

**The impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio –
economic development of women:**

A Thaba Nchu case study

By

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**A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree**

MSW Social Development and Policy

in the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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April 2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Patience, Perseverance, Commitment and Determination pays off in the end. I thank God the Almighty for giving me the strength to exercise these values. The journey through this study taught me to believe in these values more than ever.

This study was motivated by and is dedicated to a generation of women who came before as well as after me. The women to be mentioned hereafter continue to shape my life in many different ways.

To my late grandmother – Blanche Tsimatsima, you represent the power, resilience and ability to change conservative perception about women. Being a female black commercial farmer in your era taught me a lot about the strength and power women have to change the world. You still inspire me to date.

To my late aunt – Ellen Kuzwayo - your contribution to women's development in Soweto over the years strengthened my passion for Social Development. I always appreciated the capacity and empowerment you instilled in those women through the self-help projects you facilitated with them.

To my late mother – Angela Tshikare – Motsweneng, YOU ARE MY HEROINE. Your tenacity, resilience, patience, unconditional love and so much believe in me is what made me the woman and professional I am today. Your approach towards life against all odds inspires me all the time. I miss you so dearly.

To my beautiful daughter Keneiloe and granddaughter Boipelo. I pray to God that you grow up well, humble yourself and learn to respect and serve humanity.

My sincerest gratitude to all the women in Thaba Nchu who participated in this study. I am humbled by your trust in me. I hope this will inspire you to realise your dreams.

Many thanks to my research assistant Neria Seabi. Without your assistance I would not have been able to achieve this. I know the sacrifices you made.

Lastly, to my supervisor Prof Antoinette Lombard. Words cannot adequately express my gratitude for the support and guidance you offered me throughout this journey. I almost gave up but your patience and perseverance with me saw me through. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. God should bless you abundantly.

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN: A THABA NCHU CASE STUDY

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The new political dispensation post 1994 ushered in progressive policies, such as the Rural Development Framework (RDF). The introduction of the Rural Development Framework was the first progressive step towards addressing the socio-economic developmental problems and challenges faced by rural communities in South Africa. The Rural Development Framework declares that almost three quarters of people who live below the poverty line in South Africa reside in rural areas. Of these, children, youths, the elderly and women are particularly vulnerable.

The goal of this study was to determine the impact of the Rural Development Framework on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu.

The researcher used a qualitative approach for the study. The study was applied and used an instrumental case study design. Purposive and snowballing sampling methods were used to select thirty (30) rural women participants for the study. Data was collected by means of focus groups.

The findings revealed that while women have benefited from the RDF socio-economic development projects in Thaba Nchu, they have not done so sufficiently to enable them to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The study concluded that there has been a moderate effort on the side of the government to implement the RDF objectives. Furthermore, within the framework of government's commitment and support, women should be empowered to drive RDF income - generating projects themselves in order to take charge of their socio-economic development and so achieve sustainable livelihoods.

Recommendations to enhance rural women's socio-economic development within the context of the RDF include capacity building and empowerment strategies such as communication structures and business skills that would give them a voice to negotiate improved access to income-generating projects and small business opportunities.

Key words

Rural Development Framework

Rural development

Women

Socio-economic development

Thaba Nchu

Sustainable livelihoods

Empowerment theory

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

During the apartheid era, the majority of black South Africans were confined to large settlements in the former homelands, where socio-economic development was virtually non-existent. This was due to the restrictive and discriminatory laws of the time which were prominent features of the apartheid regime.

As a result of the new political dispensation post 1994, the new administration ushered in progressive policies such as the Rural Development Framework (RDF). The introduction of the Rural Development Framework was the first progressive step towards addressing the socio-economic developmental problems and challenges faced by rural communities in South Africa. Anderson (2006:12) describes a policy like the Rural Development Framework as a “redistributive policy”, as it involves deliberate efforts by the government to shift the allocation of wealth, income, property and rights more broadly throughout society. The Rural Development Framework describes how government, working with rural people, aims to achieve and sustain the reduction of poverty by means of different programmes that help women to access finance, legal information, support and empowerment (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7). Triegaardt (2006:2) states that poverty is apparent to the human eye in the form of shacks, unemployment, poor infrastructure and lack of access to basic services. Furthermore, poverty and inequality in South Africa have gender and spatial dimensions (Oberhauser, 2001:5).

The Rural Development Framework declares that almost three quarters of people below the poverty line in South Africa live in rural areas (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7). Of these, children, youths, the elderly and women are particularly vulnerable. In general, women are disproportionately represented among the poor, and the number of women in poverty in the rural areas is growing faster than male numbers as a result of customary marriage practices; inheritance laws, which reduce their ability to take up economic opportunities; restricted access to land, finance, information, training and markets; low levels of literacy; and social and cultural barriers to formal employment (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7). These features

of poverty described by Triegaardt (2006:2) are evident in Thaba Nchu. Perpetual poverty and widening gaps in economic class and gender continue to characterise the area. It is against this background that this study looked at the impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu.

The key concepts for the study are as follows:

Rural areas

Rural areas are defined as “the sparsely populated areas in which people farm or depend on natural resources, including the villages and small towns that are dispersed through these areas. In addition, they include the large settlements in the former homelands created by the apartheid removals, which depend for their survival on agriculture, migratory labor and remittances” (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:4).

Rural Development Framework

The Rural Development Framework is defined as a “policy strategy that describes how government, working with rural people, aims to achieve a rapid and sustained reduction in absolute poverty” (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:4). As it is relevant to this study, it seeks solutions to questions such as “how to increase employment opportunities and economic growth amongst rural people, including women” and how it impacts on the socio-economic development of women (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:4).

Socio-economic development

In this study, socio-economic development refers to Midgley’s view of social development, which is “a process of planned social change designed to promote the wellbeing of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development” (Midgley, 1995:250) through which a “community creates, retains and reinvests wealth and improves the quality of life” (Sumners, 2011:1).

Thaba Nchu

Thaba Nchu is a rural town situated about 60 km from the capital of the Free State

Province, Bloemfontein, and about 85km from the capital of Lesotho, Maseru. It is a stronghold of the Barolong people and was incorporated into the Bophuthatswana homeland in 1977 (*History of Thaba Nchu*, SA, 2008). It is a predominantly agricultural area, which focuses specifically on crops and livestock. Thaba Nchu conforms to the definition of a rural area as defined in the Rural Development Framework (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:4) and as such provided an appropriate case study for this research.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The first South African democratic elections (1994) marked a realignment of political power and set the tone for the transformation agenda in South Africa (Friedman, 1999:2). As a result of these changes, gender equality came to be included in definitions of rights and the transformation agenda. Throughout this process, it became clear that addressing the effects of gender inequalities is a necessary aspect of social, political and economic transformation in South Africa (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:11). Against this background, the researcher identified empowerment theory and the sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) as relevant theories for this study.

Firstly, empowerment theory is a process that involves organising and creating environments conducive to social change (*Developing a theory of empowerment*, 2000:1). It recognises people's freedom from exploitation, inequality and oppression; features that are key to the RDF (*Developing a theory of empowerment*, 2000:1). Empowerment develops over time as people gain greater control over their lives and increasingly take part in decisions that affect their lives (Larkin, Cierpial, Stack, Morrison & Griffith, 2008:2).

Through empowerment, women, particularly in South Africa, have the potential to develop socio-economically if the environment is conducive to their enjoyment of adequate access to economic opportunities, health services, education and exercise of their land rights, as well as participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives (Mehra, 1997:138; Booyesen-Wolther, 2007:72).

On the other hand, SLA comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living (Bennett, 2010:8). A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with

and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain capabilities and assets both now and in the future (Bennett, 2010:8). SLA recognises that poor people may not necessarily have money, but may have other material or non-material assets and resources, such as human, physical, social and financial capital (Kadozo, 2009:6; Goldman, Carnegie, Marumo, Kela, Ntonga & Mwale, 2000:1).

In South Africa, SLA has been applied as a basis for an ongoing programme of work with the Department of Social Development (Goldman, 2010:3). The role of government is crucial, both in providing an enabling environment and in financing services and infrastructure (Gilling, Jones & Duncan, 2001:306). For this to happen, there should be a high level of political will that places poverty reduction at the heart of government objectives (Gilling et. al., 2001:306).

1.3 Rationale for the study and problem formulation

South African rural areas are still affected by past discriminatory laws and practices which marginalised rural people from mainstream socio-economic activities. Poverty, inequality and underdevelopment remain permanent features and pose serious socio-economic challenges for rural people. The democratic government post 1994 identified women, especially rural women, as a priority target group to benefit from programmes that would enhance their chances of developing socio-economically (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7).

The focus of this research was on rural women's socio-economic development with particular focus on Thaba Nchu in the Free State Province. The researcher spent most of her childhood on a farm and continues to interact with rural women. Her exposure to the rural circumstances pertaining to women throughout her life engendered special interest in their socio-economic development and how far the Rural Development Framework had impacted on this. Despite efforts by the Free State Provincial Government to give high priority to rural development, there was limited evidence from the literature that the Rural Development Framework had improved the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu.

In the context of the focus of this study, it appeared from the literature that, despite the Rural Development Framework targeting rural communities such as Thaba Nchu, the plight of rural women had not yet changed. This was evident in their levels of

poverty and exclusion from economic activities and ultimately in the impact of this on their children and families. This remained the case despite the fact that women are recognised as important role players in the South African economy (Dejene, 2008:8). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) stipulates that women have to be empowered, supported and capacitated to realise their full potential.

The intention of this research was therefore to determine the impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu. It was envisaged that the research would provide crucial information that would inform future capacity building and empowerment strategies for rural women in Thaba Nchu.

In accordance with the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher used a research question as a tool and strategy to guide the study in determining the impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu (Punch, 2005:16).

The main research question for the study was:

What is the impact of the Rural Development Framework on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu?

The following sub-questions informed the main question:

- How does the Rural Development Framework create an enabling environment in which the socio-economic development of rural women in Thaba Nchu is supported and promoted?
- What capacity building and empowerment strategies could promote socio – economic opportunities for Thaba Nchu women within the context of the Rural Development Framework?
- What are the possible gaps that might impede the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu in relation to the implementation of the Rural Development Framework?

1.4 Goal and objectives of the research

The goal and objectives of the study were as follows:

1.4.1 Goal of the study

The goal of the study was to determine the impact of the Rural Development Framework on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu.

1.4.2 Objectives of the research

The objectives of the research study were as follows:

- To conceptualise rural women's socio-economic development within the context of the Rural Development Framework;
- To explore how the Rural Development Framework impacts on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu;
- To identify possible gaps that might impede the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu in relation to the implementation of the Rural Development Framework;
- To propose capacity building and empowerment strategies that could promote socio-economic development opportunities for rural women in the context of the Rural Development Framework.

1.5 Research methodology

The qualitative approach was used for this study. The study was applied as it intended to find a solution for the immediate problems experienced by women in Thaba Nchu (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:105). The research design for the study was an instrumental case study (Fouché, 2005:272).

The population comprised women from two villages in Thaba Nchu, namely Mokoena and Ratau. A non-probability sampling method was chosen. The researcher used purposive sampling to select the sample according to pre-selected criteria, and this was followed by snowball sampling (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392). Data was collected by means of focus group discussions which enabled the researcher to assess the women's perceptions, understanding and definition of situations and construction of reality in relation to their socio-economic circumstances (Punch, 2005:168). Data was analysed using Cresswell (2009:184)'s thematic data analysis process.

A detailed discussion on the research methodology and the ethical considerations applied to the study will be discussed in Chapter 3.

1.6 Division of the research report

Chapter 1

This chapter provides a brief introduction to the study, including the key concepts relevant to the study; an overview of the theoretical framework for the study; the rationale for the study and problem statement; the goal and objectives of the study; and a brief overview of the research methodology employed.

Chapter 2

This chapter discusses women and socio-economic development in the context of South Africa and the RDF, unpacking the objectives, the achievements and the gaps thereof with particular emphasis on women in Thaba Nchu. This is followed by a discussion on a legislative and policy framework for women's socio-economic development in South Africa as well as relevant macro-economic policies. Following this, the chapter considers factors affecting rural women's socio-economic development, paying special attention to women in Thaba Nchu. Lastly, the focus falls on socio-economic strategies for women in the context of the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 3

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology used for the study. It covers a detailed description of the research approach, type of research, research design, study population, sampling, data collection, data analysis, pilot study and ethical issues. The chapter also presents the research findings of the empirical study and a discussion thereof.

Chapter 4

Chapter Four is the final chapter of the report. It outlines how the goal and objectives of the study were achieved. It summarises the key findings of the study and draws conclusions from the study. Finally, recommendations are made.

CHAPTER 2

RURAL WOMEN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will critically review the relevant existing literature dealing with the impact of the Rural Development Framework (RDF) on the socio-economic development of women, with particular emphasis on women in Thaba Nchu. This is with a view to examining, interrogating and analysing the work undertaken by other researchers in order to contextualise and conceptualise the topic under study. According to Fouché and Delport (2005:123), a literature review aims to clarify the nature and meaning of the problem that has been identified. The researcher sought to review the theoretical orientations of the rural women's socio-economic development strategies, which were brought together to assess their applicability to the impact of the RDF on the socio-economic development of rural women.

The chapter will begin with a discussion on women and socio-economic development in South Africa. It will also discuss the RDF in full, setting out the objectives, the achievements and the lacunae. This will be followed by a discussion on a legislative and policy framework for women's socio-economic development in South Africa, along with the relevant macro-economic policies. Following this, the chapter will look into factors affecting rural women's socio-economic development, focusing on women in Thaba Nchu. Lastly the researcher will consider capacity building and empowerment strategies for women.

2.2 Women and socio-economic development in South Africa

As outlined in the 2013 Statistics South Africa mid-year population estimates (RSA, 2013), women form 51.3% of the South African population. The poverty profile of the Free State, as discussed in the Provide Project background paper (*A profile of the Free State Province: Demographics, Poverty, Income, Inequality and Unemployment from 2000 to 2007*, 2009), also shows that an estimated 42% of the provincial population live in poverty, the majority, about 90% of them, being black. The profile further estimates that 73% of the provincial poverty statistics represents the rural areas, with the greatest burden of this poverty being borne by women (*A profile of the*

Free State Province: Demographics, Poverty, Income, Inequality and Unemployment from 2000 to 2007, 2009).

Women's participation in the mainstream economy in South Africa was historically both inclined and confined to gender stereotypical activities (Kongolo & Bamgose, 2002:83). Although there has been some progress in gender equality over the past two decades, especially in developing countries like South Africa, many challenges remain (Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women, 2013).

With the dawn of democracy post 1994, a new political landscape created a better environment through progressive laws, policies, strategies and programmes for women that recognise them as critical participants in the new and vibrant economy. It was for this reason that the post 1994 government created the Office for the Status of Women in the Deputy President's office and later established a fully-fledged Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disability in 2009 (Ozoemena, 2010:1). In the 2014 post general election for government administration, this ministry was replaced by the Ministry of Women in the Presidency.

The Ministry's mandate emphasises the need for equity and access to development opportunities for vulnerable groups in society, including women (Ozoemena, 2010:1). The post 1994 government further put in place formations like the Commission on Gender Equality to monitor and review the legislation and gender policies of publicly funded bodies to ensure that the equality of women is promoted (Friedman, 1999:6). The Commission for Gender Equality also acts as a watchdog and educator to ensure that gender equality attracts attention from both government and civil society (Booyesen-Wolther, 2007:70). To further accelerate gender transformation in South Africa, government has introduced the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (B50B-2013), which is in addition to the existing programmes, policies and legislative framework (*Reaching gender equality is our unfinished business*, 2013).

Much as this significant transformation continues to unfold, rural women are unlikely to participate and contribute effectively to the development opportunities. This is owing to the effects of gender discrimination and inequality in rural areas (Nkhonjera, 2011:8). For instance, rural women's lack of access to land limits them when it comes to meaningfully contributing to socio-economic activities (Nkhonjera, 2011:8).

In rural South Africa, the majority of households are female-headed (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:54). This situation is also common across Southern African countries like Malawi (Nkhonjera, 2011:10). According to Nkhonjera (2011:9), there has been an increase in female headed households in Malawi which depend on agriculture alone for their livelihoods. This is because women are excluded from participating and making a meaningful contribution to mainstream socio-economic development. This is owing to the common gender stereotypical practices that still prevail in rural areas (Nkhonjera, 2011:10). Rural women believe that government offers them no hope for change or empowerment (Kongolo & Bamgose, 2002:82). These authors further argue that there has been insufficient political will and sustained commitment to meeting the economic needs and interests of most rural women in South Africa (Kongolo & Bamgose, 2002:82).

Significant gains have been made globally regarding women's economic participation, although they vary in nature and degree. Despite this progress, gender-based gaps still exist (*Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women*, 2013). Women remain disadvantaged in terms of both labour market and sustainable livelihoods options. The majority of women continue to work as unpaid labourers in family enterprises with no access to income of their own. If they are paid, it is at a very low level (*Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women*, 2013).

Gender inequality in the economic spectrum remains an issue in both the global and the domestic markets, as is pointed out in *Global Employment Trends for Women* (2009). The 29 million jobs lost during the global economic crisis have not been recovered (*Global Employment Trends for Women*, 2012). This has increased the global unemployment rate for women from 6.3% in 2008 to 7% in 2012 as compared with 5.3% for men (*Global Employment Trends for Women*, 2012), with projections showing that no significant reduction in unemployment is expected, even in 2017 (*Global Employment Trends for Women*, 2012).

According to a study by Oberhauser (2001:6), the rise in the number of households supported by women is an important variable explaining the increase in poverty among women in rural areas, yet the level of women's participation in the mainstream economy remains very low (Naidoo & Hilton, 2006:10).

Statistical analysis presented by Van Klaveren, Tijnens, Hughie-Williams and Martin

(2009:17-18) substantiates the fact that the majority of South African women have worked in the agricultural and informal sectors, such as in private households. With time, women are increasingly participating in formal wage employment, such as in mining, finance and construction. Initiatives like the Women's Association in India and the Women's Development Businesses in South Africa, micro enterprise strategies and programmes in both rural and urban settings and the Rural Women's Movement (RWM) in South Africa, encourage self employment, especially among women. These types of programmes are founded on the premise that women are integral to the process of economic development (Servon, 1997:168).

The 2013 Thornton International Business Report (IBR) points to the lack of gender transformation in the boardroom in South Africa (*Reaching gender equality is our unfinished business*, 2013). Research findings show that 15% of South African women were represented on boards; as opposed to the average 26% on BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) (*Reaching gender equality is our unfinished business*, 2013).

