with farming and rearing animals. They have cows, and sell their milk to various stores. They also sell the crops they produce, in stores. When her husband returned from the mines, her workload actually decreased, as he asked her

what jobs he could take over. They now work together, both with the cows and agriculture. She told me that they both wake up every morning at about 3 o'clock to go to the fields, when they get back; she makes breakfast and cleans the house while he milks the cows. They both go to the fields early in the morning until the sun comes up, as they do not want to be there in the heat.

When they get back, they usually go around delivering their produce. This is how they spend their day, and when their work is done, they go home, and rest. They have children who are all married and no longer living with them. They are very active, both sustaining their livelihoods. She did not want me to stay with her, as she was extremely busy and said that we would just get in each other's way. I accepted her decision, and thanked her for giving me some insight into her life, and how she sustains her livelihood. Me' Maling was the first woman that I met who actually wanted to work and was busy at it. She was the first person who told me that she worked when her husband was on the mines and that she continued with the same work that she was involved in her husband also helps her which was a first, and I would definitely have loved to spend some time with her, but I had to respect her wishes.

Me' Maling is an illustration of how cooperation between husband and wife yields good results. They have a set routine which they both follow and assist one another in this regard. They have a mutual understanding of what needs to be done in order to sustain their family. They share household responsibility. As mentioned before, Me' Maling said that her workload had decreased when her husband returned from the mines. This was the case with other women, although few, that I had spoken to. There was another couple that I had met that shared responsibility, and I actually saw the husband sitting outside the house washing clothes. In such cases, the men recognize the hard work that their wives did while they were away, and appreciate this rather than saying "It's now your turn to work hard in the household after I worked all those years on the mines to provide for you" as this was the mentality that some women said many of the men had, and women seemed to agree with this. In the case of Me' Maling, she was working hard for her husband and her household, and now that he had returned, he joined in her daily routine, lending a helping hand.

4.3.4 Changes in the sexual division of labour

Despite the case of Me' Maling, in the majority of the households I visited, the family still subscribes to the traditional sexual division of labour. These were especially those households where each person in the household, male and female, had their roles to play. The men were still heads of households and they performed tasks like herding cows, doing handy work etc. These were men who were not so bitter about their retrenchment and still continued to work, closer to home. These were generally the more "content" households where the husband had worked on the mines for a long period of time and took his retrenchment as more of a retirement, than anything else. The category of households where the sexual division of labour had changed, were the ones where the women were taking on the role of sole breadwinner, with the meagre wages they were earning. In some rare instances, the sexual division of labour did not exist, with the husband helping out with household chores, like washing clothes.

I visited Me' Mamososana who was busy cleaning the kitchen and her daughter was busy polishing the floor in the living room area. Her husband Chief Ntala, was outside by the cow's kraal, preparing the cows to go grazing and her son was also outside helping the father. Me' Mamososana's daughter had left the house and was out with some friends. I offered to help with the housework, but she said that she did not want me to dirty my clothes. I explained to her that I want to be involved somehow and participate in there daily activities instead of just sitting there. I helped with the cleaning and dusting as we were engaged in interesting conversation. Chief Ntala walked in and asked if we were done chatting yet, as his wife had lots of work that still needed to be done. I told him that I was there as an observer and also to participate in her work, so I would be helping her with her house chores. He then just agreed and walked out. Later he called his daughter to bring him a cup of tea. At this point I was hoping that he didn't feel like I was taking up his wife's time, as it seemed that that's what he thought. He had his tea and breakfast and then went off to go about his daily work.

The family seems to be quite happy with everyone doing their part, and it was nice to see. We were cleaning the house from top to bottom, and I must say, it's not a large house at all, but it is very well looked after, everything has to be cleaned, the coal stove was shiny and looked new despite the fact that it is used every winter. The only person that was not helping out was

Me' Mamososana's younger daughter that was off with her friends, the son was herding the sheep.

On the first day I met Me' Mamososana, she was quiet when her husband was around, but when he wasn't, she opened up a lot more. Even when he walked in earlier as if to say that I was disturbing her work, I noticed that she didn't say anything. She definitely felt a lot more at ease when he was not around and we were chatting for quite some time. At that point I was just sitting around listening to her, as I could hardly get a word in. Every time I tried to ask about the gender relations between her and her husband she would change the subject, almost as if she did not want to discuss that. I later learned that this was because she really did not want to get into that discussion and seem like she was "gossiping" about her husband as he might just have been listening.

I walked towards a fairly modern looking house, modern in terms of the fact that it was not old and shabby, and had sliding doors and cream white walls. It looked bigger than the houses in the area. I had walked passed that house on a number of occasions en route to Lifelekoaneng. It stood out for me, and I thought that maybe it was owned by a young couple who probably had a small business in town. I was quite surprised when we walked in through the gate, as I would never have thought it belonged to people who were not working, or lived on one salary. Even more surprising to me, was the fact that there was a fairly elderly man sitting on a stool washing clothes in a tub! , this was a sight that I had not seen in my time in Mafeteng. The woman of the house was actually on her way out when we managed to catch her. She said she was going to town, but she had time to spare so I went inside.

I went in through the kitchen door and sat in the kitchen. There were ceramic tiles on the floor, and the kitchen was neat and tidy. The lady of the house was Me' Makarabo. She and her husband were both not working, ever since her husband was retrenched from the mines in 1995. When her husband was working on the mines, Me' Makarabo was by his side. She lived with him in South Africa. I asked her whether or not she worked in South Africa, and her response was "I worked for my husband", she was a housewife, when her husband was working on the mines. They had six children at the time, which lived in Lesotho with their grandmother. Her husband's remittances went to the children's school fees and maintenance.

When they both returned home, things were different as there was no income anymore. Only one child managed to complete high school. All of them are married and have their own families now, and they support their parents a lot. This is what Me' Makarabo and her husband live on. She and her husband also plant vegetables in the garden for consumption. They never had a plantation, nor did they have any livestock. At the moment they both receive pension which also contributes to their livelihood, and also to pay for part of their two grandchildren's school fees, as their father has abandoned them.

The couple seems very loving, when one looks at the way that they interact with each other, they seem involved in each other's lives. One of the things that was different about them was that in all the other households, I hardly saw any interaction or happiness between the couples. I asked Me' Makarabo about the household division of labour, she told me that they share household tasks, as was evident from what I saw. She even said, "At the moment he is doing the washing as I was on my way out". They both clean the house and cook and do what needs to be done. None of them has any other responsibility away from the household, like ploughing or looking after animals. Me' Makarabo and husband have always had this type of a relationship and have not spent time apart like the other couples that I had visited and spent time with.

Another similar case was that of Me' Masello , although her housework has become a lot more difficult, it is not because there is more work to do now, but because she is a lot older than she was when her husband was on the mines. She and her husband have a good relationship, according to her. She does the housework and her husband goes out to the fields.

Me' Mahlokomelang said that her workload has definitely increased since her husband was retrenched. She says it's not easy selling at the market, because you are never guaranteed of earning money. Her husband does not work; he stays at home, as there are no job opportunities for him. He does get highly irritated and fed up with his situation, and she is also under a lot of pressure, as she still has to do the housework then she gets back from the market. She cooks for the family with food bought with the money she has made that day. If she doesn't make any money, they go to bed hungry. Her husband does not do any housework, so she has to do it herself.

In another household, Me' Makhahliso and her husband subscribe to the gendered division of labour. She says her workload has increased post mine retrenchment, but her husband cannot help her with the housework, he does the outside jobs while she looks after the house.

In another case, Me' Maletso says she definitely feels the pressure of being the only one trying to make ends meet for the family. She is also not well, and has sugar diabetes, and high blood pressure, but still has to try and do something for her family's survival. Her husband tries to help with the housework, especially when she is out.

Me' Mapuseletso runs the crèche close by, and this is the only source of income for the family. Life changed for the worst when her husband was retrenched. She now had to try and do something to earn an income for her family. In 2002 she started up her crèche, but she also not guaranteed a fixed income, especially because many of the children's parents are also struggling to pay their children's fees. On average, she receives R250-R300 a month. Her husband is still unemployed, and she is the sole breadwinner. Her husband wishes he was the one bringing in the family income, but he has to allow his wife to do so, as there is nothing else for them to do. There are no jobs for him in Lesotho.