Gender imbalances in South Africa have been integral to the country's history, with women being subjected to a variety of patriarchies dating back to the pre-colonial era (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:69). Given these constraints, rural gender equality and empowerment are not only an important goal for the South African government but are also pivotal to improving the country's economy.

This position is further articulated by Kongolo and Bamgose (2002:81) in their research findings, indicating that it is rural women who run families while their husbands are working in the cities. Rural women carry the burdens of life in general, while their inability to access resources like essential services, finance and land rights further perpetuates their vulnerability (Kongolo & Bamgose, 2002:18). This point is corroborated in the Overview Report supplied by Van Klaveren et al. (2009:30) when they assert that the burden of poverty in South Africa is the result of the lack of access to services, which continually falls heavily on rural women.

In view of the sentiments expressed in the Free State Development Plan Framework (2009), black and rural women remain a marginalised, silent group. Core to the strategies adopted in the Free State Development Plan is the promotion of self-reliance and economic empowerment for women, a principle which is also integral to

the Rural Development Plan (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:70) and the National Development Plan (NDP) (RSA, 2012:33).

Even though South Africa has made significant attempts through the Rural Development Framework to improve women's socio-economic circumstances, their socio-economic vulnerability, remains a challenge.

2.3 Rural Development Framework

The Rural development Framework was launched and adapted in 1997 by the post 1994 government to address the inequalities and underdevelopment state of rural areas during the apartheid era. It describes how government, working with rural people, aims to achieve a rapid and sustained reduction in absolute rural poverty (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:3).

The Rural Development Framework was developed from the premise that rural development is the business of everyone in the rural areas; rural people should thus set their own agenda for development (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:9). Rural development is about enabling rural people to take control of their destiny, thereby dealing effectively with rural poverty through the optimum use and management of their natural resources (Mahlati, 2011:7). Mahlati further emphasises that the transformation of rural life must be strengthened by policies that allow for growth in an equitable way. This should be done by means of the redistribution of economic and political power and people's participation (Mahlati, 2011:7).

The Rural Development Framework (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:5) recognises the severe obstacles and constraints to rural development as follows:

- Landlessness, overcrowding and inappropriate farming methods on commercial farms cause severe land degradation and soil erosion;
- Land ownership and development patterns reflect political and economic conditions left from the apartheid era;
- Apartheid spatial planning created a rural landscape lacking in economic opportunities for the disadvantaged majority, especially women.

Rural areas are defined as the "sparsely populated areas in which people farm or

depend on natural resources, including villages and small towns that are dispersed” (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:3). It also includes large settlements in the former homelands created by the apartheid removals, which depended for economic survival largely on migratory labour and remittances. Material income for rural livelihoods is obtained mostly from a range of sources of remittances from family members in urban areas, wages and social grants (Backenberg, 2009:1).

Mahlati (2011:70) maintains that the rural population represents 70% of the world’s poor. These statistics reflect the South African situation, as poverty is endemic in the rural areas (Mahlati, 2011:70). Almost three quarters of people below the poverty line in South Africa live in rural areas (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:3). A description of the character of rural areas is critical to understanding the human and socio-economic aspects of development for rural people (Mahlati, 2011:71).

Life in the rural areas of South Africa is complex, as it is characterised by many inconsistencies (Backenberg, 2009:1), such as infrastructural problems, communication networks, substandard roads and transport services, as well as poor access to basic services, such as water and sanitation (Mahlati, 2011:72). Backenberg (2009:1) concurs, stating that the majority of people in rural areas live under conditions of poverty, with food insecurities, low income and education, lack of acceptable housing and the absence of adequate services.

2.3.1 Rural Development Framework objectives

The objectives of the Rural Development Framework are as follows:

2.3.1.1 To build local democracy and development

In democratic South Africa, local municipalities are key providers and promoters of development in rural areas (Perret, 2004:1). Section 153 of the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996:17) makes provision for municipalities to manage planning processes in order to give priority to the basic needs of rural communities and to promote the social and economic development of such communities (RSA,1996:18) In addition, there is participation by citizens in general (Perret, 2004:4).

Through the local government, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), community representatives and other stakeholders participate in setting the agenda for

development. Local government also sets the development objectives that bind all land objectives and policies in their area of jurisdiction (Perret, 2004:6).

The Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 sets out municipalities' Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) as a point of departure for managing and evaluating performances, budgeting and allocation of resources, making community participation compulsory. Community participation has been repeatedly emphasised by numerous post 1994 policy documents as a compulsory element of local governance and rural development. This view is interrogated by Midgley (2014:7), who outlines the different approaches to social development and in particular community participation. The latter is critical for social change, which can be achieved only if people challenge the social structures that perpetuate poverty, inequality and oppression.

2.3.1.2 To build local infrastructure

The Rural Development Framework acknowledges that the infrastructural backlog in rural areas is immense (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41). It also recognises that sustained investment in the appropriate types of infrastructure is essential for achieving the government's equity and efficiency objectives. Good infrastructure supports strong social and economic development (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41).

The Rural Development Framework (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41) emphasises that to meet the infrastructural development backlog in rural areas, the government should commit itself to subsidising the capital costs for a basic level of service, with programmes that include the building of schools and clinics, provision of community water and sanitation, improving roads and providing settlement grants, as well as building the capacity to enable rural local authorities to operate and maintain their assets (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41).

2.3.1.3 To build local economic development and rural livelihoods

The Rural Development Framework seeks to reintroduce the drivers of the modern economy which were removed to central places so as to marginalise certain areas during the Apartheid era (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:23).

Most of the problems in rural development originated during the long period of apartheid with its discriminatory policies. These policies meant that the majority of the black population were forcefully removed from their areas and neglected. Forced removals led to the overpopulation of the former homelands that came with the deprivation of basic needs. The RDF prescribes that rural towns should be a focus for development and should be prioritised to drive the economy in these areas (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:23).

For many decades, African people were deprived of the opportunity of obtaining capital for investment in entrepreneurial activity, through selling or obtaining finance to initiate entrepreneurial activities. Poor access to education and training, limited natural resources, and monopolistic ownership of marketing chains have deprived rural people of business opportunities and active participation in the mainstream economy (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:24).

2.3.1.4 To build social sustainability

Prior to the development of the Rural Development Framework, surveys undertaken in rural South Africa revealed the depths of poverty. Women and female headed households are disadvantaged, and, as a result, three quarters of rural children grow up in poor households (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7).

The following are critical areas of rural development which the RDF prioritises to ensure social sustainability (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7).

- **Safety, security and legal issues**

Safety and security are a precondition for social and economic development. The responsibility for establishing peace and harmony is everybody's constitutional right. The South African Constitution, (RSA, 1996) prescribes the establishment of a national police service that is representative, transparent, impartial and accountable, upholding and protecting the fundamental rights of all people (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7). The Rural Development Framework emphasises the importance of women's groups being represented in community based safety and security structures so that they play a role in the efforts to reduce violence against women and children.

Furthermore, poor rural people have little or no access to the country's legal system

which more often than not is based in the urban areas. Despite the new political dispensation post 1994, rural people remain vulnerable and are often exploited by employers, farmers and land owners. This is perpetuated by them often being unaware of their rights (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7). The Rural Development Framework recognises the need to review the legal advisory offices in rural areas in order to increase rural people's access to efficient legal services. To alleviate the situation, it also proposes that law students and university graduates are encouraged to work in rural areas and that government services provide ongoing legal information to the rural communities (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8).

Statutory agencies such as the Public Protector, the Gender Commission and the Human Rights Commission were established to monitor and enforce the constitution. However, these agencies are struggling to reach out adequately to the rural areas owing to resources constraints (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8).

- **Children's rights**

Most of the children in South Africa live in rural areas. Poor women are under pressure about carrying out other income generating work, as this will deprive children of essential care and attention. The most fundamental children's right is their right to life. Ready access to basic health care services is important, as is adequate nutrition (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7).

- **Rural health**

Diseases of poverty, such as infectious diseases and maternal and infant mortality are very common in rural areas, and a number of rural children die of easily preventable illnesses (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7).

- **Rural education**

During the apartheid years, Africans living in rural areas were denied educational opportunities, even more than those in urban areas (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8). Most rural schools are poorly resourced, with buildings, equipment and books that are not up to the required standards. The schools are often without electricity and running water. Children usually walk long distances to school, and the classes are often overcrowded. There is also a high school drop-out rate and opportunities for secondary education as well as early childhood education is lacking. Adult education programmes are also scarce (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8).

Midgley (2014:83) maintains that societies with high levels of skills, knowledge, and high standards of health and nutrition, are more likely to be prosperous and economically developed than those lacking in human capital. Human capital is usually associated with the acquisition of skills and knowledge through formal education (Midgley, 2014:83). Midgley (2014:92) further argues that governments all over the world give high priority to formal education because it enhances social and economic development significantly. It also provides citizens with a broader scope of decision-making choices for issues like family planning and participating in matters that affect them in general (Midgley, 2014:95).

Kadozo (2009:18) observes a strong correlation between the level of education and standard of living. Research shows that educating girls is one of the most powerful tools for women's empowerment, as it provides them with the knowledge, skills and self confidence they need to seek out economic opportunities (Kadozo, 2009:9).

These views are supported by Backenberg (2009:7), who emphasises that in the South African context, the transformation of the economy is necessary if the quality of people's lives is to improve. If poverty is to be eradicated, there will have to be an investment in human capital, which should not be confined only to investment in skills and training but should also be an investment in the knowledge economy (Backenberg, 2009:7). Knowledge is a resource that can enhance economic activity because it empowers people to act (Backenberg, 2009:7).

As discussed in the Gender and Rural Development Employment Brief (2010:2), skills development is key to improving rural production, employability and income earning opportunities, as well as promoting sustainable livelihoods. Lack of access to education and training limits rural women's opportunities for meaningful participation in more productive and remunerative work.

- **Security and welfare**

Lack of opportunities for gainful employment is a serious problem in South Africa's rural areas (Department of Land Affairs 1997:8). Post 1994, the government recognised the need for a developmental social welfare policy and a social security system that would reach everyone in need (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8). This recognition acknowledges that social welfare is more readily available to urban people. However, the Lund Commission of 1996 recommended that welfare services

be more equitably distributed in future (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8).

2.3.1.5 To build local capacity to plan and implement

The effective performance of rural municipalities requires the establishment of a planning capacity at the district level. The purpose of this is to provide the necessary information on available resources to help the elected councillors in deciding on the most appropriate development options (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8). The main objective of establishing a planning capacity is to fully and productively use the resources, such as natural, human and financial, available in district municipalities that are responsible for rural development (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8).

2.3.2 Achievements of the RDF

According to the Rural Development's Departmental Strategic Overview and Goals for the period 2011-2014 (2011), the following have been achieved to ensure an environment conducive to rural development taking place:

- Effective land planning and administration that favors rural areas;
- Institutional arrangements allowing effective co-operative governance and stakeholder participation;
- Increased access to and productive use of land. According to the Rural Development Departmental Strategic Planning Report (2014), between 1994 and 2010 approximately 7,4 million hectares of land were transferred and redistributed to previously disadvantaged persons through the land reform programme, mainly for agricultural purposes. Most of this land, if not all of it, is in the rural areas;
- Improved access to affordable and diverse food;
- Improved access to sustainable livelihoods;
- Improved access to sustainable employment and skills development opportunities.

2.3.3 Challenges and gaps of RDF

As outlined in the Rural Development Departmental Strategic Planning Report 2011-2014 (2014:38), the overall purpose of rural development is “to improve the quality of

life of rural households, enhancing food security through a broader base of agricultural production and exploiting the varied economic potential of each area". In this plan, the Department of Rural Development has identified and acknowledged critical areas that impede significant progress regarding rural areas like Thaba Nchu:

- **Access to land, land tenure and rights:** Much as access to land has been improved through the land reform programmes, this has not yielded the desired results. This is because of the lack of capacity building for new owners and farmers so that they can farm productively and contribute to economic development in rural areas. In order to address this gap, the Rural Development Department has developed and is implementing a Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy. The strategy is aimed at responding effectively to poverty and food insecurity by maximising the use and management of natural resources, as well as creating social cohesion in rural communities, thus contributing to sustainable rural development. In the Presidency's review report of income poverty in South Africa (2012:169), the majority of rural communities complain that the land restitution programme is very slow, as so many people are still without land. Even if land is available, people are not provided with the much-needed resources like seeds, fertilisers, water and tools with which to work the land productively (Presidency's review report of income poverty in South Africa, 2012:169).

The question of access to land and the associated rights remains a sticking point which continues to deprive rural communities, especially the women, from economic opportunities that could potentially change their lives. The Rural Development and Land Reform Annual Report 2012-2013 (RSA, 2013:39) acknowledges that land remains a critical resource in the construction of an exclusive economy. It further articulates that it is through land that the country could create sustainable livelihoods, eradicate poverty and create decent employment in rural areas (Rural Development and Land Reform Annual Report 2012-2013, 2013:39).

- **Poor service delivery:** The provision of basic services is an important agent in the reduction of poverty and unemployment and in strengthening social capital. Infrastructure, like roads which connect rural areas to urban

cities, facilitates mobility of goods and people within the area, thus contributing to economic growth in rural areas (Presidency's review report on income poverty in South Africa, 2012:169).

- **High unemployment rate:** Most of the people in rural areas work as migrant workers in cities like Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban. Those who remain behind can be found doing domestic work, working in fields, occupying professional positions as teachers and nurses. According to the 2011 Local Government Budget and Expenditure Report (2012:19), formal employment opportunities in rural areas are limited. If available at all, they are confined to seasonal employment. Towards a fifteen-year review of Income Poverty Alleviation in South Africa (2008:32) revealed that unemployment is particularly severe in the rural areas with escalating retrenchments and job losses in the mining sector. As such, many households are dependent largely on social grants, such as disability grants, old age pensions and child support grants.

The above articulated unemployment scenario demonstrates a dire strain on the already limited scope for job opportunities and social security resources in rural areas, thus perpetuating poverty further. To address these gaps, a policy framework for women's socio-economic development is essential.

2.4 Legislative and policy framework for women's socio-economic development

The main goals intended for the transformation process include the facilitation of socio-economic development and growth, the enhancement of the standard of living, and the empowerment of historically disadvantaged people, particularly women and the poor (Kehler, 2004:1). The most significant feature of the transformation agenda was the introduction of the socio-economic policies put in place by the South African government post 1994, which seek to redress the socio-economic circumstances of the South African population (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:70).

In his 2012 State of the Nation Address, President Zuma acknowledged that steady progress had been made since the dawn of democracy (RSA, 2012:2). However, he

conceded that the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality persisted despite the progress made. Hofmeyr (2012) interrogates this statement and maintains that the president's description of the situation is befitting the painful reality epitomising South Africa's progressive state (Hofmeyr, 2012). Blacks, particularly women, remain firmly locked in the trap of the post apartheid South Africa's unemployment, poverty and inequality web (Hofmeyr, 2012). Hofmeyr (2012) further describes post apartheid South Africa as littered with many legislative, policy and programme instruments. These are aimed at improving the social and economic conditions of the previously disadvantaged groups in general and women in particular.

There are international instruments and declarations aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of women in the world, which the South African government has ratified. These instruments and declarations include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:40), the Millennium Development Goals (South African MDG report, 2010:4) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (Muir, 2007:2, 8). Central to these are the advancement and promotion of women's empowerment (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:14).

Globally, the major guiding principles for women's socio-economic development are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They are time-bound and quantifiable targets for addressing poverty in its many dimensions, income poverty and inequality, lack of access to finance, asset poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter and exclusion from decision-making (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000). While seeking to solve socio-economic maladies, the MDGs also aim to advance gender equality, equality in education, access to health services and environmental sustainability (United Nations Millennium Declaration, 2000). In meeting the targets set within the MDGs, the fundamental human rights of shelter, health, education, right to life and livelihood and security can be met globally. These fundamental human rights are entrenched globally in the United Nations Universal Human Rights Declaration (1948), and locally in the SA Constitution (RSA, 1996).

According to Nkhonjera (2011:22), the progress on MDG 3, which seeks to promote gender equality and empower women by 2015, is influenced by, inter alia, factors

such as domestic economic development policies and economic growth. Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) prohibits any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of gender that harms or nullifies women's human rights and fundamental freedoms (Arisunta, 2010:26). It emphasises women's rights to political, economic and social participation to be on a par with those of men (Arisunta, 2010:26).

The African Charter on the Rights of Women calls upon African states to eliminate any discrimination against women and to ensure that women's rights are set in international declarations and conventions (Aristuna, 2010:26). In Zimbabwe (Arisunta, 2010:26) and Malawi (Nkhonjera, 2011:23), women's rights violations are more obvious in their lack of access to and control over land as construed by their social positions in society. Through these international laws, policies, programmes, treaties, conventions and declarations, women, especially rural women, are identified as marginalised social groups, as they bear the burden of poverty and raising families (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:14).

Matube (2005,182-185) states that the new democratic South African government created various laws, such as the Reconstruction and Development Act 7 of 1994; the National Economic and Labor Council Act 35 of 1994; the National Development Agency Act 108 of 1998; the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997; the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998; the Labor Relations Act 66 of 1995; the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998, and the Broad-Based Black Economic Act 53 of 2003 to redress the inequalities of the past. The government also introduced programmes such as the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the Land Reform Programme, as well as strategies like the Human Resource Strategy, the Skills Development Strategy and the Integrated Sustainable Development Strategy (Matube, 2005:182-185).

Implicit in these fundamental laws, policies, programmes and strategies are gender equality objectives and principles, which are entrenched to ensure that women's socio-economic development opportunities are secured and protected. These developments on the part of the South African government accord with the notion by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) Network on Gender Equality (2012:10) that "a country's

success in empowering women depends on a multifaceted and responsive approach to its public policy management and implementation that includes its macro-economic policies”. However, the extent to which the legislation, programmes and strategies have been successful in facilitating transformation, in particular for women, justifies an in-depth interrogation which will be discussed next.

2.5 Macro policy framework for women’s socio-economic development in South Africa

The post apartheid South African socio-economic policies are formulated to ensure that the marginalised sector of the population, women in particular, bring about significant changes in their socio-economic condition and general well-being. The following discussion outlines how the different socio-economic policies in South Africa post 1994 created a framework for women’s socio-economic development.

2.5.1 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)

The RDP is a people-centred socio-economic policy framework which provided a starting point for redressing the injustices of past developmental efforts (Davids, Theron and Maphunye, 2005:18), as well as redistributing the country’s resources. It was the first official socio-economic policy in South Africa intended to address the structural and other problems inhibiting socio-economic development (Binza, 2006:493).

Article 2.2.7 of the RDP policy framework emphasises that the RDP must create mechanisms to address the disempowerment of women and boost their role within the development process of the economy (RSA, 1994). It must also address gender inequalities (RSA, 1994).The RDP was reinforced and supported by other implementation strategies, such as the Rural Development Framework (1997).

The RDP agenda was also meant to open doors for women to influence development in their communities, thus ensuring better life in general (Booyesen-Wolthers, 2007:70).The RDP, however, did not live up to expectations, as women, especially rural women, continued to be isolated from the mainstream economic developments, while their social status remained unchanged.

Because the RDP was not able to create enough jobs to stimulate economic growth, the government introduced the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy (Knight, 2001:2).

2.5.2 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)

The second significant economic policy introduced after the RDP was the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR), which was intended to address the uneven development and unequal distribution of resources (Binza, 2006:249). GEAR was developed from a decision to work towards the goals set in the RDP. Its objectives included creating new jobs and preventing job losses in order to stimulate economic growth (Matube, 2005:182).

Kadozo (2009:20) pointed out that it became clear, in 1996, that the government was not able to achieve economic growth rates that were sustainable and high enough for effective poverty alleviation, income redistribution and employment creation and financing of essential social services. Faced with this bleak prospect, the government of the day formulated the GEAR which, according to Visser (2009:232), recognised that sustainable reduction in inequality required accelerated job creation and access to employment as an essential way of achieving sustainable livelihoods, which, in turn, is a crucial means of reducing poverty (Kadozo, 2009:20). This affected the socio-economic development of women in particular, in that the unemployment rate always remained higher among women than among men (*Global Employment Trends for Women*, 2012).

With the introduction of GEAR, critics believed that the government would halt the equitable redistribution of existing resources and shift its focus to increasing economic growth, with uncertain or negative consequences for redistribution (Reitzes, 2009:16). GEAR was also expected to prioritise economic performance and efficiency and set limits on what could be achieved. This meant that market economies would not be concerned with special protection for individuals (Binza, 2006:249). This undermined the possibility of economic redistribution and challenged the struggle for gender justice, thus allowing marginalised social groups like rural women to become even more vulnerable (Binza, 2006:249). According to the South African Anarchist & Syndicalist Archive (SAASHA) (2012), like the RDP, GEAR did

not bring the required socio-economic transformation post 1994 for rural women because of its link to unintended neo-liberal systems in South Africa.

GEAR was seen by many critics as conflicting with the goals of the RDP, the reduction of poverty and a more equitable distribution of wealth (Knight, 2001:3). As a result of the GEAR policy's slow results, the government of the day introduced the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) in 2006 (Baty, 2009:26).

2.5.3 Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA)

The rationale for AsgiSA was to halve unemployment and poverty by 2014 in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), such as in Article 3, which emphasises the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (United Nations Millennium Development Goals and beyond 2015, 2014).

AsgiSA also recognised that, without specific interventions directed at addressing the reduction of inequalities among marginalised groups like women, the socio-economic status of these groups would remain the same (*Second-Economy Initiatives*, 2006). AsgiSA considers the second economy as a strategy with widening structural inequalities still keeping many people, especially rural women, in abject poverty (*Second-Economy Initiatives*, 2006). The second economic concept is derived from the notion that, if an economy exists (first economy) which is at the cutting edge, globally integrated with the capacity to export goods, services and other commodities, there exist, alongside it, a number of people who are unemployed and unemployable. These people do not benefit from the progress of the first economy (*Brief synopsis-clarifying the second economy*, 2006).

AsgiSA set out a range of interventions, including infrastructural investment, sector strategies, education and skills development, thereby eliminating the second economy, strengthening macro-economic policies and governance and institutional interventions (Reitzes, 2009:18). It recognises that increased employment and government's social grants programme should be translated into reducing poverty, especially among women, as they account for a disproportionate share of poverty in South Africa (Reitzes, 2009:20).

However, efforts by AsgiSA did not show adequate and positive results. This came to the attention of the government of the day with the message to undertake a serious evaluation of the existing socio-economic development policies. This led to the establishment of the National Development Commission, tasked to develop a social and economic transformation model that was adopted by government in 2012 as the National Development Plan–2030 vision.

2.5.4 National Development Plan (NDP)

The National Development Plan (NDP) (RSA, 2012:14) has been adopted as government's plan for bridging the social and economic gaps by 2030. The government can only realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an all-inclusive economy, building the capabilities of the state and its people and thus enhancing the capacity of the state and promoting leadership and partnership in society (RSA, 2012:14). The plan recognises that women make up a large number of the poor, especially in rural areas (RSA, 2012:33). Among the measures and recommendations it proposes to advance women's equality are the following:

- The transformation of the economy should involve the active participation of women; leadership positions should be supported;
- Long-standing social, cultural, religious and educational barriers to women entering the job market should be adequately addressed;
- Women and children should be protected from crime;
- Women should benefit from the security of tenure programmes;
- Public employment opportunities should favour women.

Among the milestones it seeks to achieve is “to ensure that skilled, technical, professional and managerial posts better reflect the country's racial, gender and disability make up” (RSA, 2012:29). In this sense, it takes into account the socio-economic gender inequalities between men and women in South Africa.

The NDP is very vocal and is focused on promoting gender equality. It prescribes that the Commission on Gender Equality and the Ministry of Women, Children and

People with Disability should jointly set clear targets for the advancement of women's rights and report annually on the progress made (RSA, 2012:38).

As women make up a large percentage of the poor, particularly in rural areas, the NDP recognises gender, race and geographic location as critical and proposes measures that will advance women's equality and the significant steps to be considered to improve the socio-economic status of women, especially rural women (*Reaching gender equality is our unfinished business*, 2013). It further recognises that the transformation of the South African economy should involve the active participation and empowerment of rural women (*Reaching gender equality is our unfinished business*, 2013).

For the NDP to realise its socio-economic development goals for rural women, it will have to critically address the historical factors affecting rural women's socio-economic status, which will be discussed next.

2.6 Factors affecting rural women's socio-economic development

To understand rural women's socio-economic development and interventions to reduce gender-based constraints and enhance more equal participation, it is crucial to analyse the multidimensionality of the constraints. These can be outlined as follows:

2.6.1 Literacy levels

Literacy is defined by Freire (2014:1) as "the ability of an individual's capacity to put skills to work in shaping the course of their own life". It is a basic human right enshrined in the Constitution (RSA, 1996). However, there is still a high percentage of people in South Africa who are unable to enjoy this right. The highest percentage of illiterate, poor and unemployed is made up of women living in rural areas (Shiluba, 2007:18). Low literacy levels among rural women predispose them to exploitation, oppression and discrimination which are the unfortunate legacy of apartheid in South Africa (Shiluba, 2007:15).

Furthermore, low literacy in rural areas perpetuates the prevalence of diseases such as HIV/Aids, which was demonstrated in India by Van Rompay, Madhivanan, Rafiq,

Krupp, Chakrapani and Selvam (2008:23). This affects the fibre of their society. In their study, the writers identified the low literacy levels as being more prevalent among women (78%) than men (54%).

The NDP (RSA, 2012) stresses that South Africa has to improve its quality of education in order to make sure that more people are working and that the standard of living is raised. Education and training are powerful tools against poverty, hunger and women's lack of empowerment. Educational achievements by women could have ripple effects within their families, as well as breaking the cycle of poverty across generations (United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) – *Promoting Gender Equality*, 2013). Increasing girls' access to education worldwide has been on the mainstream development agenda for many developing countries (Hunt, 2013). Women are more likely to control their destinies and effect change in their families and communities when they have been exposed to educational opportunities. Education is also seen as the main driver to achieving women's empowerment (Hunt, 2013).

As demonstrated by Konate (2010:2) in a research study conducted in Lassa and Mali, education for women has a great impact on the socio-economic development of a society because women are the pillars and backbone of rural communities. The study concluded that rural women's exposure to literacy programmes empowers and transforms them, as well as improving their economic conditions (Konate, 2010:3).

2.6.2 Access to finance

Constraints on rural women's access to financial services are a huge barrier to their socio-economic development. These barriers are created by policy and cultural norms that prevent rural women from developing their own enterprises, improving their productivity and entering into contracts without their husbands and other men (*Overview: Access to Productive Resources, Assets, Services and Infrastructure*, 2012).

Rural women's lack of assets owing to gender discriminatory property and inheritance practices in most of the African countries limit their access and control

over resources; specifically land (Dejene, 1999:13). The inability of rural women's access to finance for startups prevents them from investing in businesses and trade activities. However the growth of micro financing institutions is helping reduce lack of access to finance amongst rural women (Dejene, 1999:13).

Countries like Uganda have put forward different strategies for alleviating the plight of rural women trying to access finance. Some of these strategies involve mobilising savings through the Rural SPEED project, which is financed by USAID (Rural SPEED Final Report, 2007). According to a report by the Department of Trade and Industry (2012:36), South Africa's micro financing is often cited as a resource for women's empowerment. However, rural women remain under-serviced, which disadvantages them.

2.6.3 Access to land

Access to land for women is a very critical element in their empowerment. Women in general own less land and the land that they do own is often of a lower quality than the land owned by men (Nkhonjera, 2011:16). Customary law provides for only secondary rights of access to land. Men gain rights to land through their lineage or clan, whereas women have access to land only through their husbands. As women are often responsible for providing food for their households, they use land for this purpose, which prevents them from growing crops for sale (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:56).

According to Mari (2004:1), much of the literature on women and land tenure in Africa, more specifically in Uganda, has viewed the introduction of land tilting, registration and privatisation of land after colonisation and independence as a setback for rural women, as it leaves them in a state of greater insecurity, with poorer prospects for accessing land to help them obtain livelihoods.

This situation is also dominant in other countries such as Zimbabwe. Demographic information reveals that, in Zimbabwe, more than 50% of the population is made up of women. Arisunta (2010:23) argues that, if women in rural Zimbabwe could enjoy equal access to and control over rural land, this would fast track rural development in the country (Arisunta, 2010:23). Mahlali (2011:117), on the other hand, emphasises

that the land reform programme in South Africa could contribute to economic development at both household and societal levels in rural areas. She also argues that it should be considered as a cure for the deeply-entrenched problems of poverty, inequality and social dislocation that is characteristic of rural areas (Mahlali, 2011:117).

In spite of suffering from extreme poverty and undernourishment, land resources in rural areas, remain largely under utilised (Backenberg, 2009:1). This is evident as land is lying fallow around villages and towns like Thaba Nchu (Backenberg, 2009:1). The economic potential of this land ought to be unlocked to prevent rural areas continuing to be poverty traps (Backenberg, 2009:1).

2.6.4 Social and cultural barriers

In all countries, expectations about attributes and behavior to women or men are shaped by culture, tradition and history (Bobo, 2009:9). Nkhonjera (2011:9) concurs, describing women's status in Malawi (Nkhonjera, 2011:9) as still inferior. The general pattern is that women have less personal autonomy and fewer resources, while their disposal and limited influence over decision-making processes shape their societies and their own lives (Bobo, 2009:9).

Gender norms, relations and behaviors vary from society to society and change over time. Dejene's (2008:5) studies have shown that, in most societies, gender-based norms and practices favor men over women when it comes to granting access to resources, opportunities, rights and decision-making powers at home and in public spaces. Much of the gender and development literature suggests that gender norms and practices systematically put women in subordinate positions in society (Dejene, 2008:6).

The gendered nature of rural development in South Africa is linked to the cultural forces and limited economic opportunities that contribute to the marginalisation of rural women (Oberhauser, 1998:3). Women face additional hardships as a result of customary marriage and inheritance laws, which reduce their ability to take up economic opportunities (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:25). They have restricted access to land, finance, information, training and markets.

Although the improvement of women's status has been identified as a priority by the South African government and the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the South African constitution, in many rural areas, the traditional cultural norms continue to perpetuate the subordinate status of women (Kim, Watts, Hargreaves, Ndlovu, Phetla, Morison, Busza, Porter & Pronyk, 2007:2).

The high level of poverty in rural areas is owed partly to uneven labour systems. Males have more job opportunities as migrant workers to urban areas, whereas women remain behind to maintain households and oversee agricultural production. In accordance with the patriarchal customs and legal structures, they exercise no control over land and agricultural products (Oberhauser, 1999:4). According to Majali (2012:109), traditional leadership roles vary from one area to the next in determining women's positions and powers. However, men, as heads of households, dominate decision-making.

The next section will interrogate these factors in the discussion on the circumstances affecting women's socio-economic development, particularly in Thaba Nchu.

2.7 Women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu

The discussion that follows will focus on the contextualisation of women's socio-economic development in the research setting, namely Thaba Nchu.

2.7.1 Thaba Nchu

Thaba Nchu is a rural town situated about 60 km from Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State Province. It is also about 85km from Maseru, the capital of Lesotho. The population is comprised of Tswana and Sotho people. Moroka 2, chief of the Boo Seleka section of the Barolong tribe, migrated here in 1833 (*History of Thaba Nchu*, 2008). The town was officially established in 1873. It grew larger after the 1913 Native Land Act that cited Thaba Nchu as a homeland for the Tswana people (*History of Thaba Nchu*, 2008).

During the apartheid era, Thaba Nchu formed part of the area set aside as a Bantustan and was incorporated into the Bophuthatswana homeland in 1977. During this time a large variety of types and scales of geographical landscape transformation occurred, particularly in the Thaba Nchu-Selosesha urban area, of which the

settlement, industrial, commercial and educational transformations were the most important (Barolong boo Seleka, 2010). While these transformations were unfolding, the new political, administrative, cultural and tourist landscapes emerged. With the incorporation of Thaba Nchu into the Free State, the original political map of the province was restored. However, new challenges emerged after the incorporation, which affects everything to do with the +-85 0000 inhabitants of Thaba Nchu. The institutional framework of Thaba Nchu consists of Regional Authorities, the Barolong Tribal Authority and the legislative Assembly (Khanya-Managing Rural Change cc, 2000:66).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) recognises the traditional leadership and authorities as an institution and acknowledges their status and role as defined by customary law. Within the framework of the constitution, municipalities and traditional authorities have similar statutory powers and functions and share the same area of jurisdiction. It is therefore important for all the parties involved to maintain proper lines of communication from elected and traditional representatives.

Politically, Thaba Nchu was still closely ruled by his majesty Chief Albert Moroka until he died. Kgosisgadi Gaongalelwe Moroka is currently the regent. She is responsible for most civil matters and is the judge at the tribal court .The ambiance of the town is still traditional despite it having a proper court, of law and falling under the Mangaung local municipality. It is a stronghold of the Barolong people (*History of Thaba Nchu, SA, 2008*). It is a predominantly agricultural area, which focuses specifically on crops and livestock. Thaba Nchu was established as an agricultural area for small-scale black farmers for a much longer period of time. Farmers in this area also have a longer tradition of cattle farming (Khanya-Managing Rural Change cc, 2000:62).

The area has limited employment opportunities outside of agriculture (Baipheti, Viljoen, Kundhlande, Botha & Anderson, 2009:1358-1363). As in many rural areas, poverty and food insecurity are the major problems facing households. However, land is one of the readily available productive assets for most households (Baipheti et al., 2009:1358-1363).

Thaba Nchu is comprised of various rural villages classified as northern and southern trusts. There are 20 villages in the northern trust, which includes Mokoena, and 25 in

the southern trust, which includes Ratau village (Khanya-Managing Rural Change cc, 2000:67). Up to the early 1990s, land allocation and management in Thaba Nchu was the sole responsibility of the Barolong Tribal Authority. After the 1994 elections, the Transitional Local Council councillors continued to allocate stands informally, especially in Bultfontein zones 1-5, Ratau, Ratlou and Seroalo (Baipheti et al., 2009:1358-1363).

The Agricolor Agricultural Model, which was based on the allocation of grazing and arable land by headmen according to the availability of resources, came to an end in 1994 as it was replaced by an alternative model (Bernstein, 2013:237). During this time, serious overgrazing took place, which resulted in fences being in a state of disrepair. At the same time, it was recommended that a comprehensive consultation process should be undertaken in rural Thaba Nchu, with a view to formulating an appropriate rural development strategy (Baipheti et al., 2009:1358-1363).

According to a study by the Thaba Community Action Centre in Thaba Nchu (2010), the community's most pressing needs are as follows:

- Immediate cash;
- Support for farming;
- Food security projects;
- Home gardening;
- Chicken coops and farming;
- HIV/Aids training and support projects;
- Sewing projects;
- Information on government resources.

However, the study revealed that, even if projects have been initiated, their success and progress is hampered by lack of monitoring and accountability, ineffective ward councillors, non-acknowledgement of local headmen and ineffective communication.

2.7.2 Socio-economic characteristics of women in Thaba Nchu

The majority of the recipients of social grants in Thaba Nchu are women who receive the child support grants. The introduction of child support grants compromised community development initiatives, as interventions that had been initiated in the past

were abandoned post 1994 (*Boikhuco Women's Community Development Project*, 2013). The rural development infrastructure, which included farming implements, dilapidated livestock buildings, vandalised fencing and silos for grain storage, is no longer used for the benefit of the community (*Boikhuco Women's Community Development Project*, 2013). In the 1990s, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development provided communities with greenhouses to start vegetable gardening projects. By 2008, 90% of the greenhouses had still not been used (*Boikhuco Women's Community Development Project*, 2013).

In the study conducted by the Thaba Community Action Centre (2012), one of the critical findings was that many NGOs operate in Thaba Nchu on various community development interventions, like CARE South Africa, which facilitated the “keyhole home gardening project and training” through the Boikhuco Women's Community Development Project (BWCDP). This project conducted training for income generating projects and provided seed funding to augment income generating activities (*Boikhuco Women's Community Development Project*, 2013).

The BWCDP augmented the women's stokvels activities. Some of the BWCDP activities include:

- Operating a small kiosk;
- A solar panel to charge cell phones for community members and a TV set for children to watch certain programmes for a small fee;
- The study further concluded that initiatives like the BWCDP should be sustained and replicated in other areas; as such social grants should be seen as a temporary intervention.