When I spent some time with Me' Matho who is a nurse, she told me that they have cows that they milk, as well as pigs, chickens and donkeys. Her husband is the one who tends to the animals and sells the chicken, milk and the pigs. They now survive on her salary as well as what they earn from selling their animals. They also sell produce from their plantations. Her husband enjoys working at home. This was a rare case, as she was earning more money than her husband and he was quite happy working at home.

In all cases whether the sexual division of labour has changed or not, women are definitely feeling the effects of their husbands' retrenchment, because they also now have to lend a helping hand and bear the burden of their husbands' unemployment.

4.3.5 Power contestations

Now that men were at home, women had to be submissive and under their husbands authority which was something that they were not used to doing as their husbands had been away for a long time, only visiting when they were on leave.

I spoke to a woman who was the chieftess of her village. When her husband was at work on the mines, she worked alone, and also on communal gardens, but she did not sell her produce as it was mainly for consumption. She says that the money that her husband brought back from the mines was so little that he might as well not have worked on the mines, especially because all that time that he had spent on the mines, was not rewarded in kind. She prefers the fact that when he was at home, they could at least help each other out and farm together.

Me' Mamello and I talked about job opportunities and she said that she would definitely like to work in South Africa as there is no money in Lesotho, let alone job opportunities. She told me that her children would probably not go to school this year due to a lack of funding, as there is no real income at the moment as both parents are looking for jobs. It was a little better when she was working as a domestic worker, but now she cannot because she has a baby to look after and the workload at home is demanding, she needs to be with her family. One wonders why she would rather stay at home than provide for her family.

Me' Mamososana was always quiet when her husband was around and didn't directly answer some of the questions I had asked her when we were together in her house. Whenever her husband came in, she would not be as talkative as she was when he was around. Whenever we were alone, or away from the house, she always had a lot more to say. I took a walk with her to a neighbour's house, where I heard her speak about a situation that occurred between her husband and the woman's husband. She told the woman that the sheep that was given to her husband (the woman's husband) was given without her (Me' Mamososana's) permission. Chief Ntala, Me' Mamososana's husband, had not told her about it. She told the woman that this was not the first time that he had done something without her permission. Usually she just keeps quiet when he does things like that. She complained a lot about him, saying that when he does something wrong, she cannot say anything, she keeps quiet, and he is a stubborn person who always wants his way. This was the first time that I had heard her speak about her husband in that manner, and what was even more suspicious was that she wanted

me to hear what she was saying. The conversation went on, and she was telling the woman how frustrating it is that he does not tell her things that concern the both of them. When we were at Me' Mamososana's house she refrained from talking about her husband, it almost seemed like she did want to say something but was worried that he or the children might hear. I had no idea at first that she was frustrated at all. As they kept talking she spoke about another family where the children are so lazy, they don't want to tend the sheep or herd the cows. She spoke about how she would do it all by herself if her son and her husband were not there, despite the fact that she was a woman. She felt restricted by her position as a woman.

I noticed that whenever she cooks, she first dishes out for her husband, then the children eat (and the son takes quite the fill), and then she gets whatever remains, which is always not so much. Since her husband has been at home from the mines, he has the upper hand and in the household, to the extent where she feels that she could do so much more if she was not in a sense restricted by his authority.

Me' Malomile told me that when her husband returned, he bought her a rickety old tractor hoping that it would make her happy. Her husband is now not working; he stays at home and is very demanding, as he expects her to do everything for him. She also exclaimed that when it comes to families where the husband has been retrenched from the mines, the woman is the one who does most of the work. She says that the reason her husband does not work is because he says that he has worked for too long in the mines, now it is time for him to rest.

Me' Malomile wakes up early in the morning to go to work on the fields, when she gets home, her husband expects lunch, but he himself would never cook. For her, working in the fields is much better because she in a sense escapes the demands of her husband. Even when it comes to cooking, her husband would eat a lot of food and leave very little for her and her children. Me' Malomile, was working in the fields with another woman, they had formed a 50/50 partnership in which they both work on the fields and get an equal amount of crops to sell. She says that this was a lot easier as it was better to have someone else to help with the farming.

In terms of other income generating activities, Me' Malomile said that there were contracts that came up now and then where women can go and work, helping with the building and maintenance of roads. One can also work as a domestic worker. These jobs are not

temporary, and she says that the money that she does make, her husband would keep and she would have to ask for it from him, she would also have to give him a larger portion of it. He would say that he had worked hard on the mines and would give her money, so she has to give him money.

Me' Malebohang's husband was content when he was retrenched from the mines. He was not ever bitter about it, she says. She doesn't feel that she could push or urge him to get a job, even though he is still strong enough to work. He seems content. She does feel that as a woman her workload has increased somewhat as she has to work hand in hand with her husband, and she works harder on the fields when he is around, she is no longer working for herself and her children, but for herself and for husband, which is a lot more work (agricultural work).

We went to visit a woman by the name of Me' Maliteboho, she is a teacher whose husband left the mines in 2005. She was teaching when her husband was working and her salary and the remittances she received from her husband put all 6 of their children in school. They are still in school at the moment. She is the sole breadwinner of the household and her husband feels frustrated. He's not too happy about the situation, and doesn't help much with the housework, although he does occasionally help with the gardening. Her husband isn't happy at all, and wishes he was bringing in a lot more money for the family. She says it has an effect on her, when he is not happy. Now that he is at home, Me' Mapitso says that they argue a lot more, and he does not like the fact that he is no longer the breadwinner of the household. They argue a lot because of the frustration he feels about his situation. He definitely has changed since he left the mines. He has become a lot more frustrated and argumentative. The women that were visiting Me' Mapitso said that it was a normal occurrence for ex- miners to feel frustrated, because they feel helpless in their situations, but they try to keep themselves busy with the upkeep of the household.

Me' Mapalesa's husband really feels despondent due to the fact that he is no longer working. He still subscribes to the traditional division of labour. He can cook and do housework, but he doesn't do so, because it is not a man's job. I asked her what she feels about this, and she said that its okay, men return from the mines after working for such a long time, they deserve a rest. I also asked Me' Manamolo about how her husband felt when she was the sole

breadwinner prior to 2001, but she said he never said anything about that and didn't have a problem with her working, because it was not just for her, but for the family.

Me' Mateboho says the main problem is that there are no jobs for her to do, otherwise she would work. In the period between her husband's retrenchment and his job at the hospital, they did face a lot of financial difficulties. She has four children, and one of them is in grade 7. The other three are not working, and live at home with her. They help with the housework, but that is all that they do, besides looking after the two sheep that they have. She has three daughters and a son, and they help out with looking after the animals. They were unable to complete their studies, as her husband's salary is not able to cover the costs of school fees. His salary goes mainly to food for the family. Me' Mateboho says that the money he earns is not that much, and she just accepts what he gives her, it's his money, so he does whatever he wants with it. She has no say in whatever he does with his money, and cannot question him. Her whole day is spent gardening and doing housework. While her husband is at work, the children do help her out in the house. She wishes she could work, there are 'piece jobs', but she hasn't been able to do any of them because of her household obligations, and often the jobs take her away from the household.

In the case of another woman, Me' Masetabele, her husband has not worked since he was retrenched from the mines. She says that he just hangs around doing nothing all day. He is much older than she is, he is 72 years of age, and receives a pension. He does do 'piece jobs' now and then, and the money he earns from this, in addition to his pension money, belongs to him alone. Sometimes he might give his wife M10 or so, but keeps the rest for himself. Most of his money is used to buy alcohol.

When Me' Mampho's husband returned home after all these years, he arrived to find that his wife had built a house, she said " He doesn't even know how it was built, he didn't even know where I lived, he just managed to find us, and returned after all these years". She welcomed him back with open arms, and so did the children, after all, he was her husband and their father, and she could not chase him away. She says she did not have the right to chase him away because he was her husband and the children's father, despite the fact that he had not come home from the mines and supported his family all these years. Now that he's home, he doesn't do much, although sometimes he helps out in the garden. She does all the housework and everything else that needs to be done, because she has to be submissive to

him. He has made himself comfortable in a home that was built by his wife, and she can only accept him.

Me' Maletsatsi, told me that she and her husband fight a lot, life is not easy, and she has to try and do her best to support her family. She says she is better off being in Ramokhele during the day, otherwise she and her husband would argue all day long. They fight about so many different things, and it's mainly because of their frustration about the situation they are in, and because he has become a bitter person after his retrenchment.