The discussion above presents a picture of the typical socio-economic development challenges faced by women in rural areas like Thaba Nchu. The researcher's analysis of the literature in the preceding sections was confined to two research projects in Thaba Nchu, both of which presented with the common trends of high unemployment, dependence on social grants and hopelessness. The review also highlights a lack of progress but a creative wish on the part of the community to explore resources such as land, which they have in abundance, in order to change their socio-economic conditions.

2.7.3 Socio-economic challenges for women in Thaba Nchu

The following discussion will report on research conducted by the Thaba Community Action Centre (2012) in order to understand the practical socio-economic development challenges to which women in Thaba Nchu are exposed.

The study conducted by the Thaba Community Action Centre (2012) presents the following typical socio-economic challenges:

- Lack of employment opportunities;
- Inadequate housing;
- Over-reliance on grants with less economic growth in the past 10 years;
- Lack of unity among people in general;
- Very little access to information on further education and learnership programmes;
- Health Department / facilities under resourced;
- There are not enough government programmes to help the people of Thaba Nchu. Most of the projects in the community are introduced and facilitated by good samaritans and international aids. Many of these projects start and collapse before they can bear any visible fruits, as they get no government support.

The study (Thaba Community Action Centre, 2012) revealed that the community presents apathy and an attitude of hopelessness about the future. Political power and individual self-fulfilment games are played at the people's expense. The community lacks the necessary information; however, there should be a serious change of mindset to foster creativity and to focus on self-employment instead of job hunting.

2.8 Theoretical framework for socio-economic development for rural women

The theoretical framework for this study interrogates theories that elaborate on the basis of the intervention strategies embedded in the transformation policies like the RDF, which are meant to impact on the socio-economic development of rural women.

The empowerment and sustainable livelihoods strategies respectively provided the theoretical framework of this study. It provided the framework for analysis to identify

and articulate strategies that enable rural women's potential to fight poverty and develop socially and economically through enlisting their self-reliance and sustainability. The strategic interventions identified below produce outcomes that are holistic and sustainable by rural women.

2.8.1 Empowerment

Nkhonjera (2011:13) describes women's empowerment "as the ability by women to address their needs". Empowerment is further defined by Kim et al. (2007:3) as "the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes".

At the United Nations General Assembly on the Occasion of the 56th Session of the Commission on the status of Women, the Honorable Minister of Women, Children and People with Disability, Xingwana (2012:3) stated that, in order to ensure women's empowerment is high on the agenda, the South African government is committed to the following:

- Enhancing rural women's leadership and meaningful participation at all levels of society, including parliament;
- Commitment to fund and allocate budgets for massive programmes of infrastructural developments with the purpose of making provision for rural women to benefit from the huge public investment by government;
- Reducing gender-based violence by establishing the National Council Against Gender Based Violence in 2012;
- Engage women in active participation and consultation in environmental planning for finance, budgeting and policy-making processes, as women possess the indigenous knowledge needed to increase food security, prevent environmental degradation and maintain agricultural biodiversity;
- Introducing a gender-responsive budget to promote women's socio-economic rights.

Women's empowerment is also viewed as "a process that increases women's choices or ability to make choices about their lives and the environment they live in" (Kim et al., 2007:1). Through their innate ability to address their needs, rural women make use of development strategies such as micro finance. Micro finance is a

development strategy that provides credit and saving services to the poor, particularly rural women for income generating projects (Kim et al., 2007:2). In addition to providing economic benefits, micro finance also serves as an effective vehicle for women's empowerment. It also provides for newly-acquired business skills that are accompanied by improvements in self-esteem and self-confidence, the ability to resolve conflicts, household decision-making powers and expanded social networks (Kim et al., 2007:2).

Nkhonjera (2011:13) maintains that different writers describe women's empowerment in various ways, but all of them point in one direction, that it is the women's power or ability to address their needs. Nkhonjera, (2011:13) further asserts that "women assuming the ability to identify their aspirations and strategies for change, gaining skills and acquiring resources to achieve these aspirations, constitute empowerment".

If empowerment is to be achieved, women's subordinate position in society has to be challenged so that they are recognised as development stakeholders (Nkhonjera, 2011:14). Instead of mobilising themselves for change on strategic gender needs, women spend much of their time and energy trying to address their practical gender needs, such as their reproductive roles (Nkhonjera, 2011:15). Women in South Africa have the potential to develop socio-economically if the environment is conducive to their enjoyment of adequate access to economic opportunities, health services, education and exercise of their land rights, as well as participating in the decision-making processes that affect their lives (Booyesen-Wolther, 2007:72).

As emphasised in the Khuthaza Women's Construction Profile (2014), a growing body of micro-economic evidence indicates that increases in women's education, labour force participation and earnings can stimulate socio-economic development. Access to education, equal opportunity employment, the creation of conducive working environments and equal remuneration practices enhance women's chances of entering a competitive labour market. In return, they are empowered (*Khuthaza Women's Construction Profile*, 2014).

As maintained by the Rural Development Framework objectives (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:5), institutional development is intended to help rural people set their agenda, which is crucial to their empowerment. The RDF takes into consideration the

conditions of rural women, such as illiteracy, and restricted access to land, finance and information, as inhibiting their potential for development (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7).

2.8.2 Sustainable Livelihoods

Sustainable livelihoods as a strategy comprise the range and combination of activities and choices that people undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals (*Sustainable Livelihoods Approach*, 2012:3). This has to be understood as a dynamic process in which people combine activities to meet their various needs at different times and at different geographical or economical levels (*Sustainable Livelihoods Approach*, 2012:8).

A sustainable livelihoods framework places people, especially rural women, at the centre of the interrelated resources and assets that affect how they create a livelihood for themselves and their households to address their socio-economic vulnerability. The sustainable livelihoods approach encourages the use of multiple methods, such as using micro-finance systems, and provides an appropriate vehicle for facilitating a holistic acquisition of other resources needed (Fofana, 2009:9).

Kadozo (2009:6) points out that the sustainable livelihoods approach recognises that people who are poor may not have cash or other savings but have material and non-material assets, such as their health, labor, knowledge and skills, their kinship ties and friends, as well as the natural resources around them. Mahlali (2011:97) is of the opinion that the different types of assets on which individuals draw to build their livelihoods are natural, social, human, physical and financial capital. The success of sustainable livelihoods lies in people using a holistic analysis of their strengths, their understanding of micro-macro linkages and holistic approaches (Mahlali, 2011:97).

The significance of addressing rural women's socio-economic development by means of a sustainable livelihoods approach is that, by their very nature, sustainable livelihoods empower people's capacity to earn incomes that meet their current and future economic and social needs and minimise their vulnerability to external stresses and shocks (Fofana, 2009:11).

Fofana (2009:20) further asserts that the holistic approach of sustainable livelihoods involves eradicating the marginalisation of poor people, understanding the complexity

of the relationship of their influences and recognising various institutional stakeholders, such as the government. The sustainability of people's livelihoods cannot be guaranteed if the institutional capacity required to design and implement policies and regulations in the interest of people is lacking (Fofana, 2009:12).

According to Oberhauser (1998:1), gendered livelihood strategies are important aspects of economic development in rural areas. Women's exclusion from many formal economic activities, especially in rural areas, has contributed to their involvement in casual or unregulated labor as a means of coping with economic hardship (Oberhauser, 1998:1).

Empowerment and a sustainable livelihoods theoretical framework provide scope for articulating relevant strategies for progressive socio-economic development for rural women. Both strategies are critical in ensuring that the implementation of the Rural Development Framework objectives benefits women in rural areas like Thaba Nchu. Both strategies have the potential to change the socio-economic circumstances of Thaba Nchu women, who, according to both the research reviewed in this chapter and the views articulated in the background of Thaba Nchu are heavily reliant on social grants and migrant work.

2.9 Summary

This chapter reviewed relevant literature to entrench the impact of the rural development framework on rural women's socio-economic development, with particular emphasis on Thaba Nchu.

What emerged from the literature review is that, there is still a disjuncture between rural development theory and policy implementation in relation to bringing about the desired and intended socio-economic changes for rural women. The literature review indicates common trends in respect of the slow progress in socio-economic development for rural women in both South Africa and other countries, especially those of Southern Africa. It is important to note that the design of rural development policies to achieve rural development constitutes a broader subject, such as entrepreneurship, as opposed to agricultural economics (Mahlati, 2011:20). Mahlati (2011:23) argues that developing countries like South Africa will not provide a better quality of life for their entire people unless the spiral of deprivation among the rural

poor is broken.

Economic growth, poverty and job creation strategies, such as micro enterprises and cooperatives for empowerment and sustainable livelihoods, remain critical for any socio- economic development policy intended to change the lives of rural women.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter focuses on the research methodology and the empirical study undertaken to respond to the following research question:

What is the impact of the Rural Development Framework on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu?

The following sub-questions informed the main question:

- How does the Rural Development Framework create an enabling environment in which socio-economic development of rural women in Thaba Nchu is supported and promoted?
- What capacity building and empowerment strategies could promote socio-economic development for Thaba Nchu women within the context of the Rural Development Framework?
- What are the possible gaps that might impede the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu in relation to the implementation of the Rural Development Framework?

The Chapter commences with a discussion of the research approach, type of research, the research design, methodology, ethical aspects considered for the study, and the limitations of the study. The next section presents the research findings followed by a discussion thereof.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This topic required an in-depth exploration of socio-economic aspects of women in Thaba Nchu; and, as such, a qualitative research approach was deemed to be the most appropriate for this study (Norman, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 3). A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to use an interpretive and naturalistic approach (Norman, Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:3) to carry out an in-depth analysis, interpretation and understanding of the impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu. The purpose of the study was to

explore and understand the meaning the women ascribe to their human, social and economic situation caused by poverty, unemployment inequalities and a lack of resources.

3.3 TYPE OF RESEARCH

The study was applied as the researcher determined the influence of the Rural Development Framework in the search for a solution to the high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality among rural women in Thaba Nchu (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:105). Knowledge of the influence of the Rural Development Framework on the women's socio-economic development was thus of practical significance in finding potential solutions to socio-economic development problems which impede women's empowerment in Thaba Nchu (Jackson, 2008:15).

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design and methodology.

3.4.1 Research design

A case study research design was used to specify the methods and procedures for collecting and analysing the data needed for the study (Adams, Khan, Raeside & White, 2007:81). Fouché (2005:272) describes a case study as "an exploration or an in-depth analysis of a bounded system by time or place". In this study, 30 women were interviewed by means of focus groups, as such were a study unit because they were from the same villages and participated in the RDF socio-economic projects.

An instrumental case study was more relevant in this study because it was used to gain a better understanding of a social issue namely the impact of the RDF on the socio-economic development of the women in Thaba Nchu (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322, Fouché, 2005:272).

3.4.2 Research population and sampling

The population for this study comprised the aggregation of elements from which the sample was selected and encompassed the total collection of all units of analysis from which the researcher drew specific conclusions (Babbie, 2007:190). In the context of the Rural Development Framework, the population included all the women

living in villages in Thaba Nchu. However, for the purposes of this study, the population comprised women from two particular villages in Thaba Nchu, namely Mokoena and Ratau.

The non-probability sampling method was used for this research because the researcher did not know the size of the population or its members (Strydom & Delport, 2011:391). The probability of including each element of the population in the sample was unknown (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:100). A sample of thirty (30) women was selected for the study, of which twelve (12) were from Mokoena village and eighteen (18) from Ratau village. This sample included a list of women participating in the RDF programmes obtained through the tribal and local leaders according to pre-selected criteria thereby applying purposive sampling (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392). The sample comprised elements that contained the characteristics most typical of the population (Strydom & Delport, 2011:391).

As the researcher could not obtain a sample of thirty (30) women from a list provided through the tribal and local authorities, she had to rely on the referrals she obtained from the local and tribal authorities for additional participants. Twelve (12) participants were obtained through these means. As this did not make up the required number, the researcher used snowballing sampling to obtain a further eighteen (18) participants. In snowballing sampling the researcher approaches a person “involved in the phenomenon to be investigated in order to gain information on other similar persons. In turn, this person is requested to identify further people who could make up the sample” (Strydom, 2005:203). The individuals chosen for the purposive sampling had to meet certain criteria. They had to be women who:

- Participated in various socio-economic activities as prescribed in the Rural Development Framework;
- Had at least two or more dependants;
- Were between the ages of 30 and 45 years;
- Had not obtained a senior certificate.

It was only during the interviews that it was discovered that the first criterion required in order to participate in various socio-economic activities as prescribed in the Rural

Development Framework was differently interpreted by participants and was also not signalled in the pilot interview. However, as the focus was on socio-economic activities, the data was still relevant, as the discussion of the findings below shows.

3.4.3 Data collection

Within the context of a qualitative study, the data collection method used was that of interviewing by means of focus group discussions. Through focus groups, the researcher was able to assess the women's perceptions, understanding, definition of situations and construction of reality of their socio-economic circumstances (Punch, 2005:168).

The researcher was also able to explore perceptions, experiences and understanding on the part of groups of women who had some experience in common with regard to the impact and implementation of the Rural Development Framework on their socio-economic development (Kumar, 2005:124). There were two focus group interviews in Mokoena village and three in Ratau, with six women in each group.

The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule to facilitate the discussion (see Appendix A), as it allowed for questions on areas of interest while at the same time allowing for considerable flexibility, scope and depth in the discussions (Kumar, 2005:124). One hour was initially planned for each focus group; but some groups took a shorter time than this while others took longer.

The researcher recruited a social auxiliary worker to assist her with managing the administration of the interviews. Her role was to help with the voice recording and keep order in the groups. The researcher facilitated the discussions as she had vast experience in interviewing skills, the topic in question and was able to keep the discussions in line with the questions.

3.4.4 Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study to orientate herself to the research study and to help her refine the research procedures and data collection method with respect to both the content of the semi-structured interview schedule and the procedures to be followed in conducting the interviews (Yin, 2009:92).

The pilot study was initially intended to include one (1) woman from Ratau village who worked as a domestic worker around the village, as well as two (2) women residing and working in the agricultural fields around Mokoena village. These women would have been selected according to the sample criteria, but it was impossible to find women working in the agricultural fields in Mokoena. Therefore the researcher exchanged the criteria between the two villages by recruiting one (1) woman from Ratau who worked in the agricultural fields and two (2) women from Mokoena village who worked as domestic workers. They signed informed consent letters and did not participate in the main study.

The pilot study also helped the researcher to decide whether to make use of an assistant facilitator for focus groups, as well as whether certain questions needed to be amended, deleted or added. In addition, the pilot study also provided the researcher with an idea of what financial resources and time would be needed. The researcher did not have to amend any interview questions as the pilot interview generated very interesting and relevant information. The pilot focus group discussions made the researcher aware of sensitive, in-depth areas of some questions; for instance, the participants were reluctant to disclose any information that could negatively implicate their leaders, namely councillors and tribal leaders. However, this did not affect the interview schedule.

3.4.5 Data analysis

In order to make sense of the data collected by means of transcripts and voice recordings, the researcher analysed it in order to obtain a better understanding (Creswell, 2009:183). The researcher used Creswell's (2009:184) process of data text analysis, which included the following stages:

- **Organising data:** The transcribed information was revisited by arranging and classifying data according to different topic areas, and logging it according to dates, times and places.
- **Immersion in the data:** The researcher read the transcribed data and listened to the voice recordings data repeatedly to familiarise herself with information and made relevant links with different information classifications done in the first stage.

- **Generating categories:** The researcher identified common themes, recurring ideas and patterns of belief that linked women and their experiences. This provided similarities and consistencies amongst members of the focus groups.
- **Coding:** The researcher classified and categorised data by using self-generated code names and different colours to classify and categorise individual pieces of data.
- **Writing analytic memos:** The researcher compiled notes, reflective memos, thoughts and insights in the margins of the field notes as well as transcripts to explore the collected data.
- **Offering interpretations:** The researcher interpreted data by attaching meaning to the themes, patterns and categories, and developing linkages and a story line that made sense and were engaging.
- **Searching for alternative understanding:** The researcher challenged the very patterns that seemed apparent. She searched for other plausible explanations for the data and the linkages it contained.
- **Writing the report:** The researcher described, analysed, and interpreted data which is captured in this research report.

3.4.6 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in a research study is established when findings are closely reflecting the meanings as described by participants (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006:5). Trustworthiness of the data was verified through the process of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in De Vos, 2005:346-347).

The goal of credibility in trustworthiness is to demonstrate that the study was conducted in a manner that ensures that the subject of the study was accurately identified and described (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:419). In this study, the credibility of data was validated by the consistency of the information presented by the participants throughout the focus group discussions. For instance all the five

focus groups related to the political interferences in the implementation of the RDF socio-economic projects as well as their desire to be provided with empowerment opportunities to improve their lives.

Transferability of data refers to whether the research findings can be generalised from a specific situation to another (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:420). It was not possible for the researcher to generalise the findings of this research to a wider population or situation, however the researcher noted specific areas of information provided by participants that desire to stop depending on child support grants and sustenance of collapsing RDF socio-economic projects. This correlates with the theoretical framework namely empowerment and sustainable livelihoods.

Through dependability, the researcher determined whether the research process is logical and well documented (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:420). The use of the research assistant, audio recordings and manuscripts ensured that the research process was logical and properly documented. The researcher ensured that data collected through notes and voice recordings collaborated. This was done by comparing notes taken during the focus group discussions with the research assistance and going over and over the voice recordings.

Conformability stresses the need for a researcher to demonstrate that the data and findings reflect participants' circumstances and conditions outside the researcher's own imagination and interests (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2008:699). Much as the researcher grew up in a rural area and continues to interact with rural women, this did not influence the findings and interpretation of data as presented by the participants. During the interviews, as can be verified through the voice recordings, the researcher reflected the information provided by the participants to them to confirm it, and the interpretation thereof. The findings are therefore purely the results of the experiences and ideas of the participants.

3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

The research touched on sensitive aspects of people's lives and this might have brought unique ethical problems to the fore. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006:86) strongly emphasise that ethical considerations should be a critical part of the substructure of the research process from the initial conception of the problem to the

interpretation and publishing of the research findings. It was therefore imperative for the researcher to interact with participants with caution and a degree of sensitivity. The study was ethically cleared by the University of Pretoria (see Appendix B). Permission for the study was granted by the Thaba Nchu tribal authority as well the Free State Department of Rural Development (see Appendices C and D respectively). The following classification of ethical issues was considered in the study:

- **Informed consent**

The researcher obtained the necessary consent from the research participants (see Appendix E), based on their right to be informed about the nature and consequences of the research in which they were involved (Norman, et. al., 2008:192). As the informed consent form was written in English, the researcher verbally translated the form into Tswana which is a local language. The participants agreed to participate voluntarily, without any coercion, in the research process by reading, understanding and signing the consent form (Neuman, 2007:135; Strydom, 2011:117; Leedy & Ormond, 2005:107). This included making them aware of their right to withdraw from the study if they so wished. The social auxiliary worker/ research assistant who assisted the researcher with managing the administration of the interviews also completed an informed consent form (see Appendix F).

- **Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality**

The researcher strove to act with the necessary sensitivity where the privacy of participants was relevant (Strydom, 2011:119). The researcher was able to assure participants of the privacy and confidentiality of sensitive and private information, especially concerning Section A of the interview schedule. This included adhering to the social work professional code of conduct to safeguard participants' identities and locations against unwanted exposure (Babbie, 2007:64). With regard to the interview schedule, the researcher assured the participants that the information to be shared in the focus groups would be treated confidentially. The researcher also sought permission from the participants to take notes. As the researcher also used a voice recording device and a camera, this was first negotiated with the participants. The researcher protected the participants' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality by not using their names in the research findings. In addition, no findings were written up in a way that could be linked to any specific participant. The use of the recording device

and the camera as well as the request that participants protect one another's identities, was included in the informed consent form which the participants signed before participating in the study.

- **Avoidance of harm**

The researcher was aware that social research can harm research participants in many ways; emotionally, physically, psychologically, legally or even financially (Babbie, 2007:63; Newman, 2007:132). Strydom (2011:115) and Babbie (2007:63) emphasise that vulnerable respondents should be identified in time so that they can be excluded beforehand.

To uphold the ethical principle of avoidance of harm, the researcher kept in mind that probing questions could hurt people's fragile self-esteem. In addition, the researcher avoided giving false hopes and promises related to any aspect discussed, and maintained honesty and trust at all times. In addition, the researcher ensured that precautions were taken to avoid unnecessary anxiety that could harm the participants. As Strydom (2011:115) suggests, the researcher informed the participants beforehand about the potential impact of participating in the study. This offered them an opportunity to decide in time whether they wanted to continue with the study or withdraw.

- **Debriefing of participants**

The researcher offered debriefing sessions to the participants at the end of each focus group. She focused on the possible long term benefits of the research to them and to other women (Jackson, 2008:50). The debriefing sessions afforded the participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and clear up certain misconceptions that some women had. The debriefing sessions also provided the researcher with an opportunity to identify and address misconceptions, possible discomforts and risks that were generated during the research, as well as possible deception (Bless, et al., 2006:144). The researcher provided the participants with her contact details to follow up on any aspect pertaining to the research study. At the end of the interview, no participant indicated the necessity to be referred for counselling to a local social worker.

- **Deception**

In practising deception, the researcher hides the true nature of the study from participants (Bless, et al., 2006:144). This is done to deprive the participants of an opportunity to alter their natural behaviour, knowing that it is being observed (Bless, et al., 2006:144). In this study, the researcher did not deceive the participants and ensured that all the necessary information and explanations were given to the participants truthfully through the letter of consent that they signed and by preparing them for participation.

- **Release of publication of the findings**

The researcher made sure that she reported as accurately and objectively as possible on the research findings of the study. The researcher will present the research findings in this research report to the University of Pretoria. She will also inform the participants of the findings in an objective and open manner during a feedback session, after the completion of the study in a way that the participants could easily understand them. The research findings will also be published in a scientific journal.

3.6 Limitations of the study

Participants' reluctance to disclose any information that could negatively implicate their leaders, namely councillors and tribal leaders initially influenced the information that they were prepared to share regarding their involvement in projects. This put a strain on the quality of the interviews at the beginning, as the researcher depended on a few talkative participants when the discussions started. Their views on projects and their involvement changed later as they realised that their opinions did not jeopardise them in any way.

The researcher experienced challenges in obtaining a sample of thirty (30) women from the tribal and local authorities as originally planned. This was because of inadequately coordinated lists of women who participated in the RDF projects. Instead the researcher had to rely on the referrals she had obtained from the local and tribal authorities for additional participants. This inadvertently influenced the criteria of the sample. It was only during the focus group discussions that the researcher discovered that some of the participants had not necessarily participated in the income generating RDF projects directly but only benefited indirectly from their

existence. Because the benefits were on a socio-economic level, it was possible to include the participants as they contributed data that helped to provide answers to the research questions.

Due to the participants' socio-economic circumstances, some of them brought along their small children to the focus group discussion because they did not have anyone to take care of them at home. This disturbed the smooth running of the discussions as the children would constantly make a noise and require the participants' attention. This compromised full participation in the discussions and possibly limited the sharing of valuable information. However, saturation of data was obtained through the interviews.

The informed consent was written in English and although the women had a command of English, the concepts were not clear to all. The researcher had to spend some time during the focus group discussions to translate the form into Tswana which is a local language. It is a limitation that the informed was not translated in writing as it would have facilitated easier understanding. This limitation was unfortunately not detected during the pilot interviews as the participants were comfortably conversant with English.

3.7 Research findings

This section presents and discusses the findings from the empirical study. First, the biographical details of the participants are presented, followed by the presentation and discussion of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the research data. This is followed by a discussion integrating the findings with the literature.

3.7.1 Biographical profile

The biographical profile of the participants included age, marital status, number of dependants, educational background and employment in Ratau and Mokoena.

3.7.1.1 Age of participants

The age profile of participants is visually captured in Table 3.1 below. Out of the thirty (30) women who participated in the study, nineteen (19; or 63.3%) were between the ages of 30 – 35 years, three (3; or 10%) were between 36 and 40

years, seven (7; or 23.3%) fell between 41 and 45 years of age whereas one (1; or 3.3%) was between 45 and 49 years old.

Table 3.1: Age of participants

Age of participants	Number of participants	% of participants
30 – 35 years	19	63.34%
36 – 40 years	3	10%
41 – 45 years	7	23.33%
46 – 49 year	1	3.33%

In the findings, it was not clear as to whether an age criterion was used in order for women to participate in the RDF projects. However the age categories reflected were determined through the sampling criteria. What was significant was that the majority of participants fell within the 30 to 35 age category. This demonstrates that rural women in this age category are socio-economically vulnerable.

3.7.1.2 Marital status

The marital status of the participants is depicted in Figure 3.1 below.

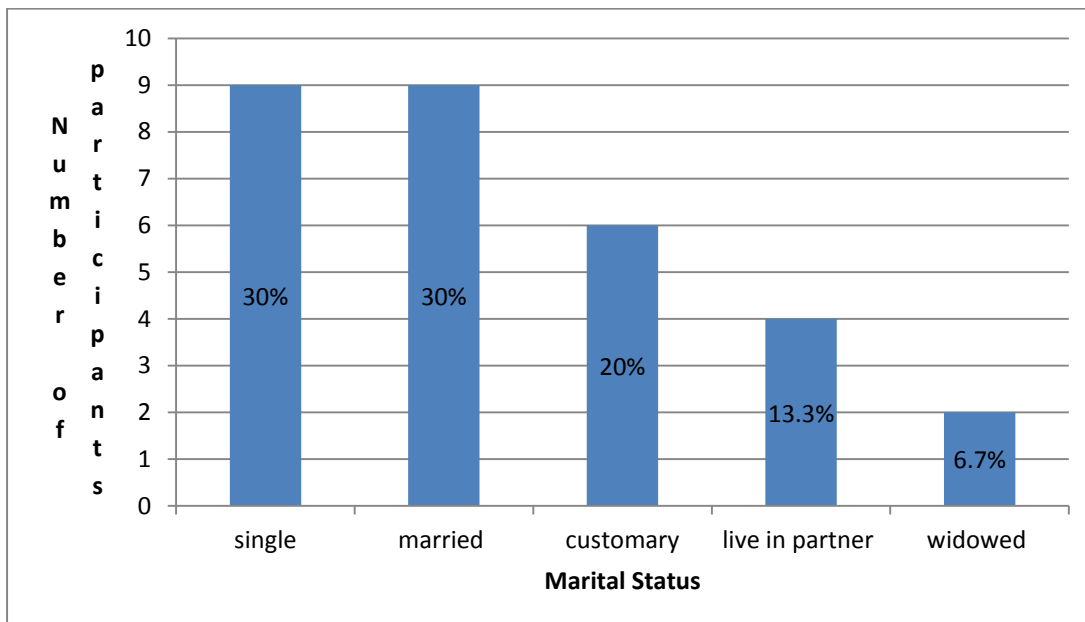


Figure 3.1: Marital status

Of the thirty (30) women who participated, nine (9; or 30%) of women were single, another nine (9; or 30%) married, two (2; or 6.7%) widowed, four (4; or 13.3%) lived with partners and six (6; or 20%) were married according to customary law.

There was an equal number of single and married participants and this combined group was the largest. This finding illustrated that the socio-economic conditions that rural women faced did not discriminate according to their marital status.

3.7.1.3 Number of dependants

Participants' number of dependants is illustrated in Figure 3.2 below. Out of 30 participants, eight (8; or 26.7%) had dependants between the ages of 0 to 3, one (1; or 3.3%) had dependants between the ages of 4 and 6, fourteen participants (14; or 46.7%) have dependants between the ages of 7 and 11, whereas seven (7; or 23.3%) had children with ages ranging from 12 to 18. On average, all participants had two (2) children each.

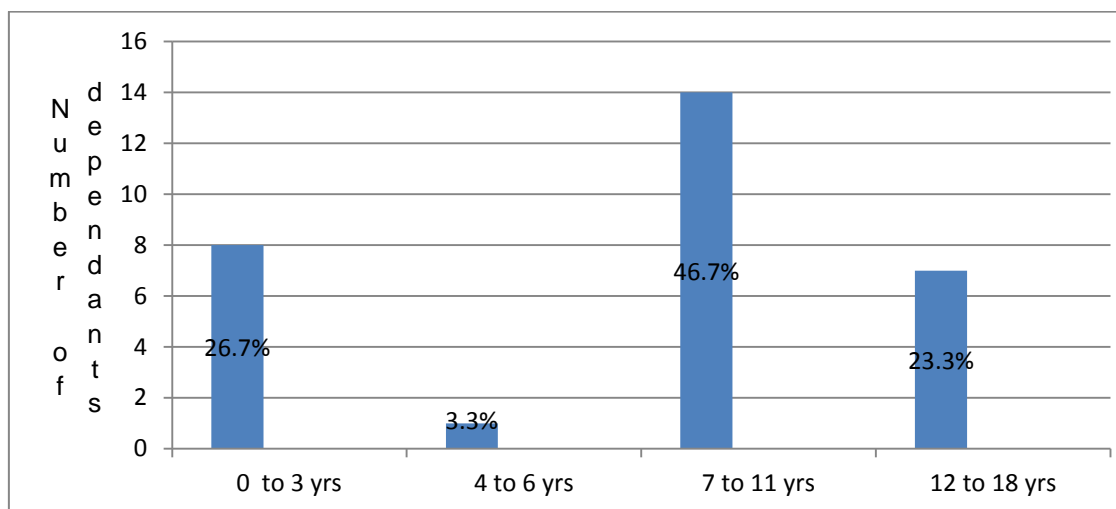


Figure 3.2: Number of dependants

On average, all participants had dependent children up to the age of 18 whom they had to support financially. The participants relied mainly on child support grants to maintain the children. Improved and sustainable socio-economic conditions in accordance with the objectives of the RDF could bring about much needed financial relief.

3.7.1.2 Educational background

Findings indicate that four (4) women (13%) only went as far as primary school whereas twenty six (26) women (87%) went through high school with the majority going up to Grade 12. As Figure 3.3 below shows, twenty- six (26) women (87%) have some high school education.

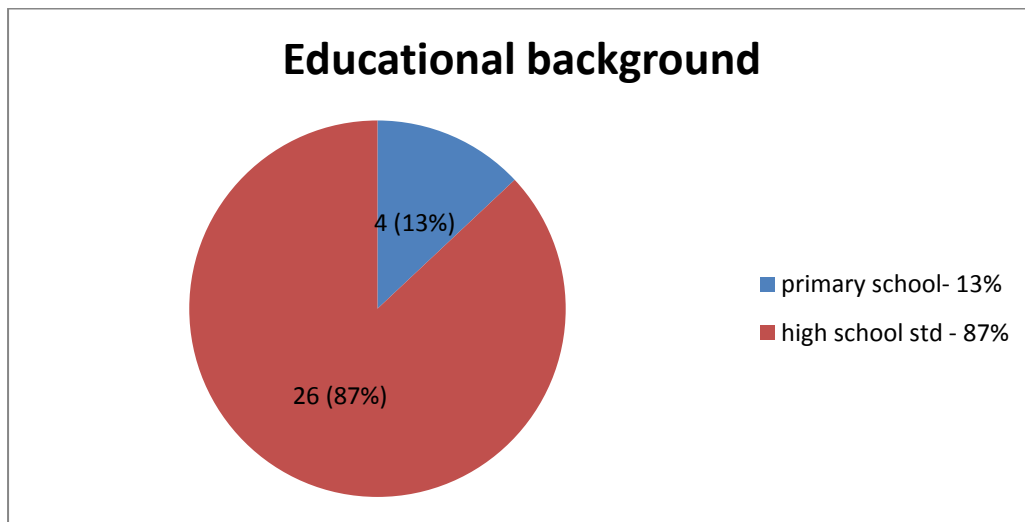


Figure 3.3 Educational background

Only four (4) women (13%) did not go beyond primary school level education. The majority of the participants, twenty six (26; or 87%) went through high school, but did not obtain any post high school education, formal vocational and technical training to improve their chances of securing sustainable employment in the formal sector. Lack of adequate skills and training exposed rural women to more poverty.

3.7.1.4 Employment, income and source of income

Findings indicate that out of 30 participants, ten (10; or 33%) of participants' income ranged between 0 and R1000, sixteen (16; or 53%) earned between R1001 and R2500 and four (4; or 13%) earned R2500 or more. In all income categories, the majority depended on child support grants and were not employed. Table 3.2 below shows the income status of the participants.

Table 3.2 Income status of the participants

INCOME	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	% OF PARTICIPANTS
R0 - 1000	10	33.33%
R1001 – 2500	16	53.34%
R2501 and more	4	13.33%

The findings above illustrate the vulnerability of the participants in various ways. The majority of participants were not formally employed and depended a great deal on social security. Those whose household income was higher were supported by their spouses/ partners, though their income capacity remained low. This state of affairs confirmed the hardships that rural women continued to be exposed to. Their perpetual dependency on social security is not sustainable.

3.8 Key themes

Five themes emerged from the data. The themes and their respective sub-themes are summarised in Table 3.6 below. The findings of the respective themes are presented first, followed by the voices of the participants in direct quotations. This is followed by the discussion of the findings, integrated with the literature.

Table 3.3: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Participation in income-generating projects by Thaba Nchu women	1.1 Successful ongoing and short term income generating projects 1.2 Failed, incomplete income generating projects

2. Changes that the socio-economic projects brought in the lives of women in Thaba Nchu	2.1 Water and sanitation 2.2 Housing 2.3 School nutrition programme and food security 2.4 Short term income
3. Communication and participation in existing income generation projects	
4. Needs and expectations from the RDF	4.1 Early Childhood Development (ECD) facilities 4.2 Safe spaces for children 4.3 Sports and recreational facilities and resources 4.4 Job opportunities 4.5 Inner city development
5. RDF gaps that influence the socio-economic development of Thaba Nchu women	5.1 Lack of proper roads 5.2 Lack of safety and security 5.3 Inadequate schools 5.4 Limited health care facilities and services

Theme 1: Participation in income generating projects by Thaba Nchu women

Participants' experience and knowledge of existing income-generating projects in Thaba Nchu differed from one village to the other. What was striking was that in Ratau, most of the projects centred on infrastructure and building whereas in Mokoena they were centred more on self-help projects.

The success rate of the projects also varied in that some were short term as they either collapsed, terminated prematurely or failed, whereas some were long term and successful. The projects that were successful continued to run. They included sewing, cleaning and sweeping of the streets, paving, tiling and bricklaying, installation of water pipes, cooperatives and home based care projects. Projects that

collapsed, terminated prematurely and failed included the building and erection of “VIP” toilets, bead making, chicken farming and wreath making. These projects are discussed in the following sub-themes:

Sub-theme 1.1: Successful ongoing and short term income generating projects

The majority of the participants confirmed that most of the projects that they had been involved in, and some were still involved in, were on a very short term basis, lasting an average of six months. Their involvement was also rotational to allow others a chance to participate. The projects therefore provided them with a short term income as opposed to long term financial security. However, their short term incomes assisted them to care for their families by enabling them to buy food and clothing for their children as well as pay for their school going children’s needs, such as school trips.

The following were the short term income generating projects that most of the participants were involved in:

- **Sewing project**

Some of the participants from Ratau focus groups were involved in the local sewing project. Through this project, participants revealed that they were able to generate their own income and that they were also learning basic business management skills. However, findings revealed that participants were not well informed about who managed the project and how it was sustained. They were clearly not involved in taking ownership for the project as they were not involved in the decision making processes and management of the project. The women clearly lacked information which was crucial to their empowerment.

The participants’ views on the sewing project were as follows:

- *“I am involved in the sewing project that is facilitated by a local retired female teacher”.*
- *“The project has been running well so far. We do not know where the funding for the project comes from but I suspect it comes from the government”.*

- *“At least ever since the project started I have learnt basic business management skills that can help me to run my own business”.*
- *“Through the project I can see how I can run my business especially the financial side of business”.*

- **Cleaning and sweeping of the streets**

From time to time, some of the participants, especially from Ratau, were involved in a project which entailed cleaning and sweeping the streets around the villages as well as in town. They were also sometimes required to clean the streets in Bloemfontein. This project occurred at short intervals and was ongoing. Their involvement depended on being called upon to participate. This was also a disempowering position as they had to wait to be called, as opposed to taking the initiative themselves.