I visited an area called Matholeng. It seemed like a more "well off" area compared to Khubetsoana, Lifelekoaneng and the other villages I had visited. Reason being that there were a lot more brick houses there instead of small huts and mud houses. There was also a fair amount of construction going on, as people were building houses, many of them made of brick, and there were younger people that lived in the area. There was a large bottle store and Café (general dealer) by the side of the road, just at the entrance to the area. I was told that many of the new houses that are being built or are already standing, belong to miners who were retrenched from the mines. They used their retirement money to build houses in the area. Many of them are struggling, because they have no money, but big houses. Their children do not even go to school, because all the money was spent on building or renovating the house, and now they are struggling. I asked some of the women why this was so, and why they did not save the money for their children's school fees as capital to start up a business. The woman said that it was their husbands' decision to build the houses and they had no say in the matter as it was not their money, but belonged to the husbands. Many of the women would have rather saved up the money, because they already had houses and did not need to renovate or build new ones. They had been living in those houses for years without any problems, and they believed it was unnecessary to build new ones. They could not say anything however, because it was their husbands' hard earned money.

Most of the women I spoke to were submissive to their husbands, particularly because the men returned and reasserted their gender roles. More so because they seem to have lost their financial power, and are re-asserting this power in another form, some by not helping out in the household, and having their wives do all the housework, others by restricting their wives from doing anything outside of the household. Some women like Me' Mamososana were not comfortable speaking to me when their husbands were close by and would rather disclose

things to me when we were away from the house. There were men who still had some financial power over their wives, from the money that they received from ‘piece jobs’ as some of the women said they could not ask their husbands for money, because it belonged to them. Some husbands did work hand in hand with their wives, and share some of the workload, but women were still only restricted to the household, and were under their husbands’ watchful eye.

4.3.6 Women’s lives and the spectre of ill health

The livelihoods of the women in Mafeteng had changed in more ways than one after their husbands returned home from the mines. The majority for the households I visited had a family member that was ill, and in most of the cases, it was the husbands who had returned home ill. In almost every household I visited, there were complaints about illness, especially TB. Some of the men had returned home from the mines due to illness. This caused an added burden to their wives who also now had to look after them, and try to do something to earn the money that they needed to pay for hospital bills.

Lesotho also has a very high rate of HIV infection, with a large proportion of it being caused by returning mineworkers (Kimaryo,2004). Because of women’s lack of decision making power in the household, they in turn are more vulnerable to infection. In many of the households I visited, women seemed to be more in touch with the realities of the disease than the men who were largely still in denial about its existence. This denial then would cause them not to seek medical help or get tested for the virus. Women would look after themselves, and take antiretroviral (ARV) medication that they had access to from clinics, and live longer than their husbands. In several villages I visited, there were more widows than married couples, and whenever I inquired, I was given the same answer, that men do not seek medical help when they are ill, that is why women end up living longer than they do.

HIV/ AIDS is still not really spoken about that much in the community. Many people just talk about having TB, and people dying of TB, not mentioning that they may have been vulnerable and died of the disease due to HIV infection. Many of the men believe in myths surrounding HIV/AIDS and this is also a result of not seeking information and being ignorant about its realities. There were also cases where men got injured or fell ill on the mines, but they did not receive any severance pay for on-the- job injuries. These men then return home

and are not able to work due to illness. This then becomes an added burden to their wives, not only because their husbands cannot work and they have to look after them, but also because their husbands do not like being helpless and often get frustrated with their situation, which their wives have to put up with. Women's livelihoods have changed significantly after their husbands' retrenchment.

I visited a woman named Me' Mathabang .She was lying on the bed when I arrived and later she sat up to chat and went back to lying down. When I was there, I sensed that she really had nothing else to do and was not feeling well. There were pots on the stove and it seemed like she had already done her cooking for the day, and the food was also for the evening. I chose to sit there and chat to her a little longer. I thought I would then move on around the area, and she told her daughter to introduce me to the next door neighbour who was also an ex-miner's wife. Both she and her husband were also not working. Her name is Me' Mamello. We arrived at the house just after lunch time and, in the living room she sat with her children, two teenage children, a daughter and a son, and a little baby on her lap. Both Me' Mathabang and Me' Mamello had done their housework and had little else to do. They wished that they did have something to do, but seemed helpless, as though they had lost hope of doing anything else besides working in the home. This was their job, this is what tired them out during the day.

I spent some time with a woman named Me' Matokelo. Her son was helping her with the house chores, and when I got there, and explained my research to her, her husband was there and wondered why I was only speaking to her, and not him, as he was the one that worked on the mines. Me' Matokelo was quiet the whole time I was there and her husband was speaking, asking me questions about my research. He left after a while after he understood why I was there. I had an interesting conversation with Me' Matokelo who told me that she really does not go out of the house that much. She just does the housework, and gardening, and her son helps her out sometimes. They also do not have a proper income as her husband is not actively seeking employment. He might take some 'piece jobs' but only when he wants to. She cannot force him. Her life has become a lot tougher now that she cannot do anything without her husband's permission, so to speak,.

Me' Matokelo said that life was easy when her husband was on the mines, they had no worries, as she knew that there was an income and they would receive money at the end of

the month which she was satisfied with. She used to farm and sell chickens; they had enough money to sustain their livelihoods. Back then, 20l of paraffin used to cost M2.50, 50kg of maize meal also cost M2.50. The money that she had was little, but it went a long way in terms of provision of basic needs, M20 was a lot of money back then. Before her husband was retrenched, at least one could think about what to do with M200, but now, one needs to think about where the next meal will come from. Everyone, especially the children, have needs, but how are they to be met? Her son (the one who works) does lend a helping hand when it comes to the household financial needs. By the way that the son was working in the house, one can see that the parents really rely on him a lot. I mentioned this to Me' Matokelo and she said, he definitely does a lot of the housework; she doesn't do much, she only fears that when he gets married he won't be helping around anymore.

When I left Me' Matokelo's house, she went back to her seat in front of the house beside her husband. There were two other men that sat outside with them, and I noticed that her son had also joined them now that the housework was done. I left the house with Me' Malebohang, and we walked around the area, as she greeted almost everyone that came past. It seems like they hardly see each other, only once in a while, they all kept saying "hey, long time no see" or "Where have you been?", to each other. I asked her about that, and whether there is a lot of community interaction, and she said there used to be, but not anymore. People are too involved in their own business and their own households. They no longer get together as community members anymore, as there is no common tasks or work that they do. People used to work together when they farmed but this does not happen anymore.

I paid a visit to Me' Matebello, she is a widow, her husband had TB and had to return home from the mines. He passed away at home in 1997. She now just stays at home with her grandchildren. Her children are now adults, one of her sons is a taxi driver, and she survives on his earnings. The children had to drop out of school when their husband passed away, as there was no longer any income for the family. She plants vegetables in her garden, but only for subsistence. She cannot do much, and cannot work because her leg is swollen and she doesn't have enough money to see a doctor. She told me that all she does all day is look after her two grandchildren. Her other son (she has two sons), is still looking for a job. I noticed from the moment we arrived at the house, that Me' Matebello was not happy at all. She seemed very bitter, as she sat on her stool with her painful leg stretched out. She was feeding her two granddaughters; they were both girls and both the same age. She could not work due

to the fact that there were no jobs, but also because of her leg, and she seemed very helpless. We spent a short time there before heading back to Me' Malebohang's house.

There was a particular day, that was extremely hot, and I stopped to sit under a tree for a while on my way into the villages. It was hot and dry, as if it had not rained at all the previous day. I asked myself "how do people here survive? If they rely so much on what they grow in their gardens and in the fields?" It must be terrible during the drought season, and even if it rains, it is so hot that the land dries up so quickly. It is no wonder they do grow so much in their gardens, so that they can store a lot of it in times of need. But they can only store so much for a certain period of time. It was really quite sad to think about it.

Me' Malerato and her husband have two pigs, and they are hoping that they would get piglets, so that they could sell them. I asked her about help in the community, and whether people help each other out in times of need. Unfortunately this is not the case in their community as everyone seems to be facing the same problems, which are unemployment and many people struggle, not knowing where their next meal comes from. Despite the fact that community members know each other, they tend to keep to themselves as everybody is involved in their own lives, trying to sustain their livelihoods, and concerned with household matters. In times of drought, people suffer immensely because they live on the crops and vegetables that they grow in their gardens.