Participants explained as follows:

- *“There were times when we would be called to the hall for a meeting and as usual we were selected through the identity document raffle system to clean the street around the villages and the town. This has not happened for a while now”.*
- *“I was informed by our local councilor that women are needed to go and clean the streets in Bloemfontein. I registered my name through the coordinator linked to the local councilor”.*

- **Paving, tiling and brick laying**

Some of the participants from Ratau were involved in the construction of the nearby cultural village. The village was built over a period of three years during which time they were hired to pave, lay bricks as well as tile the facility. Other participants tiled the community hall. Findings indicate that this was a positive experience for women as they acquired skills. However, they did not obtain certificates to show the skills

that they had obtained that would advance further job opportunities. This disappointment was articulated by some participants as follows:

- *“I participated in the cultural village project whereby I and other women acquired skills such as bricklaying, tiling and sand mixing. The challenge is that we do not have certificate”.*
- *“I am proud that I can lay bricks, fit tiles and mix building sand, however ever since the project was completed, I cannot do much with the skills I have acquired from the project as I do not have the certificate for that”.*

- **Installation of water pipes**

Most of the participants from Ratau were involved in the installation of the water pipes which meant they were responsible for digging holes and fitting pipes. The project time line was six months only and benefited only a few participants.

The benefits for participants' were represented in the following quotes:

- *“There was a contractor who hired us to dig holes around the village to install water pipes”.*
- *“Much as I benefited from the project, it was very short; only for six months. Anyway it brought short term financial relief”.*

- **Cooperatives**

Some of the participants were involved in the cooperatives that supplied schools with groceries for the school nutrition programme. Each cooperative supplied schools with groceries for a period of six months at a time in order to give others a chance. The participants who were participating or who had participated in the past expressed their gratitude for the opportunity. They also acknowledged the skills they had acquired through the experience, which included negotiating and bargaining skills. Other participants indicated that they were involved in the school nutrition programme by cooking for children. This project also benefited the participants' children directly as discussed in sub-theme 2.4 below.

Although the women benefited from their involvement, the project in itself did not provide a sustainable income as their participation was rotated. However, the project did build their capacity in that the women learned skills that they could use provided that they got the opportunity to do so. The participants expressed their experiences as follows:

- *“I am involved in the cooperatives that supply the schools with groceries for school nutrition programme. The project is ongoing but we take six months turns in the cooperatives”.*

- *“I have also participated in the past in the cooperatives, however after six months I had to give others a chance. From my involvement in the cooperatives I have acquired negotiating and bargaining skill as the budget we were provided with was very minimal”.*

- *“I have not been part of the cooperatives but at a school where my children are attending, we were invited by the principal to cook for the children. Again in this project we do give others a chance after a year”.*

- **Home based care**

One participant from Ratau was involved in the home based care project that takes care of the sick, supplying them with food parcels as well as offering children developmental services which involved counselling and facilitating life skills.

The participant summarised her involvement in the home based care project as follows:

- *“I am involved in the home based care project that is taking care of the aged and sick. The project helps them with distribution of food parcels and medication. The project also provides children with developmental services such as life skills and offers counseling as well”.*

Sub theme 1.2: Failed and incomplete income generating projects

The income generating projects that failed or remained incomplete included building and erecting "VIP" toilets; beadwork; chicken farming and wreath making.

- **Building and erection of "VIP" toilets**

Some participants were hired to dig holes and fit "VIP" toilets. However, this was a short-lived opportunity as the contractor disappeared. In addition, some of them were not paid. However, by the time the project terminated, most of the households in the community were provided with the "VIP" toilets, including the participants. The benefits of this project to the women are discussed below under sub-theme 2.1.

The participants expressed their views as follows:

- *"The project was successful however as time went on we were no longer paid because of corruption from the officials. This problem is very common".*
- *"This is one of the untrustworthy projects. We will work, when we were supposed to be paid, we will be told to take a short break when we ask for our money, we will be told that the material is finished and we will never be called again".*

This experience was another example demonstrating that the women had no ownership of the projects at any level; neither in planning, decision making, management or financing.

- **Beadwork project**

The beadwork project was coordinated by an official from the mayor's office. There were two women chosen from each ward to participate in the project, and two women from Mokoena were involved.

Before the project started, a meeting was coordinated in which the participants were briefed on how the project was going to work. The participants indicated that they acquired bead making skills out of the project and were promised that they would learn a lot of skills and be able to run their own beadwork businesses. However, the project collapsed after the money they had contributed towards the project

disappeared from the bank. This appeared to have been another ‘top-down’ project in which the women were not supported in their efforts to make it sustainable, but were exploited instead.

The following quotation by one participant represented the views of other participants in respect of the project:

- *“We worked for a long time making beads and submitted our IDs, and made to pay R50s meant to buy more material. We never received any payments from the work we produced and did not know where the profits were going. After complaining, we started to receive R800/month. Later on we secured a factory to produce more beadwork and exhibited our work at shows. After sometime there were some political conflicts against the mayor then later the project disappeared and the money disappeared from the bank account as well. Also the material that was bought disappeared. If the project continued, it would have changed our lives a great deal”.*

- **Chicken farming and wreath making projects**

Some of the participants in Mokoena revealed that they tried to start a chicken farming project after being approached by one ANC member who advised them to do so. When the chicken farming project failed, they initiated a wreath making project which went well for some time but then collapsed. The same group of women organised an event in 2012 to celebrate the lives of the aged and the destitute. Each contributed R20. They invited the mayor who motivated them to develop as women in Mokoena. However they had since realised that whenever they started something it did not last long because of a lack of support. Both these projects failed and were discontinued.

The participants’ voices are represented as follows:

- *“We were approached by an ANC member to start a chicken farming project. It did not go anywhere but when it failed we grouped ourselves again as women from Mokoena to start a wreath making project”.*
- *“The project was going on well for sometime but collapsed along the way”.*

In summary for Theme 1, women had opportunities to engage in income generating projects. However, these projects were not sustainable or did not provide a sustainable income due to the rotational nature of their involvement. While it appeared that the women were eager to participate, they were not engaged as partners and given an opportunity to claim ownership of projects. They were excluded from decisions on resources, management and finances and remained disempowered through a lack of support and opportunity.

Theme 2: Changes that the RDF socio-economic projects brought in the lives of women in Thaba Nchu

The participants revealed that although some of them did not participate directly in the socio-economic projects, the RDF projects had changed their lives in many different ways. These changes pertained to water and sanitation, housing, school nutrition and food security which are discussed as sub-themes next.

Sub-theme 2.1: Water and sanitation

All the participants acknowledged that they now could access water easily as they had taps in their yards. They no longer had to stand in long queues to fetch water. Some were able to plant vegetables in their yards to feed their families and the destitute. The only problem was that they did not anticipate that they would have to pay for the consumption of water.

Another benefit was that they no longer had to depend on the bucket system of toilets. They appreciated the efforts made by the government to provide them with “VIP” toilets which were an improvement on the bucket ones. However, there were different views on the “VIP” toilets as most of the participants’ views suggested that they pose health risks when not drained regularly. The ideal situation would be the provision of flush toilets.

Participants’ views of appreciation and dissatisfaction were represented through the following quotes:

- *“Projects like water help us as we can now easily access water in our yards. We are no longer standing in long queues at communal taps to fetch water”.*

- *“Though we now have easy access to water, we did not know that we will be paying for water. The government is now giving us bills to pay water, something we were never prepared for”.*
- *“We are now able to plant vegetables, to feed families and sell. We also share with the destitute”.*
- *“The ‘VIP’ toilets have changed our lives greatly as we no longer use bucket system toilets. Our health and that of our families are no longer at risk. Before the ‘VIP’ toilets, we would be forced to dig holes in our yards to empty waste buckets. This practice was not pleasant at all”.*
- *“We want flushing toilets. The ‘VIP’ toilets sometimes smell too much. Sometimes the municipality takes a long time to come and drain them”.*

Sub-theme 2.3: Housing

The RDP housing project had provided most of the participants with the much needed opportunity to own houses for the first time in their lives. They used to stay in shacks, but families now enjoyed privacy, and children had their own bedrooms away from adults. However, the programme was no longer in existence and there was still a huge shortage of houses. There was no understanding expressed by the women of why this was the case.

The appreciation for the RDP houses on the one hand, and the need for more on the other, were expressed by participants as follows:

- *“I also received a RDP house. I went to the housing department to register for the house. I was called after a few months and was presented with a house. I did not pay any money for the house”.*

- *“We used to stay in shacks. Most of the time the shacks were very small and there was no privacy. With the RDP house that I received, children now have their own bedrooms and no longer sharing space with the adults”.*
- *“I wish the government can bring back the RDP houses. There is still a huge shortage as many people still stay in shacks and rent rooms from others”.*

Sub-theme 2.4: School nutrition programme and food security

Participation of women in the school nutrition project was at three different levels; namely, through the cooperatives that supplied schools with groceries; women that cooked at schools; as well as women whose children benefited from the programme at schools. As indicated in sub-theme 1.1, women benefited financially as they generated income from the cooperatives. Overall, all the participants were happy with the programme because it ensured that children received at least one guaranteed meal a day at school which had improved their health status. Children were now going to school regularly and the school drop-out rate was reduced. In addition, involvement in the cooperatives provided opportunities for capacity building through skills development such as negotiation and bargaining.

The following quotes capture the expressions of the participants with regard to the school nutrition programme:

- *“I have just joined a cooperative that is supplying the schools with groceries for the school nutrition programme. We are provided with money, the budget and a list of things that are needed. The problem is that, the budget provided is little for what is required and expected from us; however what I am learning through this experience is negotiating and bargaining skills”.*
- *“Much as I do not participate in the cooperatives so far, at least our children are benefitting a great deal. The school nutrition programme has benefited our children a lot as children are now getting decent meals at school”.*

- *“Yes, our children are now attending school regularly and school dropping out rate has reduced drastically”.*

Sub-theme 2.5: Short term income

As indicated in Theme 1, most of the participants confirmed that all the projects they had been involved in so far operated on a very short term basis with an average duration of six months. Therefore projects provided them with short term income and not long term financial security. However, their short term incomes assisted and continued to assist some of them to care for their families by enabling them to buy food and clothing for their children as well as pay for their school going children's needs, such as school trips.

Participants expressed their views in respect of the short term income through the following quotes:

- *“Much as I participated shortly in the projects, they brought temporary relief in my life. With the little money I received from the projects, I was able to support my family”.*
- *“The income I received made a difference in my family life. I was able to buy groceries for my family. At least I was also able to pay for my child's school trip”.*

Theme 2 illustrates that as much as the RDF income generating projects that women in Thaba Nchu engaged in were not sustainable, the women appreciated the changes that the short income generating activities brought. Their appreciation also expressed their desire to see the different projects, whether these were income generation or provision of services such as water, sanitation and housing, being taken to a higher level.

Theme 3: Communication and participation in existing income generating projects

All participants revealed that they had found out about the projects taking place through different ways.

Firstly, whenever there was a new project, the authorities would call a community meeting. At the meeting, women would be invited to put their identity documents in a hat or basket. Whoever's identity document was pulled out would be hired. It did sometimes happen that one person got a chance more than once consecutively. Some participants felt that the system was not fair as some of the people would always get an opportunity whereas others might never participate in the projects. On the other hand, other participants were of the opinion that the system was fair as it was transparent and open. Participants who were in favour of the system felt that if it was someone's luck that her identity document was pulled out more than once consecutively, so be it. What was striking about the system was that it was only women from the Ratau village who were affected by it.

Some participants revealed that there was no structured method used to recruit them to participate in a project. Usually meetings would be called randomly by means of a loudspeaker by the councillors or other community leaders. At these meetings, the contractors were sometimes present. In most cases, when a meeting was called, the leaders or the authorities came with a predetermined list of who would be hired. Most of the participants expressed their discontentment with this process and decided to stay away from such meetings which they felt did not benefit them. Participants were also discouraged by the fact that some contractors disappeared without paying them. The sentiments of the participants with regard to these issues are represented in the following quotes:

- *"We were called to a meeting and informed that there will be people from Bloemfontein who are going to run the project".*
- *Sometimes they ask for our identity documents and throw them into a hat and pull out some. Whoever their IDs will be pulled out, they will get jobs'.*
- *With regards to the 'VIP' toilets project, we were called to a meeting at the hall and told about the project. We realised that there were people already working and we did not know how they got in. I feel that the system is not fair".*
- *"No, the ID system is fair because if they did not do that, people will still complain. Most of the time it goes with one's luck".*

- *What I know is that the government makes money available through contractors so that people can benefit but contractors sometimes vanish without paying us”.*
- *“Other people who are hired come in secretly and are recruited through political parties. When the politicians come to the meetings, they already have a list of people who are hired through secret means and the authorities camouflage by using the ID raffle system. Those who attend ANC meetings will always get preferential treatment”.*
- *“The other unfair scenario is that of fencing the new cemetery in Ratau village. We just saw people working and we do not know how they got to be chosen to work there”.*

In summary, Theme 3 presents an impression of an irregular communication and participation system that the authorities were using to facilitate RDF activities in the community. It was very clear from the voices of the participants that they felt exploited and as such did not have confidence in the system to the extent of deciding to stay away when meetings were called, to protect their integrity and dignity.

Theme 4: Needs and expectations from the RDF

All the participants revealed that they had not known about the existence of the RDF. As indicated in the sampling selection (see 3.4.2), they were identified by tribal councillors and the leaders in their communities as beneficiaries of the RDF. This demonstrates the lack of information, context and background that the women receive when invited to participate in projects. The impact of lack of information, context and background has been pointed out above (see sub-theme 1.1 and theme 3). They were supposed to benefit from the RDF, a policy they were not even aware of, or had only scanty information about. It became clear in the interviews that they were participating in the RDF projects not knowing the projects’ relatedness to any policies, let alone being familiar with government policies in general. However, as pointed out in the limitations of the study (see Section 3.6), the women also provided inconsistent information at the beginning of the focus group discussions, most

probably out of fear of jeopardising their chances of being called upon to participate in future projects.

The discussions in the focus groups on the research theme allowed participants to openly acknowledge what they knew about the RDF and in turn, participants who claimed to know nothing, and later understood the situation, indicated that they expected the RDF to take care of their needs and expectations related to their socio-economic development for a long time; however, they did not know what platform was available to address such needs and expectations with the government. Their needs and expectations unfolded in the following sub-themes:

Sub-theme 4.1: Early Childhood Development (ECD) facilities

All participants maintained that there were not enough ECD facilities in their areas. Their children were deprived of opportunities to access ECD programmes. This affected the progress of their early formal education. The participants further maintained the notion that the availability of ECD facilities would provide them with the opportunity to look for jobs. Sometimes they wanted to go into town to sell goods but if they had a small child and no one to leave the child with, they would either be forced to take the child with them to town to sell, or not go at all. Town streets are not ideal environments in which to raise children. Furthermore, the existence of ECD facilities could also create employment opportunities for many women who are unemployed.

The following quotes represent the participants' expressions on ECD:

- *“We lack Early Childhood Development facilities where we can enroll our children. Sometimes I want to stock goods and sell in town but because I have a small child, I cannot do so as I cannot take him with me. It is not safe to be with a small child in the street the whole day”.*
- *“We need day care facilities to take care of children”*
- *“Maybe the crèches can also create jobs for us. I love children and would not mind looking after them”.*

Sub-theme 4.2: Safe spaces for children

Apart from lack of ECD facilities, participants revealed that their villages did not have safe spaces where their children could play. There is a play space for children in Ratau; however, for some of the children to access the spaces, they have to cross the N8 which is a national road and always busy, so their children are not safe. One participant expressed her view as follows:

- *“We also want our children to have safe spaces to play. At present our children in Ratau have to cross N8 which is busy as it is a national road. We also need school patrols to help children with traffic”.*

Sub- theme 4.3: Sports and recreation facilities and resources

All participants in Mokoena village identified a need for sports and recreation facilities for their children. They felt that the government seemed not to be concerned about providing sports and recreation facilities and resources for their children, and expected the government to do something about the lack of these facilities and resources. The sports and recreation facilities and resources would help all their children to stay away from social ills as well as develop the necessary basic life skills. The following quote represents the view of the majority of participants:

- *“In Mokoena, we do not have sports and recreational facilities for our children. We wish to see the government providing our children with sports gear and suitable playing grounds for children to play. If there are enough sports and recreational facilities, our children will not go astray and they will learn enough life skills. At present our children are playing at makeshift sports grounds without the necessary equipment. We do not have parks as well”.*

Sub-theme 4.4: Job opportunities

All participants indicated that there were not enough job opportunities in Thaba Nchu. The jobs that were available were few and far between, very short-term and not everyone had equal opportunities to access them. Their needs and expectations

from the RDF were that the policy should be able to make the environment conducive to job creation and opportunities.

The majority of participants were Child Support Grant recipients as indicated in Section 3.6.1.5 above. Participants expressed their desire to be independent of the Child Support Grants (CSG) if they could be afforded job opportunities or opportunities to create jobs.

They also expressed the need to establish community based organisations that would run more home based care to deserving people as well as a children's home which would accommodate orphaned and vulnerable children.

They wished the government could provide them with free water to establish small scale farming/ food gardens as their yards were big enough to do so. They could plant vegetables to feed their families as well as sell to other people.

They also needed business spaces/ premises. Participants indicated that the government should re-utilise the factory spaces where Chinese people used to trade. Furthermore, they suggested that buildings such as the former Eureka Reform School should be made available for use as business premises.

The participants' views on job opportunities were represented through the following quotes:

- *“We also need income generating projects so that we stop depending on the CSG. The income generating projects that we need are small scale farming. We have enough spaces in our yards to start planting vegetables; however we are not able to do so due to possibility of paying high water bills”.*
- *“We want the government to create opportunities for us to establish home based care projects to care for the elderly, bathe them and collect medication for them. We also want to establish children's homes. There are children who need developmental work such as counseling and to be taught life skills. The Barend Van Rensburg children's home is no longer catering for orphaned and vulnerable children as the facility has been converted into social workers' offices. The government must fund these projects as they will also create much needed jobs and helping people at the same time”.*

- *“I want to see the government reviving business spaces such as the one in Selosesha Township which used to serve as Chinese factories. We need such spaces to operate our small businesses”.*
- *“We want to be helped with establishing cooperatives. Amongst us we have people who have acquired skills such as brick laying, tiling, cooking, sewing, mixing building sands and painting though we do not have certificates for that. If the government can help and support us, we will be able to create jobs as well”.*
- *“In Mokoena, there was a government employee from Bloemfontein who approached us with an idea of establishing a cooperative. The gentleman collected R50s from us to register the cooperative. We were about twenty. The project never took off and we lost the money they collected”.*
- *“In Mokoena, there was a government employee from Bloemfontein who approached us with an idea of establishing a cooperative. The gentleman collected R50s from us to register the cooperative. We were about twenty. The project never took off and we lost the money they collected”.*
- *“The Eureka reform school building has turned into a white elephant. We want the building to be given to us to use it for projects that we as women in Thaba Nchu can develop and fend for ourselves”.*

Sub - theme 4.5: Inner city development

Most of the participants revealed that the inner city had been in a state of neglect for a very long time. In fact, it had continued to deteriorate. They felt that inner city development could change their lives dramatically for the better. They would also be able to access services easily because at present they had to go to Bloemfontein to access services such as the ones provided by the Department of Home Affairs. The development could also create sustainable jobs and livelihoods. Participants' views were expressed in the following direct quotes:

- *We want to see Thaba Nchu town developing. We do not have enough supermarkets to do our groceries. We always have to go to Bloemfontein if we need better services. For instance we do not have efficient Home Affairs offices in Thaba Nchu. We do not have restaurants and fast food outlets. We only have KFC. Once the inner city can be developed, it will attract more businesses, thus creating jobs and boosting the economy of Thaba Nchu”.*
- *Our children obtained qualifications but they cannot use them anywhere as there are no jobs. If Thaba Nchu inner city can be developed, maybe our children will be able to get jobs and use their qualifications”.*

In summary, Theme 4 indicates that the women had a clear understanding of what they expected from the RDF and how, if their needs and expectations were realised, the desired changes in their socio-economic circumstances could be brought about. Furthermore, they displayed a strong commitment and will to contribute towards the improvement of their socio-economic circumstances and those of their families.