Me' Mathabiso has a little shop in her yard. They do not make much money, because people would rather buy from the cheaper Chinese shops. She doesn't grow food in her garden, but rather has to travel to Bloemfontein in South Africa to buy vegetables, which are of better quality. Since both she and her husband are ill (she did not disclose what the illness was), they are not able to any strenuous work. It is a lot easier for them to have a shop in their yard rather than do any other kind of strenuous work. Her husband has already retired after spending his life on the mines. She says that life cannot get better for them, they can either remain in their situation or it could get worse, she sees no hope for them as they both cannot work, and are living each day as it comes. Her husband has accepted that he can no longer work and is not bitter about it; they work together for their survival. Their children also live in the house with them and they help out as well, as they cannot find jobs either. If they did have jobs, this would possibly improve their livelihoods, but they also did not finish their schooling, so they would not be able to find proper jobs.

Me' Matokela told me that her husband wishes that he could still work, but he's too ill with TB, to work, and he is ageing. She said it's hard for a man when his wife has to become the sole breadwinner, but household needs have to be met, so if she could find work, she would do it. Her husband would not really like it, but he has no choice. Her husband feels frustrated because he cannot do the same things that he used to do before, like buying soft drinks, and the family can't have the luxuries that they used to have. They don't even have enough money to pay for medical bills and medication. She would have to try and find a job, but has been unsuccessful.

Unlike Me' Matokela's husband, Me' Mapakiso's husband is able to work, and does get 'piece jobs' now and then. However, according to her, her husband doesn't seem to care much. As long as she is working, he doesn't seem to care whether or not he has a job. She is ill, but there's nothing she can do, she has to work to feed her family. Her workload has really increased. She does her housework and still has to go to the market. Her husband does not help out in the house.

Another woman, Me' Makhasane's, says her husband is also ill and cannot work, ever since he returned from the mines, he has not been able to find a job. She has never had a job. They live off hand-outs they receive from other people, in the form of food and clothes. She says her husband feels satisfied somehow, he has fulfilled his job, and his family has enjoyed the fruits of his labour. She also agrees with this view, she has enjoyed the fruits of her husband's labour.

Me' Mamosieoua's husband suffers from high blood pressure and cannot do any hard labour. They do help one another with household chores now and then.

Me' Mapule's family is in a dire situation, but there are no jobs for her to do. She has to look after her husband, so it is understandable that she cannot work outside the home. She has to look after her bed-ridden husband. Her workload has increased in that she has to look after her husband as well as the household, and only relies on her daughter's meagre income. As a mother and a wife, she worries about her family's well being, especially her husband whose health needs to be sustained, and without proper nutrition this is not possible.

On the way from Me' Mapule's house, the woman that was showing me around, Me' L disclosed her HIV status to me. She told me that she was HIV positive, and that she has known for a long time, and is on medication. She told me that there are a lot of people who are living with HIV but they do not disclose their status for fear of stigmatization. I was surprised that she told me about this, but perhaps from the few days we spent together she felt comfortable to talk to me. I figured that maybe this is why she did not want me to write about her, and her life. I told her that I would not interview her, or include her real name in my write up, and she agreed. As we were walking I felt that she trusted me enough to share that bit of information, and it must not be easy to disclose something like that in her community, but she said that there are people in the community who know of her status, but not many, perhaps only the people that she was close to, and those that she trusted.

I thought about how many other people feel and live in fear of stigmatization, especially the women in the community, because the men are the ones who deny their statuses. It must also be a burden for women who have to look after their husbands, especially those who return from the mines already ill. Many women who I spoke to had said that they were ill, and so were their husbands and I thought of how many more could possibly be living with HIV. By the end of the fieldwork, there were a few women that disclosed their statuses to me, and told me that their husbands were still in denial.

Me' Mathabo sold goods at the market in 1992, after beer brewing which she started when her husband was retrenched, to try and make ends meet. She can no longer work due to illness. She is HIV positive, and says that she can work, but it's no longer easy for her to do so. Her husband does not live with the family anymore, he is also ill, and lives at his parents' house now. She just lives with one of her daughters, as the other one is out trying to find a job. Both her daughters are not married, but have children. No one in the household has a job, and they do not even grow vegetables in the garden. At the moment, she lives off food donations from USAID. During the day, Me' Mathabo does the house work. That is all she does, as she has to rest quite often. Her daughter also helps her out. Me' Mathabo's husband has not been living with her since 2001, and apparently has another family with another woman.

Me' Mathabo told me that there are many miners who come back home ill, especially those that return, being HIV positive, and this is a burden to wives who would either also live with

the virus or have to look after ill husbands. Me' Makhahliso and I left the house, and went back to her place. We spoke about the effects of HIV on the livelihoods of women. She said that there are many women in that situation. Their husbands return from the mines ill and they do not get tested for HIV, because they believe it is a myth, and that the illness is a result of being bewitched. They then do not seek medical help, and may go to traditional healers who do not provide proper treatment, or have the facts about the virus, which results in its spread. Women are the ones who mainly take the initiative to go and get tested, and get themselves on treatment. Men are still largely in denial about the disease. She told me that this is the reason why the women are left widowed and live longer than their husbands because they receive treatment.

Women also have very little negotiating power when it comes to safe sexual practices. Many husbands do not believe the disease exists and their wives are not to question them. This is why so many of the women suffer, and end up contracting the virus, many of the men are also unfaithful when they spend time away from the home. They often had women at the mine compounds that cook and clean for them, because they could not do so themselves. Some ended up taking second wives and having other families, and this is a major problem in the area.

Ill- health was not only in the form of HIV or TB. Me' Matsoanyane's husband returned from the mines sometime in the 1990's. He was involved in a hit and run accident, that left him injured, and unable to work. At the moment she cooks for school children and gets some money from this. This is what they survive on. She also grows vegetables in her garden, she has a daughter who is now married and has her own family. Me' Matsoanyane lives at home with her husband and the herd boy.

She used to farm, but has not planted anything this year as they cannot pay for the manual labour, and there was no one to sharecrop with. Her workload definitely increased after her husband's retrenchment. Her day involves collecting water from the well, cooking for her husband and the herd boy as well as the school children. She then spends most of her day at the school, and then goes to fetch her granddaughter from school. In the afternoon her granddaughter spends time with her. She then washes her school clothes and looks after her until her mother fetches her in the evening. Her workload is a lot more because she has to try and bring an income into the family, and her husband cannot work, He is at home all day. She

wishes there was some other jobs he could do besides cooking for school children. It becomes a problem during the school holidays.

After my time in the village of Thabaneng, I was warned about an outbreak of anthrax in the Mafeteng area. Anthrax is a disease in humans and animals that is caused by a bacterium that is lethal. In areas where there are extreme temperatures or drought, the spores become active after being dormant for a long period of time. Once these spores are inhaled or ingested, especially by animals after ingesting grass, they become infected with the disease. Once the animal dies from this disease and the meat from these animals is eaten by humans, they too are infected. Human beings can also be infected with this lethal disease if they come into contact with the animal's blood or skin. I was then advised to stay away from the areas, especially as I was walking long distances through grazing fields. There was a mass immunization and awareness campaign going on, to warn people not to eat the meat of dead animals, and to vaccinate their livestock against anthrax. There had already been a number of fatalities due to this.

I began to think of the people who relied solely on their livestock for income as well as consumption, and with animals dying off, they would be left with nothing. There would also probably be many people who would rather eat the meat instead of throwing it away, not knowing the dangers of doing so. I returned to Pretoria for two weeks while the situation was being stabilized in the area. When I got back, all the people I interviewed from then on told me that their animals had been vaccinated on time.

4.3.7 Sitting, waiting, helplessness: is there no agency?

There was only one family I came across in Mafeteng, where both husband and wife were working and had stable jobs. The majority of households had both husband and wife that were unemployed. Despite the high rate of unemployment, and the fact that many households have no stable income, there seemed to be no real agency reflecting serious efforts to find employment. Women would talk about not being able to find jobs, but they did not seem to be actively trying to find jobs, day in and day out. They were also not starting up their own little initiatives. Their workloads had definitely increased, but they were still unemployed.

Housework is what primarily kept these women occupied, and were tired out by midday when all the housework had been done. They did not only have the housework to worry about, but possibly also worry about the future, the burden of looking after ill family members, and a general feeling of helplessness. It was almost as if they were hoping and waiting for better days, not knowing what the future holds. There was also a sense of helplessness amongst the men who had worked for a long time and now returned home with nothing to do.