Theme 5: RDF gaps that influenced the socio economic development of Thaba Nchu women

All the participants identified different gaps in the RDF that if addressed, they felt would bring about the desired changes in both their lives and those of their families. These gaps could be classified under the sub-themes: lack of proper roads; lack of safety and security; inadequate schools; and limited health care facilities and services.

Sub-theme 5.1: Lack of proper roads

All participants revealed that one of the obstacles in their own socio-economic development was the condition of the roads. The participants emphasised that the roads were in a bad state, being gravel and poorly maintained. Even when they thought of establishing small businesses, they realised that they would be unable to transport their goods as people with delivery cars and taxis complained that they were not able to help them due to the bad state of roads. Their cars would need frequent repairs due to wear and tear. They expressed their views as follows:

- *“Now that we know about it, we want the RDF to improve the roads. We expect the government to improve roads and we will also be getting jobs through roads works”.*
- *“The roads that are running through Mokoena are not in good condition. As we rely much on public transport, we find it difficult to run our businesses. The car and taxi owners always complain about wear and tear of their cars due to the poor conditions of the roads”.*
- *“The roads that we have are gravel and are not proper. We want to see the government improving on the conditions of the roads by tarring them and paving the sidewalks. This will improve our standard of living”*

Sub theme 5.2: Safety and security

All participants acknowledged that community safety and security was a serious gap. Although the government had installed street lights in the villages, without visible policing their lives were still not safe. When they experienced situations that needed the attention of the police, the police took too long to respond to their plights. They expressed their view that if the government could make resources available for effective policing to take place, their safety and security would be guaranteed. The views of some of the participants are captured in the following quotes:

- *“There is no visible policing. We are not safe as women. Even our children are not safe. We have had incidents whereby children are attacked on their way to school”.*
- *“We want to see our police services improving. When you phone the police for any incident, they take time to respond and will tell you that they did not have transport”.*

Sub theme 5.3: Limited health care facilities and services

Most of the participants in Ratau revealed that there were not enough health care facilities and services. The local clinic was not efficient enough to cater for their

needs. The clinic operated only within specific hours, and when it was closed, they had to travel very far to the hospital. Sometimes the clinic would not have enough resources, such as supply of chronic medication.

Furthermore, when they had medical emergencies, the ambulances from the hospital did not respond to their calls timely. Because ambulances took long to respond, clinics were supposed to be open to compensate for this. The following quotes represent their views:

- *“We do not have enough health care facilities. The nearby clinic that is Dinaane is open from 8 to 4 only. Most of the time it is without medicine and doctors. Even when we have emergencies, we cannot be helped at the clinic. There was a time when the clinic was closed without any explanation. We were suffering as we had to go to Moroka Hospital for health care attention. We have nowhere close to collect our chronic medication”*
- *“When you call an ambulance for an emergency, they take a long time to respond. They say they do not have enough ambulances to cover the whole of Thaba Nchu”.*

Sub theme 5.4: Inadequate schools

Some participants, more specifically in Ratau, identified lack of adequate schools as a RDF gap. They expressed their wish to see the government providing schools that were closer to their homes. For instance, the high school that catered for their children was very far and provide for many other surrounding villages as well. Children walk long distances, and when it is raining, it becomes even more difficult for children to get to school.

In addition, there are children from the “trusts”, who are boarding at one local school when they should still have been taken care of by their mothers because they were very young. Due to the lack of schools in their areas, they were forced to attend school away from their homes.

The views of participants on inadequate schools are articulated in the following direct quotes:

- *“We want schools that are close by. The schools that our children attend are far. For instance Albert Moroka High School. It is serving many villages and it is far for some of the children”.*
- *“Maybe the government should provide with school transport to ferry school children to far schools. Our children are not safe on the roads as well”.*
- *“There are primary school going children who have been taken from the surrounding “trusts” who board at one local school. Life is very tough for these children. They still need to be cared for by their mothers but they stay away from their homes. If it is lack of schooling facilities in those areas, the government must do something about it. The arrangement is not right for the children at all”.*

In summary of Theme 5, the participants’ views on what they considered to be RDF gaps also indicated their insight into what they saw as priorities to improve their socio-economic conditions. Their views on gaps spoke directly to issues such as lack of proper roads, safety and security, limited health care facilities and services, and inadequate schools. These areas stood out as long term investments in the process of achieving sustainable development.

3.9 Discussion of findings

This section discusses the findings of the study by integrating empirical findings with findings from the literature. Furthermore, the findings are contextualised within the theoretical framework of the study.

The demographic profiles of the participants show that most of the participants are bread winners in their households, but do not have sustainable incomes. These findings correspond with the literature which states that the rise in the number of households supported by women is an important variable explaining the increase in poverty among women in rural areas (Oberhauser, 2001:6), yet the level of women’s participation in the mainstream economy remains very low (Naidoo & Hilton, 2006:10).

The poverty profile of the Free State, as discussed in the PROVIDE Project Background paper 2009 1 (3) (2009:3), also shows an estimated 42% of the provincial population living in poverty with the majority - about 90% - being blacks. The profile further estimates that 73% of the provincial poverty statistics represents the rural areas, with the greatest burden of this poverty being borne by women PROVIDE Project Background paper 2009 1 (3) (2009:3). In rural South Africa, the majority of households are female- headed (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:54). This situation is also common across Southern African countries such as Malawi (Nkhonjera, 2011:10).

In the findings, the participants listed a number of income generating projects as well as provision of service projects such as water, sanitation and housing that contributed to and impacted on their socio-economic conditions by bringing about temporary financial relief to their families as well as access to basic social services. The projects included sewing, cleaning and sweeping of the streets, paving, tiling and bricklaying, installation of water pipes, cooperatives and home based care, building and erection of "VIP" toilets, bead making, chicken farming and wreath making.

The findings further note the changes that, in addition to the income generating projects that had brought short term financial relief to the participants, other RDF projects such as water, sanitation and housing had brought improvements in their socio-economic conditions. All participants acknowledged their lives had changed for the better when the government provided them with water in their yards as well as the "VIP" toilets which replaced the bucket system ones. These changes are in line with the objectives of the Rural Development Framework which emphasises that, to meet the infrastructural development backlog in rural areas, the government should commit itself to subsidising the capital costs for a basic level of service with programmes that included provision of community water and sanitation (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41). On the other hand, however, participants indicated that "VIP" toilets created health risks because they were not emptied regularly enough and created a bad smell.

The findings also reveal how a project such as the school nutrition programme had contributed significantly towards improving the lives of most participants in various

ways. Firstly, the programme guarantees their children at least one decent meal a day, thus contributing to the improved health status of children. This change is in accordance with the provisions of the RDF which states that the most fundamental right of children is the right to life. Ready access to basic health care services as well as adequate nutrition is important for children (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7).

Although most of the projects brought about temporary financial relief in the lives of most of the participants, this was not adequate for the women in Thaba Nchu to sustain their livelihoods and obtain financial security. Lack of employment opportunities in Thaba Nchu had put women in dire financial strains for a very long time. These findings are consistent with a study by Baipheti, et al., (2009:1358-1363) as well as a study conducted by Thabo Community Action Centre (2012) indicating that there are limited employment opportunities in Thaba Nchu for women and too much reliance on grants, with too little economic growth.

This state of affairs demonstrates that women continue to be disadvantaged in terms of labour markets as well as options for sustainable livelihoods (*Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women*, 2013). The majority of women continue to work as unpaid labourers in family enterprises with no access to income of their own. If paid, it is at a very low level (*Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women*, 2013).

The findings further reveal that all participants were exposed to different communication and participation systems from authorities such as councillors, government officials and community leaders with regard to socio-economic development activities in their communities. Common communication and participation trends identified by the participants included community meetings that most of the time was politically motivated. In these, women were hired through the ID raffling system which some participants saw as fair, whilst others did not.

Lack of adequate information on the part of women in rural areas disadvantage them as it deprive them of the necessary chances to improve their capacity and to empower them to take advantage of opportunities in their communities. Empowerment capacity of women in rural areas is very critical because it provides them with the ability to make the necessary choices to address their needs, as articulated by Nkonjera (2011:13) and Kim et al. (2007:3) in their definitions of empowerment. Lack of information further perpetuated the women's vulnerability as

demonstrated by their articulation of how they were manipulated to align themselves with specific political parties.

Furthermore the authorities took advantage of the vulnerability of the poor people by taking their hard earned cash and promising them projects that never materialised (see sub-theme 4.2). This system created apathy and hopelessness amongst some of the participants. The findings were supported by findings from a study conducted by Thabo Community Action Centre (2012) indicating that the community showed apathy and an approach of hopelessness towards the future as a result of the political power and self interest of corrupt individuals who exploited vulnerable people.

Participants identified their needs and expectations from the RDF as ECD facilities, safe spaces for their children, sports and recreation facilities and resources, job opportunities as well as inner city development. The findings indicate that most participants saw ECD facilities also as providing them with the opportunity to look for jobs and initiate small businesses. This finding resonates with the RDF objective that emphasises and takes into consideration that most of the children in South Africa live in rural areas (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7). Poor women are under pressure to carry out income generating work as otherwise children would be deprived of essential care and attention (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7). The RDF has identified early childhood education also as a scarcity in rural areas (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:8).

Apart from the ECD facilities, the participants expressed their need and expectation that the RDF and hence government should provide their children with safe spaces to play as well as sports and recreation facilities and resources. They believe that the government is not concerned about providing sports and recreation facilities and resources for their children. These findings are contradictory to the objectives of the RDF in that the RDF prescribes that sustained investment in the appropriate types of infrastructure is essential for achieving the government's equity and efficiency objectives (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41). Good infrastructure supports strong social and economic development (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41).

One of the critical needs and expectations from participants was job opportunities. They acknowledged that they could not financially depend on the child support grants

for ever. Their recognition and desire to be financially independent illustrated their need to be empowered. Women's empowerment is viewed as "a process that increases women's choices or ability to make choices about their lives and the environment they live in" (Kim, et al., 2007:1). Nkhonjera (2011:13) states that there are different writers who describe women's empowerment in various ways, however all point in one direction: that it is the power or ability by women to address their needs. The participants desired to establish community based organisations that would run more home based care to deserving people as well as a children's home which would accommodate orphaned and vulnerable children. They also wished that government could provide them with free water to establish small scale farming/ food gardens as their yards were big enough to do so and they needed business spaces/ premises such as the abandoned Chinese factory and the former Eureka Reform School which should be made available for business purposes. All these desires resonate with the assertion by Nkhonjera (2011:13) that "women assuming the ability to identify their aspirations and strategies for change, gaining skills and acquiring resources to achieve these aspirations, constitute empowerment".

To achieve empowerment, women's subordinate position in society has to be challenged so that they are recognised as development stakeholders who are called upon to participate; who have a say in who is selected to participate; who are informed; given information; seen as possible partners; who can take ownership of a project; and be engaged in planning, decision making, finances and development of markets (Nkhonjera, 2011:14).

All participants saw themselves as facing a bleak future without job opportunities. The findings indicate that most of the participants had participated and benefited from the income generating projects. However these projects were short term and did not provide them with sustainable livelihoods, so they were not able to take care of their families adequately. Sustainable livelihoods as a strategy comprise the range and combination of activities and choices that people undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals (*Sustainable Livelihoods Approach*, 2012:3). Kadozo (2009:6) highlights that a sustainable livelihoods approach recognises that people who are poor may not have cash or other savings but have material and non-material assets such as their health, labour, knowledge and skills, their kinship ties and friends as well as the natural resources around them. In the case of the participants in this

study, they had acquired knowledge and skills over time through different projects but required support to use these skills to sustain their livelihoods.

Mahlati (2011:97) is of the view that the different types of assets on which individuals draw to build their livelihoods are natural, social, human, physical and financial capital. In the case of the participants, they lack the ability and courage to draw on these assets to build their livelihoods. The success of sustainable livelihoods lies in people using a holistic analysis of their strengths, understanding of micro-macro linkages and holistic approaches (Mahlati, 2011:97).

Most of the participants cited lack of inner city development as a barrier towards their socio-economic development. The participants saw the inner city development as a potential opportunity for their socio-economic development as it would create much needed jobs as well as provide easy access to services. As one of its objectives, the RDF is intent on building local economic development and rural livelihoods by reintroducing drivers of the modern economy which had been removed to central places in order to marginalise certain areas during the Apartheid era (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:23) The RDF also prescribes that rural towns should be the focus for development and be prioritised to drive the economy of the area (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:23).

Amongst the RDF gaps identified by participants were lack of proper roads, inadequate schools, lack of safety and security as well as limited health facilities and services. The findings indicate that infrastructure such as roads were still a serious problem in Thaba Nchu. This state of affairs represents a gross impediment to the socio-economic development of women. This finding is supported by Backenberg (2009:1) who states that life in rural areas of South Africa is complex and characterised by many inconsistencies such as infrastructural problems, communication networks, roads and transport services that are substandard, as well as poor access to basic services such as water and sanitation (Mahlati, 2011:72). As further corroborated in the Presidency's review report of income poverty in South Africa (2012:169), the provision of basic services is an important agent in the reduction of poverty and unemployment and in strengthening social capital. Infrastructure such as roads which connect rural areas to urban cities, facilitate mobility of goods and people within the area thus contributing to economic growth in

rural areas, is essential (*Presidency's review report of income poverty in South Africa*, 2012:169).

Inadequate schools as a RDF gap pose a serious problem for children because they have to walk long distances to schools. Children from farms are separated from their parents very early in life because they had to board away from home in order to attend school. Lack of adequate schools poses a serious socio-economic challenge to all participants because it deprived their children of an opportunity to acquire education; thus compromising their chances of developing socio-economically. Midgley (2014:83, 92, 95), Kadozo (2012:9,18) and Backenberg (2009:7) note that human capital is usually associated with acquiring skills and knowledge through formal education. Societies that have high levels of skills and knowledge through formal education are more likely to be prosperous and economically developed than those lacking in human capital (Midgley, 2014:83).

The findings reveal further that there were limited health facilities and services as the local clinic provided limited services and were sometimes without adequate resources. The RDF emphasises that, to meet the infrastructural development backlog in rural areas, the government should commit itself to subsidising the capital costs for basic levels of service with programmes that include the building of clinics (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:41) in order to meet the health care needs of rural people.

Some participants identified a lack of safety and security in their neighborhoods as another RDF gap. This was due to a lack of visible policing and slow responses from police when their services were needed. Lack of adequate safety and security services is in violation of both the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), and the RDF (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7) which emphasise that safety and security are a precondition to social and economic development. The RDF (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7) emphasises the government's responsibility for establishing peace and harmony which is everyone's constitutional right as well as the establishment of a national police service which is representative, transparent, impartial, accountable and which upholds and protects the fundamental rights of all people. The RDF (Department of Land Affairs, 1997:7) further emphasises the importance of women's groups being represented on community based safety and

security structures so that they play a role in efforts to reduce violence against women and children. Furthermore the National Development Plan recognises that women constitute a large number of the poor, especially in rural areas (RSA, 2012:33). Amongst measures it recommends, is the proposal that women and children should be protected from crime (RSA, 2012:33).

From the discussion, the following key findings were made:

- The income generating projects that the participants had been involved in contribute significantly towards the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu, even though gaps were identified.
- Women in Thaba Nchu show interest and are eager to change their socio-economic circumstances for the better provided they receive adequate support and guidance from the government.
- The RDF gaps that the participants identified such as roads, schools as well as sustainable livelihoods indicate a desire from participants for the government to improve on the implementation of RDF objectives.
- The socio-economic development strategies are not well communicated and coordinated amongst women in Thaba Nchu hence there is misunderstanding and misinformation about how the RDF operate and what its intended objectives, especially for women, are.
- The exclusion of women from ownership and direct management of projects reflects lack of willingness from the government to empower and capacitate them to be self-reliant and socially and economically included. Lack of adequate information about socio-economic development processes in their area further disempower women and perpetuate their dependency on grants as they rightfully indicated that they do not want to depend on child support grants for the rest of their lives. Their involvement in short term income generating projects as well as dependency on child support grants alone do not provide them with sustainable livelihoods.

4 Summary

This Chapter presented the research methodology, the ethical issues, and the findings of the empirical study. It included a discussion of the empirical findings which was substantiated by literature, and contextualised within the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter Four deliberates on the conclusions drawn from the key findings and makes recommendations based on the study.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Introduction

This chapter focuses on discussing how the goal and objectives of the research were achieved. It further presents key findings as well as the conclusions drawn from these. Finally, recommendations based on the findings and conclusions of the study are made.

4.1 Goals and Objectives of the study

The goal of the study was to determine the impact of the Rural Development Framework on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu. The goal was achieved through the following objectives:

Objective 1

To conceptualise rural women's socio-economic development within the context of the Rural Development Framework

This objective was achieved through an in-depth literature review conducted and presented in Chapter 2 (sub-sections 2.3 and 2.5).

The literature review provided a description of socio-economic development with specific reference to rural women. It also contextualised the Rural Development Framework in terms of its objectives, achievements and gaps in relation to rural women's socio-economic development. The literature review also explored the topic from a national and international perspective which was intended to determine what constitutes an environment conducive to rural women's socio-economic development.