Me' Mathabiso said that the men who returned from mines, really have no work to do in Lesotho, the South African ex-miners are far better off because they have better job opportunities. In Lesotho there really is no work for them to do. TEBA which is a bank specifically for mineworkers and their families has a programme where they teach these men various skills, like woodworking etc, but very few people know about this, it's almost as if the organization only alerts a few people about their programme. She also says that a few women went to a meeting where they were told that ex mine-workers would be given houses, but until today there has been no such thing happening, and no more word of it ever happening. She is also very suspicious that maybe the government keeps the money from South Africa that is supposed to go to the ex-mine workers, because they are always being promised something, but they never receive anything.

When I was at Me' Mamososana's house, she told me that there was a woman who had come to see her the day after I was there, asking why I had not come to her house, and why I was only selecting households. The woman thought that perhaps I was offering people jobs or money or some kind of aid and did not want to be left out. She told me that there were a number of women who knew about my research but believed I was offering some aid. This woman had come to Me' Mamososana's house to ask her for money. Me' Mamososana tried to explain to the lady what research I was doing, but she did not believe her. As she was telling me this, the lady arrived. At least I was able to speak to her and explain everything to her in person. She then understood and stayed to chat for a while. She told me that women in the area really do not have any money, but they cannot work to earn an income, so they would appreciate hand-outs. No one really actively goes about job hunting.

That day, I watched as Me' Mamososana's husband returned home from breaking rocks at the quarry and was drinking a cup of tea while resting under the shade of a tree. He had

already had his lunch that was prepared earlier on that morning. In the afternoon there was not much to do but sit around and chat. I asked Me' Mamososana's daughter how they usually spend their afternoons, since the housework is already done by midday. Apparently, they do not do much. If they have visitors they sit and have a chat, there is not much that they can do in the afternoons, especially because of the heat.

The day I went out to the fields with Me' Mamososana, the women really enjoyed each other's company, we stayed there for a while and I noticed some buildings in a fenced area nearby in the middle of the fields, so I asked what it was. I was told that that the building was built by the Lesotho Mineworkers Union, and was supposed to serve as some sort of income generating project for ex-mineworkers. They could rear and sell chickens, and also learn how to make wire fencing. This project for some reason failed and the building was abandoned. No one is doing anything about it at the moment, and the building has been vandalized. We walked over to see the place, and we were able to get into the ground because the wire fencing had been stolen. One woman thought about bringing her chickens there, as there was enough space and facilities for them.

Not having the amount of money that they used to have, Me' Masechaba says that she feels lazy, and doing the housework is just one of things that she has to do. Nothing is enjoyable anymore, like it used to be when she used to receive money from her husband. A typical day in her life involves doing the housework, and resting. She says that there is not much for her to do. She was busy washing clothes when we arrived at her house, and she said that she was going to carry on with the washing and cleaning the house, as was her daily routine.

I spent some time with Me' Mapitso and the women who were visiting her. They also had nothing much to do as they were housewives, and widows. The one's who were housewives had husbands who were working, and they were just involved in agriculture, the others who were widows, are also getting by, on the crops that they grow. Their workloads are a lot lighter, as they just have to look after themselves, the children are in school. The women, who are housewives, had their days' work done, so they had time to visit. Me' Mapitso was also busy with her housework despite the fact that she had visitors. Women who were widows seemed to have a lot less to worry about.

Me' Mamelita is a quiet but friendly person, she just does the housework, and when she's done, she just rests. There is not much that she does, as her daughter helps her around the house, and she helps to look after her child. Me' Mapule's situation is similar to this. When I went to see her, she was in the house, lying on her bed and there were other women sitting next to her. They were friends who had come to visit her. She had done her housework for the morning, and said there was not much to do, so she was resting, and having a chat with her friends. Her husband can still work, but by that she means jobs that do not require much labour. She herself would not work because she has a foot problem. When I asked her what was wrong with her foot, she just said that it aches from time to time so she cannot do any work. I asked her if that was why she was lying on her bed, and she said "well, yes, and I'm tired".

Me' Mamosieoua was busy when I arrived at her house. I told her that she can carry on with whatever it is she is doing, and we can casually chat as I would also like to observe and see what work she does. She told me that she really did not have much work to do anyway. As far as economic activities in the area, she says that there are just no opportunities to do anything, especially for women who have to look after the household as men themselves struggle to find work. If men struggle to find work, it's even worse for women.

Me' Lerato explained to me that as long as there are children who look after their parents, the parents feel as if there is no need to work, as their children would take care of their needs. The younger generation is able to find work a lot easier, even if it means driving a taxi or doing housework, because those are jobs for younger people.

From my months of observation, I would agree that there definitely is some sort of complacency when it comes to actively seeking employment, but women talk about the need to find jobs a lot more than the men, who although are frustrated, seem to enjoy being pampered by their wives, and being at home. The men's complacency seems to rub off on their wives who cannot find jobs either, but have to be the good wives looking after their families. Women do not seem to be involved in any hidden income generating activities because their husbands have a watchful eye on them. They cannot venture out on their own, and seem to be trapped in a state of under-activity and helplessness. They can only do what is required of them.

Women relied heavily on remittances for the survival of the household, and this is what they would live on. The retrenchments definitely had an impact on their livelihoods, as they no longer had a stable source of income. Women also had no say when it came to household finances, and merely accepted what their husbands provided them, without knowing his salary or the amounts that they were supposed to receive every month. Men had control over their finances, as their remittances, were their hard earned wages. Their wives were to accept what they were given, without questioning the amounts.

Despite the fact that many of the women I had spoken to did not have stable jobs, they still classified themselves as wealthy, because their husbands were sending home remittances. They gave me accounts of their financial stability in the past, and how they were able to put their children through school and manage to provide a proper meal for them. Many of the women were also involved in cooperatives that they enjoyed participating in with other women, and they had the freedom and the means of doing so. Now that their husbands are at home, their situations changed, and they are no longer living in relative comfort. Their circumstances after the mine retrenchments definitely changed for the worst.

Chapter 5: Final analysis and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the strands that run through this paper are tied together, offering an analysis of the findings by examining the common themes and deciphering information gathered in order to answer the research questions.

Each day I spent in Mafeteng, I felt a lot closer to understanding the people that lived there. It was different to me. The kind of lifestyle that people adopted and seemed content with was a very different one from that which I was used to. I realised that although people were complaining about their state, and about being unemployed, many of them accommodated and were generally happy with life in Mafeteng. I started making comparisons between the life that I live and the livelihoods of ex miner's families. In our society, and where I live, when both parents in a family are not working, it's a disaster. We strive to find work, because we are so used to the lifestyles that we lead and having a stable job and an income at the end of every month is a must. Many of us would not know how to survive because unemployment is not something that we can easily deal with. The difference between my type of lifestyle and those of the people I spoke to is that they, despite their circumstances, still survive; they still go about their daily lives. They have learned to prioritise the basic necessities which enable their survival. It made me think of the things that we often take for granted. The people I spoke to did not need to buy cars. They did not need to watch TV or have a fancy house, because that is not what they need in order to live. The women's husbands had been out of work for many years, some more than others, but they still maintain decent lifestyles, despite that. Some of their children still manage to go to school.

Apart from the fact that some people seem to be content in their situations, there still exists gender disparities that may have an adverse effect on Basotho society and particularly Basotho women. I thought a lot about the country, its population and the women in particular. I thought about their situation in the future, especially because lives seem to come to a standstill when husbands returned from the mines, re-asserting their gender roles. It is almost as if the men's return is a barrier to progress, a barrier to women's autonomy, which keeps them stuck in traditional roles that may not necessarily be adept to the times. When the women stayed at home, while their husbands were away, they did perform traditional

household or family roles, but with a lot more freedom and vigour as they were able to fend for themselves, and make ends meet for their families, with the remittances that they received from their husbands. Empowerment and entrepreneurship were more possible when husbands were away, as women had the means to do what they wanted, and in turn fulfilled a number of desires that they had, be it material assets or personal aspirations- they were able to be the wife and mother who was able to buy things for the family with remittances received, and buy household goods.

5.2 Gender implications of the study

The two questions that I wanted to investigate were: How have mine retrenchments influenced changes in gender and power relations in rural Lesotho households? And how do rural women perceive their economic activities, and the ways in which their abilities to generate income have been affected in the post-mine retrenchment period? I address these research questions firstly by analyzing the accounts of women's lives before the mine retrenchments, and contrast this with their present day livelihoods. The information gathered from accounts of women's economic activities will also be analyzed in light of the women's changed circumstances. The gender analysis I offer is the following:

5.2.1 How have mine retrenchments influenced changes in gender and power relations in rural Lesotho households?

Before the mine retrenchments, although many women saw themselves as living in luxury on their husbands remittances, this did not prevent them from fulfilling their household duties and sustaining their households. Agriculture is a major activity in Lesotho, and is an important part of their livelihoods. The majority of the women in Mafeteng were involved in farming, mainly for subsistence. They did not sell their produce as this would mean that they would have to go out and sell their vegetables, at the market, and this would take them away from their household duties, so they would rather farm for their families or sell small portions of their produce from home. They had enough money, so it was not necessary for them to sell their produce. Women enjoyed farming as it was also a social activity where they would work together and spend some time with each other. Nowadays, women can no longer really socialize as they used to because everyone is preoccupied with their own household affairs. They do visit or chat to one another when their housework is done, and they have little else to

do, but they do not do so as much as they did before the mine retrenchments. Everybody has to look after their household.

There were also women who were working, while their husbands were away, but they did not deviate from their gender roles, as many of the jobs were stereotypical female jobs like nursing, or housekeeping, sewing clothes etc. The wages from these jobs were just sufficient; and did not exceed what their husbands were earning from the mines. Women would also stay at home rearing chickens or selling vegetables from home while their husbands were away. This was permissible as it was not tough work, and in a sense, was part of “housework”, because it was done at home. Women also had opportunities to get together and form co-operatives because they had the finances to do so. They would contribute a certain amount of money or buy chickens in a collective effort and share goods amongst themselves. This however stopped once they were no longer receiving money from their husbands.

Before the mine retrenchments, men and women’s labour roles were quite clear cut. Men would work on the mines and women would stay at home and be the homemakers. After retrenchments, gender roles were shifted somewhat to accommodate prevailing financial circumstances, but only to the extent where there was mutual help in some households. Men were still largely re-asserting their gender roles, which kept women in their positions with an extra burden in that they did not have as much autonomy as they did previously and were now living in tough times where they needed to look after the household in a way that they had never had to before. Life was great when husbands were on the mines. Some women even quit the jobs that they were doing before they were married in order to fulfil their roles as married women. They were married to men who were going to work on the mines. Mine work only provided a temporary stability that people really didn’t think about. Women especially seemed to believe that their husbands would work on the mines forever, and did not necessarily anticipate that their financial circumstances would change after retrenchments.

The women’s stories clearly indicate that their daily routines changed since the men returned home. They no longer have their own routines in their own time, but have to restructure their time in a way that accommodates their husbands and in a way that they should be able to perform their duties under their husbands’ authority.

Women's work is very limited as compared to when their husbands were away, this is why they end up sitting at home, as there is not much for them to do, but be at home. Their daily routines involve house chores and resting. This is in support of Sweetman's (1999) article, "Sitting on a Rock" that illustrates the way in which women literally had not much to with their time as they could not actively pursue income generating practices. There are no jobs for women to do, so they simply make do with what they have, they plant vegetables in their gardens, and try to somehow make ends meet. This is how they survive. It is the woman's responsibility to take care of the family, as husbands have been providing finances for a long time.

In cases where there was mutual help between husbands and wives in the household, husbands were cooperative because they believed that their wives had "looked after them" and the household, while they were away on the mines. This was mostly the case with couples who had lived together on the mine compounds or had not been away from each other for a long period of time. They seemed to have a stronger relationship because they had spent a lot of time together. With couples who had spent most of their time apart, their relationships were distanced a lot more by gender disparities and their relationships seemed to have more distinct gender roles. Men, despite being unemployed, would retain their roles as heads of households and women were to remain subservient.

Some of the men in Mafeteng realized that they are now in tough financial times and were willing to help out with the house chores, as they believed it to be a joint responsibility. There were however some arguments between husbands and wives, especially working so closely together, but they were nothing out of the ordinary and women believed these arguments to be normal, just like in any other context. Many husbands were frustrated and distanced themselves from doing household work. In these situations, there was also a lack of communication between husbands and wives, as each one would not want to get in the way of the other. This is where most of the women felt the burden of their livelihoods because their husbands were not contributing to the household at all, whether it is through labour or financial means. The women had to do everything. There were fewer arguments in these households as women would not confront their husbands if there was a problem. They would rather discuss it with other people outside the household if it was a serious situation like the situation with Me' Mamososana where she was not consulted when her husband decided to

sell their sheep. She went and discussed it with the person to whom the sheep was sold instead.

In households where there was no mutual help between husband and wife, the husbands felt that they had earned their retirement, and they needed to rest and allow their wives to do most of the work for the family upkeep. These men were those whose wives were living “luxurious” lives when they were not working, and they believed that it was now their turn to be burdened with household duties. Women who used remittances to enjoy themselves are now at home, struggling with the burden of work, whereas those who actually did work before still carry on with their work, more urgently. Those women who only started working when husbands returned from the mines realize the effects of poverty and do their best to do something, in a sense, allowing their husbands to rest for a while, especially if they have worked for a longer period of time.

In both cases where there was a clear sexual division of labour and, women were hard working, they spent most of their time doing household duties, and were not outside of the house that often. Husbands had a lot more freedom to do what they pleased, and could take ‘piece jobs’ if they wanted to, even if the ‘piece jobs’ took them away from home for a while, but this was not the case with women who had to remain at home. When men went out to find ‘piece jobs’, they would also keep their money for themselves and would not give that much money to their wives, who could not question that. Women said that some men used their money for entertainment and not solely for household purposes but they could not do anything about it.

The reality of poverty does sink in once the men have been at home for a while, at first it almost seems like they do not realize that they now have no money. It is the women who feel the brunt of poverty as they are used to receiving remittances, and now in this later phase they no longer have the means.

At first there seems to be some harmony in the household when husbands return but they then re-assert their gender roles, perhaps out of frustration with their situations. As mentioned before, there are some men who help out with the housework, and encourage their wives, to find work (even though not far from the household). They are still however in control of their domestic affairs, as it is up to them whether or not their wives will stay at home and be

involved in household labour or sell food at the market. At the end of the day, it is the decision of the husbands. Women can no longer do as they please. Beer brewing, although it yielded quite an income was at their husbands' discretion. Even though women were allowed to work, it was only because they were in a dire situation and needed some money. Husbands were not entirely supportive of the idea. The men, who did not contribute to their household in terms of doing housework and chores, would not want to lower their status even more. They were no longer sole breadwinners, and would not lower themselves even further by doing a woman's job.

Husbands were a lot more assertive when they returned from the mines; this could be due to the fact that after working on the mines for so long, and being under authority, they felt the need to regain their assertiveness (Morrell, 2001). Men would work as miners under supervisors, and perhaps they felt the need to react against their emasculation in the mines. This was the case more so with men who had stayed on the mines for a longer period of time. There were however no accounts of domestic violence. The only account that I heard about was the case where a woman used to hit her husband because she said he was "useless" and had no job. The family's well-being depends on the state of the husband's well being. Clearly, the general belief was that if the head of the household is happy, the family is happy and it's up to the wives to make sure of this.

This analysis ties in with the notion of the social construction of masculinity, and the fact that men wanted to retain their dominance and not be undermined in their roles as the head of the household. When looking at gender issues, men and masculinities need to be taken into account as Morrell states:

"While early gender studies focused mainly on women, the process of revealing the dynamics of gender also 'makes masculinity visible and problematises the position of men' (p.1). Within this broad framework there are of course, debates and distinct angles from which these generalised statements are approached" (Morrell, 2001:253).

This is further augmented by Sweetman who believes that in order to achieve gender equality goals, gender analysis has to be applied to both men and women to understand men's participation in daily life, the sexual division of labour, and why women put up with male

domination, or of how women perceive their interests as partly served by male domination (Sweetman, 1998).

The men that returned from the mines did reassert their gender roles, placing women in a position where they now had to restrain themselves from the autonomy that they once had. Men were still the heads of the household but not the sole breadwinners and this may have had an effect on gender relations because now their gender roles were undermined. Their masculinities needed other avenues to divulge in, hence the need for their reassertion in having some control over woman's work. Men, having been socialised in a specific way, to have certain gender roles in society, needed to hold on to these roles in an attempt to get rid of the emasculation that they felt, now that they are no longer earning money for the family, now that they are no longer the family's pillar of survival, so to speak. Morrell again offers the following explanation for this:

“While many texts on masculinities give attention to a conservative claim that there is a crisis of masculinity, claims by African men that they were emasculated reflected a real and not an imagined crisis. The condition of colonial and apartheid domination infantilised African adults; African men were called ‘boys’. This was explicitly linked in some apartheid discourse to the notion of the native people being a ‘child race’, which needed to be governed by or fall under the tutelage of others” (Morrell, 2001: 253).