Objective 2

To explore how the Rural Development Framework impacts on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu

This objective was achieved in the literature review in Chapter 2 (sub-sections 2.3.1 and 2.7) as well as the empirical study's findings in Chapter 3 (sub-section 3.8).

The literature review illustrated how Rural Development Framework objectives are intended to change the lives of rural people and women in particular, through creating enabling environments for their socio-economic development. Ideally, this should be done through allowing rural women themselves to set the agenda for their own development as well as enabling them to take control of their destiny, thereby dealing effectively with rural poverty through optimal use and management of available resources. The Rural Development Framework also encourages redistribution of economic and political power, as well as the participation of the people.

The empirical study, on the other hand, revealed the reality of how the Rural Development Framework has impacted on the women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu through income generating projects as well as the provision of basic services such as housing, water and sanitation.

Objective 3

To identify possible gaps that might impede the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu in relation to the implementation of the Rural Development Framework

This objective was addressed in the literature review Chapter 2 (sub-sections 2.6 and 2.7.2) as well as the empirical study findings in Chapter 3 (sub-section 3.8).

The literature review discusses factors impeding rural women's socio-economic development and demonstrates that although there are achievements shown in

terms of the Rural Development Framework, gaps and challenges such as poor service delivery still exist. Poor infrastructural development such as roads prevents economic growth for rural people. The high unemployment rate in rural areas forces rural people to seek employment in urban centres. Those who remain, work in poorly paying jobs such as domestic work service and in the agricultural fields.

Objective 3 was further achieved in Chapter 3 (sub-section 3.8) in which all participants highlighted what they considered to be gaps in the RDF. These included lack of proper roads that prevented them from starting their small businesses because they had to rely on public transport to ferry their goods; lack of safety and security, especially inadequate resources for the police to respond to emergencies; inadequate schools as available schools were remote and not easily accessible; and limited health care facilities and services. It was pointed out that local clinics do not have adequate resources such as medication, and ambulance services usually take too long to respond when called.

Objective 4

To propose capacity building and empowerment strategies that could promote socio-economic development for rural women in the context of the Rural Development Framework

This objective was achieved in the literature review in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.8) as well as the empirical study in Chapter 3 (sub-section 3.8). In addition, the objective is discussed further in section 4.3 of this Chapter in which proposals are made for capacity building and empowerment strategies for the socio-economic development of rural women.

The literature review outlines socio-economic development intervention strategies for rural women which are embedded in the theoretical framework of the study, namely empowerment and sustainable livelihoods. These strategies are intended to strengthen the RDF objectives. Through empowerment theory, women can apply their innate ability to address their needs by using development strategies such as micro-financing. On the other hand, through sustainable livelihood theory, women

are able to implement a range and combination of activities and choices to achieve their livelihood goals.

Through the empirical study, participants identified Early Childhood Education (ECD) facilities and job opportunities as their RDF needs and expectations. In addition, they listed the lack of proper roads as one of the critical gaps in giving access to opportunities such as reaching markets for their goods. The needs, expectations and gaps identified by participants illustrate what changes Thaba Nchu women expect that could improve their lives and those of their families.

4.2 Key findings and conclusions

In this section, the researcher provides the key findings and the conclusions drawn there from.

- The income generating projects that the participants have been involved in have significantly contributed towards the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu, even though gaps were identified.
- ❖ It can therefore be concluded that there has been a moderate effort on the side of the government to implement the RDF objectives. This was achieved through the income generating projects for women in Thaba Nchu, although the projects were not sustainable.
- Women in Thaba Nchu show interest and are eager to change their socio-economic circumstances for the better provided they are given adequate support and guidance from the government.
- ❖ The researcher therefore concludes that with coordinated support and guidance, rural women could be empowered to find exit level strategies for social security, take charge of their socio-economic circumstances and in time, achieve sustainable livelihoods.
- The socio-economic gaps that participants identified, such as roads, schools as well as sustainable livelihoods indicate a desire from rural women for the

government to improve implementation of the RDF objectives.

- ❖ It is therefore concluded that the rural women are aware of what the government is supposed to do to improve their socio-economic circumstances as prescribed in the RDF. Moreover, they were willing to participate in processes designed to improve their livelihoods.
- The socio-economic development strategies were not well communicated and coordinated amongst women in Thaba Nchu, hence there is misunderstanding of and misinformation about how the RDF operates and what its intended objectives, especially for women are.
- ❖ The researcher concludes that lack of proper communication and coordination of socio-economic policies such as the RDF, as well as RDF activities, create a sense of apathy and disillusionment amongst rural women because women end up not getting involved in the RDF processes and thus remain disempowered.
- The exclusion of women from ownership and direct management of projects reflect a lack of willingness from the government to empower and capacitate them to be self-reliant and socially and economically integrated in mainstream socio-economic development. Lack of adequate information about socio-economic development processes in their area further disempower women and perpetuate their dependency on grants. As they justifiably indicated, they do not want to depend on child support grants for the rest of their lives. Their involvement in short-term, income-generating projects as well as dependency on child support grants do not provide them with sustainable livelihoods.
- ❖ The researcher concludes that lack of commitment from government to ensure that RDF income generating projects were driven by women themselves so that they were empowered through the projects, is hampering their chances of standing on their own feet and driving their own development. Government does not take into account that the RDF objectives require rural women, in particular, to set their own agendas for their development and determine their

own destinies.

4.3 Recommendations

In accordance with the findings and conclusions discussed above, the researcher makes the following recommendations to address gaps and challenges identified through the findings, in order to enhance the rural women's socio-economic development within the context of the RDF. Recommendations regarding capacity building and empowerment strategies that could promote socio-economic opportunities for rural women in the context of the Rural Development Framework are also made.

- **Income generating projects by Thaba Nchu women**

It is important that proper mechanisms such as project planning, resource mobilisation and management strategies, as well as project coordination systems are put in place to extend the income-generating projects to longer periods - at least a period of twelve months, as against the prevailing maximum period of six months. Longer financial relief would benefit Thaba Nchu women more effectively and would promote sustainable livelihoods. Women would also be better empowered through acquiring on the job training, and skills such as business and financial management.

There is also a need for the relevant authorities at local and provincial government levels to establish proper project monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure that project objectives yield sustainable outcomes. Officials facilitating monitoring and evaluation systems should also be trained to report accurately and appropriately.

As part of the monitoring and evaluation systems, it is critical that a concerted effort be applied by the authorities in partnership with the women in Thaba Nchu to draw valuable lessons from the positive changes that the RDF projects have brought about in the lives of the people. This would influence government's planning to improve on these projects, as well as its future planning to deal with existing gaps.

- **Capacity building and empowerment strategies that could promote socio-economic development for rural women in the context of the Rural Development Framework**

Capacity building and empowerment strategies that could promote socio-economic development for rural women in the context of the Rural Development Framework should address what women identified as their RDF needs, expectations and gaps as well as the shortcomings of the socio-economic projects that they were involved in. The strategies can be classified as follows:

- ✓ **Strengthen access to business opportunities and collaborations**

Access to business opportunities for rural women is fundamental in helping them create their own income and so break the cycle of their poverty, ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

Women in Thaba Nchu have expressed their interest in and gratitude for their involvement in the cooperatives that are supplying schools with groceries for the school nutrition programme. The disadvantages of these cooperatives were that they are rotational and only short-term. For the system to benefit women more effectively, it is recommended that the government review this approach by extending the rotation period to at least a year. On the positive side, women participated in paving, tiling and brick laying projects and so acquired useful skills, even though they did not receive certificates for these. Given the failing and collapsing RDF projects identified in the research findings, it is strategic that the government prioritises women to participate in tendering for projects such as road construction, erecting toilets and building houses. It is thus recommended that the women who participate in such projects be assisted with establishing cooperatives or close collaborations so that in future such projects, contracts and tenders are awarded to them instead of unknown contractors. In this way they would be further empowered to establish and run their own businesses.

- ✓ **Involving women in communication and participation structures**

Both the local government and tribal authorities have a responsibility to improve how they relate, engage and generally communicate with women at community level. As articulated in the RDF, community participation and empowerment through relevant

structures are key in realising the objectives of the RDF. The government should ensure that communication with women and rural communities in general is facilitated through democratically established community representative structures such as tribal committees. Community meetings should be regularly coordinated so that women can voice their opinions and participate in the decision making processes involving the implementation of the RDF objectives, especially the projects taking place in their villages. Through these processes and systems, identified needs and expectations by Thaba Nchu women can be considered by RDF implementers as important areas that need urgent attention. There is a critical need for robust discussion and planning to take place beyond the local and tribal authorities to address the gaps identified by the participants, namely infrastructural development such as roads; inner city development which is an urban and spatial planning department's competency, as well as job opportunities. These gaps are core to the women's socio-economic development and serve as good pointers towards engaging women in Thaba Nchu in future long term development areas at a macro level. Some of these gaps are not necessarily within the competence of the local and tribal authorities and should therefore be escalated to the provincial tier of government. In essence, it is critical that the RDF give women a voice in order to enhance their livelihoods and uplift the quality of their lives.

✓ **Training in business skills**

To enable women to fully participate and benefit from socio-economic strategies, the RDF should build their capacity to earn a living by providing them with relevant training skills. These skills should cover business, marketing and financial management skills. This would empower the women to be self-reliant and take charge of their socio-economic destinies. They would also be better able to establish their own cooperatives and collaborations.

• **Reviewing the RDF**

The RDF is a ground breaking rural development policy that, if well implemented, has huge potential to break the cycle of poverty amongst rural women significantly. Its shortcoming, however, is that it does not provide guidelines for minimum implementation norms and standards that would act as control measures for monitoring and evaluation systems. The fact that, as findings revealed, authorities

charged with the facilitation of the RDF activities did as they pleased and could use their party political powers to manipulate vulnerable women in Thaba Nchu, provides good reason for the government to pay attention to developing and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation systems in order to ensure that the RDF yields the intended results.

There is therefore a need to revisit and review the RDF in order to enhance the impact on women's socio-economic development. The emphasis should fall in the area of stipulating the minimum and basic socio-economic development norms and standards. This would be a good foundation for sustainable monitoring and evaluation systems.

- **Opportunities for further research**

The researcher recommends the following topics for further research:

- ✓ Exploring the impact of effective capacity building and empowerment strategies that would improve the lives of rural women long term in order to break the vicious circle of poverty.
- ✓ Further exploring the factors that cause projects to fail, terminate prematurely and collapse. This would inform proper intervention strategies to resolve problems and sustain these projects.
- ✓ Determining the impact of integrating rural women in the planning, facilitation, management, monitoring and evaluation of RDF activities.

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Appendix A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Goal of the study: To determine the impact of the Rural Development Framework (RDF) on women's socio-economic development in Thaba Nchu.

SECTION A

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1. AGE

30 – 35yrs	36 – 40yrs	41 – 45yrs	45 - 49yrs	50+

2. MARITAL STATUS

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	Live in partner	Customary marriage

3. Number of dependents

3.1 Age of dependents

0-3 yrs	4-6 yrs	7-11 yrs	12-18 yrs	18+yrs

4. Educational Background

4.1 Highest standard passed

Primary school standard	High school standard

5. EMPLOYMENT

5.1 What type of job are you doing?

5.2 How many people in your family have a job?

5.3 What is the total monthly income of your family?

(R) 0 – 1000/Month	1001 - 2500	2500 +

SECTION B

SOCIO - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. What income generating projects are there in your community?
2. Where did you hear about them?
3. In which income generating projects are you participating?
4. When did you start participating in these projects?
5. How did your participation in these projects change your life in terms of
 - 5.1 Birth control rights and family planning?
 - 5.2 Customary law rights?
 - 5.3 Land rights?
 - 5.4 Access to financial assistance?
6. What kind of resources have the government made available for the projects?
7. How did your participation in these projects change your life with regard to:
 - 7.1 Access to education for you and your children?
 - 7.2 Access to adequate water and sanitation?
 - 7.3 Health services?
 - 7.4 Food security?
 - 7.4 Housing?
 - 7.5 Household income?

8. What are your needs and expectations from the RDF in your community?
9. To what extent does the RDF help you to meet these needs and expectations?
10. What strategies does the RDF use to build your capacity and create empowerment opportunities for you to enhance your socio-economic development?
11. What in your view are the gaps in the RDF that might influence the socio-economic development of women in Thaba Nchu?
12. In future, what socio economic development activities and projects would you suggest and recommend for the RDF to meet your needs and expectations?

Appendix B

ETHICAL CLEARANCE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

26 May 2014

Dear Prof Lombard

Project: The impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio-economic development of women: a Thaba Nchu case study
Researcher: BMD Ramaphakela
Supervisor: Prof A Lombard
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference number: 28434298

Thank you for your response to the Committee's correspondence of 4 September 2013.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 23 May 2014. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof. Karen Harris
Acting Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: karen.harris@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Dr L Blek and Prof M-H Coetzee, Dr JEH Brooker, Prof KL Harris/Acting Chair, Ms H Klopper, Dr C Rancheo-Warrent, Dr C Pulling II, Prof GM Spies, Dr Y Sines, Prof E Tsjani, Dr P Wood

Appendix C

TRIBAL AUTHORITY PERMISSION LETTER

Station Road
Ratiou Location
Thaba Nchu
9780

☎ - 051 875 2509
☎ - 051 875 2652



Private Bag X4
Ga-Rapulana
9775

✉ - barolongbooseleka@gmail.com
Fax to e-mail – 086 269 2449

BAROLONG BOKO SELEKA • TRADITIONAL COUNCIL • BAROLONG BOKO SELEKA

Dear Prof Lombard

Your letter dated 4 September 2013 has reference.

This serves to confirm that Ramaphakela BMD, has been granted permission to conduct her said research on the impact of the Rural Development Framework on the Socio economic development of women: A Thaba Nchu case study.

The aforesaid traditional Council will assist her without any reservation.

Yours in Community Development

M. Setlogelo

Chairperson

Date: 04/04/2013

Chairperson: Mr M. Setlogelo

Secretary: M.E. Sehume

Appendix D

PERMISSION LETTER – FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



agriculture & rural development

Department of
Agriculture and Rural Development
FREE STATE PROVINCE

Enq: GV Mambo
Tel: 0518618420
Ref: student/01/04

Me M Ramaphakela
Student: University Of Pretoria
Via email: mamikir@mail.nqa.za

Dear Ms. Ramapakela

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK ON THE SOCIO- DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN: A THABA NCHU CASE STUDY.

It is my pleasure to inform you that your request to conduct research study on the impact of Rural Development Framework on the socio development of women in Thaba Nchu has been granted by the Department.

We believe by granting you this opportunity it will not only enable you to finish your studies but will also allow you to give back to the community hopefully sparking other young people to want to do the same.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. MP Thabethe
HOD: Agriculture and Rural Development
Date: 04/04/2014

OFFICE OF THE HOD
Private Bag 202, Bloemfontein, 9301
Glen, 1st Floor, Room 217, Bloemfontein
Tel: (051) 851 8500 Fax: (051) 851 8452
E-mail: ps.hodagr@fs.agric.za

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Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT - PARTICIPANT



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Social Work & Criminology

08/05/2013

Researcher: Ms B Ramaphakela
Tel: 011 484 1928
Cell phone: 0829711198
Email address: mamikir@mail.ngo.za

INFORMED CONSENT

1. TITLE OF THE STUDY

The impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio-economic development of women: A Thaba Nchu case study

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of the Rural Development Framework on women's socio economic development in Thaba Nchu.

3. PROCEDURES

You will be requested to participate in a focus group interview with the researcher and other participants. The study will be done in two villages and in total the researcher will conduct 4 focus group interviews over a period of two weeks. The discussion will be guided by a semi-structured interview schedule. The focus group interview will take place between one and a half and two (2) hours.

4. RISKS

There are no risks anticipated while the study is conducted.

5. BENEFITS

There will be no direct compensation or incentives, either monetary or otherwise, directly or indirectly for your participation in the study.

6. PARTICIPANTS' RIGHTS

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants have the right to withdraw their participation at any time during the study if they so wish without being subjected to any negative consequences.

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University of Pretoria
PRETORIA 0002
Republic of South Africa

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7. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information participants will provide for this study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. Your name or any personal information will only be known to the researcher and will not be indicated in the research report or any other publication. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the video recording. After the completion of the research study the tapes and the other research data will be stored for fifteen years at the Department of Social Work and Criminology after which it will be destroyed. The research data will not be used for any other research purpose without your informed consent.

8. RIGHT OF ACCESS TO THE RESEARCHER

You have the right to contact the researcher to clarify any uncertainties about the research or if you have any doubts about participating in the study. You can contact the researcher telephonically either at 011 484 1928 or 0829711198, or e-mail her at mamikir@mail.ngo.za

I understand what the study is about and why and how it will be conducted. I give voluntary consent to participate in the study.

.....

Signature of Participant

.....

Date

.....

Signature of Researcher

.....

Date

Appendix F

INFORMED CONSENT – RESEARCH ASSISTANT



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Social Work & Criminology

02/08/2014

Researcher: Ms B Ramaphakela

Tel: 011 484 1928

Cell phone: 0829711198

Email address: mamikir@mail.ngo.za

INFORMED CONSENT

1. TITLE OF THE STUDY

The impact of the Rural Development Framework on the socio-economic development of women: A Thaba Nchu case study

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of the Rural Development Framework on women's socio economic development in Thaba Nchu.

3. PROCEDURES

You are requested to assist in the facilitation of focus group interviews with the researcher. The study will be done in two villages and in total the researcher will conduct 5 focus group interviews over a period of two weeks. The discussion will be guided by a semi-structured interview schedule. The focus group interview will take place between one hour and a half (1.5 hours) and two (2) hours. Your role will be to help in keeping order during the interviews as well as voice recordings and taking notes.

4. RISKS

There are no risks anticipated while the study is conducted.

5. BENEFITS

There will be no direct compensation or incentives, either monetary or otherwise, directly or indirectly for your assistance in the study.

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6. ASSISTANT'S RIGHTS

Your assistance in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your involvement at any time during the study if you so wish without being subjected to any negative consequences.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

All information participants will provide for this study will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and anonymity. Their names or any personal information will only be known to the researcher and yourself and cannot be divulged to anyone.

RIGHT OF ACCESS TO THE RESEARCHER

I understand what the study is about and why and how I will be involved. I give voluntary consent to assist in the study.

.....

Signature of Assistant

.....

Date

.....

Signature of Researcher

.....