The above is characteristic of the type of treatment that was prevalent on the mines in South Africa, especially during the apartheid times. This could also be an explanation as to why men, who had been at the mines for a longer period of time, were a lot more assertive in their gender roles, having worked under the conditions of the apartheid regime. It is not surprising then; that they would be the ones that are more emasculated and felt the need to cooperate with their wives a lot less as compared to the men who were more recently retrenched, not having worked during the apartheid era.

Men's need to reassert themselves may lie in the fact that they were treated as inferior and on returning home, and not being able to work, this was a double blow to their feeling of inferiority. Men needed to hold on to their masculinity despite their changed circumstances, and this had an adverse effect on household gender relations. Women in a sense had to “bear

the brunt” and succumb to their husbands assertions, as women were also to retain their gender roles as the submissive wives. This then hampered their own ability to sustain the household in the way that they would have, if their husbands were not around, or they would have been able to actively do something about their situations without much constraint and undermining their husband’s authority.

In the case of the men who helped out their wives with housework and general upkeep of the household, the explanation for this, could be that gender is a socially constructed notion that is not homogenous, despite the fact that there is a common cultural gender norm in Basotho society. In the same way that as South Africans, we have certain gender norms that are different from the British, yet there may be some people in both societies that experience gender norms in the same way, across cultures despite different cultural backgrounds. Culture and social norms are also not static. Connell (2005) also writes about different masculinities and different levels of power that men have in society, based on their positions. Although they are in different positions in society, they still hold power over women in their different “levels” in society. Background and circumstances may determine the extent to which men may experience this “emasculatation” or need to reassert their gender roles:

“The volatility of gender change is important for two reasons. In the first instance it shows that masculinity can and does change and that it is therefore not a fixed, essential identity which all men have. Secondly the change reveals that men differ – not all have the same masculinity. Theorists have attempted to elaborate on this observation by *talking* of a number of masculinities” (Morell, 2001:2).

These different masculinities are attributed to different up-bringing. Although men are socialised in accordance with the gender norms of the society, their experiences may differ. It is not surprising that not all men had the same attitude to being unemployed. Women had to deal with men’s feelings of emasculatation and changing gender relations in the household in a time when they needed to be able to have the same tenacity and vigour they had when their husbands were away, in order to sustain their livelihoods. In this regard, women have a heavier load to carry, as they could not do much about their situations, but work earnestly in the household as was their custom. Men and their chauvinisms restricted women, and limited freedom means that individuals have no control over their destinies (Todaro, 1997).

According to the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (2005):

“Gendered norms and behaviours are taught and learned rather than being natural or genetic. While mass culture likes to assume that there is a fixed, true masculinity, in fact, each societal construct of masculinity varies over time and according to culture, age and position within society. All men, though, while unique individuals, share one thing in common—gender privilege. By virtue of being born male, men are granted access to power, position and resources on a preferential basis to women. These are often assumed, taken for granted and seldom earned. A sense of entitlement, in fact, comes simply from having been born male” (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2005)

Unless rigid notions of masculinity and femininity are engaged, the mindsets of men and women cannot be changed. In order to deal with gender relations, this needs to be looked at and examined, by giving an understanding of what it means to be a man and a woman in society, placing both as equal partners with specific roles that are not weighed up against each other. Rather, men and women have their specific roles in society with one not being superior over the other.

5.2.2 How do rural women perceive their economic activities, and the ways in which their abilities to generate income have been affected in the post-mine retrenchment period?

As far as economic standing, women are generally not as actively involved in any economic activities. They may want to be involved but they do not have the means and are preoccupied with trying to meet their family’s needs. There are a few strategies that NGOs have, but the women say that they have to pay for classes like sewing or cooking, and no one can afford this. Women do not want to leave their families behind and work elsewhere, especially in South Africa, their first priority is the maintenance of the household, so being involved in economic empowerment strategies would be too time consuming and they would not be able to adhere to anything. Eldredge, as quoted in chapter 2, states, “Given the subordinate position of women in Basotho society socio-economically and politically, it seems surprising that women would initiate changes that increased their workload. I suggest that this occurred

precisely as a result of their marginalized position in society" (Eldredge, 1991:726). This statement coincides with the findings of this research paper.

Another reason that the women gave me, was that in Mafeteng and the rest of the country, Chinese people own a number of shops, and this hampers their efforts to try and start up a business. The Chinese have large shops and can afford to sell their goods at very low prices that the local people cannot afford to match. People are then forced to support the Chinese instead, as they are much cheaper. The women blame the government for giving the Chinese people opportunities to own businesses in their areas. They also do not employ that many Basotho women in their shops, but they have factories where they employ a lot of Basotho women, but the conditions are not favourable.

It seems as if the women are shifting the blame to where it is not due, and this may be a result of their own lack of entrepreneurial spirit. Blaming other people does not solve anything, as everyone tries their best to make some money, and whether or not the Chinese are making more money is not the issue "...it is people and their capabilities, capacities and general commitment that drive economic processes and not material goods, such as capital" (Blignaut and Ueckermann, 2005:470). There are a lot of initiatives that women can come up with, but there really seemed to be no drive amongst the women that I had spoken to, and this is what contributes to the plight of these rural women's lives. Poverty is defined as "...powerlessness and exclusion, resulting in denial of access to basic human needs and lack of capacity to influence the direction of one's own life" (Kingdom Lesotho, 2003:12). Women are left powerless by the fact that they are not supposed to be the ones heading households and earning more than men. This is why women do not see any future prospects for themselves and say that there are no jobs for them to do. Many of the women would like to work, and so would the men, but women being restricted and men feeling emasculated only serves as a catalyst for poverty due to their low expectations as Yanagihara and Sammbomastu in Blignaut and Ueckermann (2005) echo that "Both low self esteem and limited freedom of choice contribute to low levels of income when material well-being largely determines an individual's identity and value in the eyes of other people" (Blignaut and Ueckermann, 2005:469). Yanagihara and Sammbomastu say "People, acting as economic drivers, form the key to progress, not material means per se" (Yanagihara and Sammbomastu, 1997:90 as quoted by Blignaut and Ueckermann (2005). When there was money coming into the household, and husbands were working, the family was looked at as being "well off" and as

many of the women mentioned, people do look down on them when they can no longer afford material possessions and are in different financial circumstances. This would contribute to a lower self esteem, and in turn a lack of “drive” in addition to their powerlessness. This would also be the case for the men, feeling looked down upon and emasculated. Economic opportunities may look bleak in light of this, with little effort to pursue income generating activities. NGOs should attempt to build the self- esteem of both men and women, providing them with basic life skills as a foundation to build better, sustainable lives. I agree with what Goebel and Epprecht state, that "Clearly, the fact that the owner of a business is not a Mosotho means that Basotho entrepreneurship is not being directly fostered" (Goebel & Epprecht, 1995:10)

Gender stereotypes prevent women from looking for other work, they are socialized to look after the household, and they do just that, there seems to be no real “drive” to go out and work, and government does not seem to be encouraging these women enough by creating opportunities for them to be able to contribute to the country’s economy.

“The proper long tem goal of national development policy must be the successive relaxation of the systematic obstacles to the full realization of the human potential of its members” (Adelman, 1975:206).

Encouraging women as well as men and allowing them to utilize their potential will improve their livelihoods. Women , being more educated than men have a lot of potential, and men who have been working on the mines have work experience, and may have the stamina to do tough jobs that require manual labour .Creating opportunities for them to work within their gender roles may be a positive step towards development and improvement of their livelihoods. The study done by Blignaut and Ueckermann proves that “Income is mostly influenced by attitude and vulnerability variables and not *vice versa*.” (Blignaut and Ueckermann, 2005: 475). Changing attitudes and encouragement can make a positive difference and in turn enhance gender relations within the household. Women will not be as burdened, but would rather have something to do, within their gender roles, and so will men. This will not break down any traditional structures but rather give both women and men the opportunity to better their livelihoods within gender norms. Men returning from the mines need to have a safety net in the form of job opportunities, to fall onto, on returning home. This can curb the effects of the

despondency that contributes to a sense of lost masculinity that may cause antagonistic gender relations in the household.

“...the construction of masculinity and femininity, and the ideology of gender-relations characteristic of a culture, act as powerful organizers of behaviour. Failure to observe culturally valued and gendered prescriptions for behaviour can lead to social disapproval and even punitive social reaction. It also leads to self-doubt, guilt and shame since these values are deeply internalized and become core regulators of self-esteem. This helps to understand how women are co-opted into systems that oppress them” (IDRC, 2005).

Mine retrenchments had an effect on women’s livelihoods as well as their earning power. Men who had their lost masculinity contributed to the women’s burdens and the way that gender relations in the household panned out. It is therefore necessary to look at developing strategies not only focus on women but both men and women in a quest to improve their livelihoods and have them contribute to the country’s economy.

5.2.3 New challenges for women

Throughout this mini- dissertation, sub- themes emerged, as women now face new challenges as their husbands return from the mines. Women also now have the burden of looking after ill family members, many of them are ill themselves and are not able to work. Many of them also now have the burden of looking after grandchildren as well. They often worry about where their next meal will come from. It seems as if that is now just the main concern, food for survival. There is no need for anything else, but food is essential. Where women were once concerned about material things that they would buy, these no longer matter. As long as there is food for them to eat, they are fine. In all the households I visited, the meals consisted of pap and spinach or potatoes and spinach. This is all that many people live on. They cannot afford the luxury of having meat to eat, and grow the spinach in their gardens and grind maize to make maize meal for pap. When it is meal time, the women make sure that their husbands get the most food, then the children, and they eat what is left over, which is often not much. They do not even have a proper balanced diet and cannot buy nutritious food, which then also perpetuates illness.

I noticed that women whose husbands passed away seemed to be in the same situation as women whose husbands are still alive. There does not seem to be that much difference in their livelihoods, except the ones' whose husbands passed away have a lot more freedom to do what they please. They are both in dire situations trying to make ends meet on their own.

5.3 The study's contribution to knowledge

The study makes a valiant contribution to knowledge about the plight of rural women in Mafeteng, whose husbands have been retrenched, from the mines. It provides insight into the barriers preventing the equal participation of men and women in the country's development, with recommendations as to what needs to be done to fast track development in Lesotho, by addressing gender as a key issue. Most importantly, the study sheds light on the role of women in Basotho society, and the way in which their roles have become malleable as a result of incongruous gender relations and how this affects their livelihoods and that of their families. It highlights the need for gender equality and that one role is not more important than the other. Gender roles exist in every society, and need to be addressed adequately without prioritising one above the other.

This study also shows the need to empower women, educate both men and women and to have a contingency plan in place for men who return from the mines. These needs arise from the assertions that the study makes, and would contribute to alleviating the adverse effect on the country's employment rate and economy, and the drive towards development.

In the field of gender studies, this study contributes to the knowledge of how socially constructed gender roles can be disrupted when one gender role is not catered for, and restricted from being adequately carried out within the cultural norms of the society. It also depicts the necessity of having gender roles operating together, and not as separate entities or constructs. Once the men are out of work, then it caused a disruption to normal ways of life, and this hampers the livelihood of the family unit. The study focussed on women's livelihoods and demonstrated how the shifted gender roles had an effect on them in particular as the subservient gender.

5.4 Recommendations

The livelihoods of the families of ex-mine workers need to be paid attention to in Lesotho, particularly the role of women who are struggling to sustain their livelihoods without a proper income. Although the most important thing for these women is to have food on the table, they cannot live out their lives fully depending on their next meal. They may complain about their situations but believe that things cannot get better for them so they lose hope in ever bettering themselves and their families. This section highlights recommendations towards improving the livelihoods of rural women in Mafeteng:

1. Job creation and the changing of mindsets

Creating jobs for women would not really solve the problem, but possibly worsen it if men's mindsets are not changed. There is the possibility that men would feel threatened by women who are given the opportunity to work, as they would then be earning a lot more than their husbands. Husbands would also not necessarily allow their wives to work. In order to tackle this problem, jobs need to be created for men as well as women, but with respect to their gender roles, so that they can both be earners and also not disrupt their traditional gender roles. Women in Mafeteng accept their gender roles, and if they were given the opportunity to work, and earn money within the constraints of their gender roles, they would. The main factor is to give them the opportunities that they need, and for men to allow them to pursue whatever they want, especially if they are in dire straits. Both men and women need to lend a helping hand and work together to sustain their livelihoods. Women's mindsets also need to be changed, and they need to know that they can use their knowledge and skills and are just as capable as men are.

2. Creating a safety net

If women and development are to go hand in hand, worldwide, then there needs to be some evidence of action being taken since the signing of the Beijing declaration in 1995. For women in Lesotho their situations have only become worse over the years, and there seem to have been nothing done about it. Many of these mineworkers have been retrenched for quite a number of years but only to return home without a safety net, and this safety net applies to women as well. Mine retrenchment should not be seen as a dead end to people's livelihoods.

3. Education as an alternative to mine work

Men also need to be educated, and given opportunities other than working on the mines. There is a strong need for men especially in the rural areas, to further their education and utilise their skills for the development the country. Both men and women need to be active participants in growing the economy of Lesotho and need the necessary skills to do so. A greater investment in rural education would benefit the country a great deal as it will have a larger pool of human resources. At the same time, job creation is important, so that these men and women can be appropriated into the labour force.

Men return from he mines with no proper skill other than mining, and end up doing jobs like ‘piece jobs’, or being caretakers which are really not stable jobs

4. Investing in the future of Lesotho through its children

Children should also be given grants, especially children whose fathers have been retrenched from the mines. This would lessen the effects of unemployment for the entire family, as struggling parents would not have to worry about paying for their children’s education. After retrenchments, parents should be able to apply for grants for children to continue with their education. This will also highly contribute to the development of the country itself, because it will be investing in its children. There is quite a brain drain in the country as the top, well educated children find work in South Africa, and those that are not so fortunate are unemployed and do not have much of a positive contribution to the society. Children who are educated are also able to help their parents out of financial difficulties, and are able to support them.

Conclusion

Gender relations in the post mine retrenchment era have an impact on the women's livelihoods and earning power. Their changed circumstances have allowed for a sense of despondency now that their husbands are at home. They no longer have the autonomy to do as they please, and make ends meet for their families, without gender relations having an effect on how they go about their daily lives. Their social and gendered positions have left women with little else to do, but look after their families within the constraints of their gendered roles.

The women that I spoke to enjoyed their lifestyles before the mine retrenchments, knowing they had a source of income and their husbands were away, so they were not as constricted as they would have been if the men were around. None of the women I had spoken to mentioned that they are now happier with their lifestyles or livelihoods after their husband's retrenchment. Men's return from the mines affected women's participation in economic or income generating activities in Lesotho, leading them into compliance and subordination.

The way that the mine retrenchments influenced changes in gender and power relations lies in the fact that they caused a disruption to the lives of men and women who did not anticipate tough times. Although their economic lives were disrupted- efforts were made to keep gendered norms intact. Men remained, in theory, the sole breadwinners and women, the homemakers. Now that in reality this is not the case, or rather cannot be the case, changes to this arrangement pose a problem to people who have been socialized in this way. Men cannot find work, or do not want to find work, but still want to retain their masculine roles, and assert their dominance. Women try to do their best for the household, but are limited to their gender roles. In doing so, their workloads have increased because they have to struggle a lot more to try and make ends meet with limited capacity. They have the burden of looking after their families with the little they have, and in some instances, looking after ill husbands or other family members.

There seems to be a lack of initiative and empowerment from both men and women. Men, feeling emasculated in their state of unemployment and not being the sole breadwinners, and women in their restricted roles due to the men re-asserting their gender roles in a different form, albeit with changed masculinities. Any development initiative to better women's

livelihoods would need to look at both men and women and address their needs, allowing them to play out their gender roles without restrictions, but rather harmoniously. There is a great need for both men and women to be the drivers of change in their lives, and be empowered to do so, without a disrupting of the gender roles that they have been socialized to perform. The mine retrenchments changed the livelihoods of both men and women and women bore most of the brunt for this. If gender roles are to be fundamentally changed in the future, they will have to undergo slow processes of revision and be initiated by the men and women of Lesotho themselves.

Glossary of terms

Khotla - a community council or local government meeting.

Maloti - Currency of Lesotho

Me'- Mrs or Madam

Mokhatlo - an informal savings program. People contribute an amount of money or goods collected and distributed amongst members of the program.

Ntate - Mr, Sir or man

Piece job - a temporary or contract job

Rondavel – a round thatch- roofed mud hut, with walls plastered with mud and dry cow dung.

Shebeen - Tavern

Stokvel- (*see mokhatlo*)

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