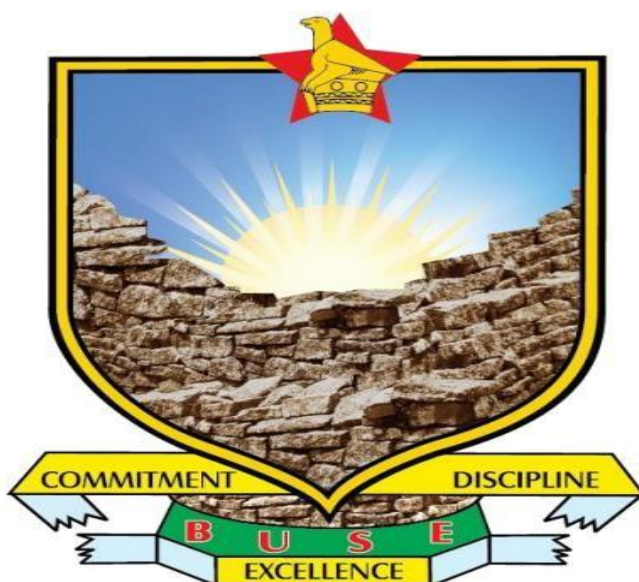


BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES



**The Impact Of Food Assistance Programmes On Food Security On Women Headed
Households In Mabvuku Surburb**

By

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(B211253B)

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Peace and Governance in Partial
Fulfilment the Requirements for the Bachelor of Science Honours Degree in Peace and
Governance**

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ABSTRACT

The project focuses on the impact of Food Assistant Programmes on food security of women headed households, in Mabvuku suburb. The intention of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of the food assistant programmes vis-à-vis food security of women headed households in Mabvuku. The study was conducted in Mabvuku, Harare, covering the period of 2020-2024. The researcher selected Mabvuku, because she resides in the area and she witnessed the plight of women headed households. This research adopted a qualitative research technique, where questionnaires and interviews were used in collecting data. In the study, the sample comprised of 43 participants. There were 40 women who were leaders of female-headed households and 3 key informants. Thematic analysis was used in analysing the data. The study was conducted over a one-year period. The findings indicate that several food assistance programmes have been implemented in Mabvuku suburb, specifically targeting women-headed households such as direct food distribution, cash transfers, and food vouchers. The study outlined that direct food distribution initiatives provided essential staples such as maize meal, beans, and cooking oil. The study concluded that food assistance programmes significantly impact food security for women-headed households in Mabvuku suburb. The study concluded that these initiatives have substantially improved their access to nutritious food, reducing instances of hunger and malnutrition within their families. The direct provision of food staples through distribution programmes ensured that households had a reliable source of essential food items. The study recommended that the Ministry of Women Affairs should improve transparency in distribution, so as to establish clear and transparent criteria for aid distribution. The study further recommends that NGOs should also enhance programme awareness and accessibility. The aim is to increase awareness of available programmes through community outreach effort

DECLARATION FORM

I, Kundai Rasayi (B211253B), hereby certify that this dissertation is the product of my own independent research and analysis, except where due acknowledgment is made in the references and acknowledgements. I further confirm that that this work has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other institutions.

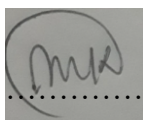


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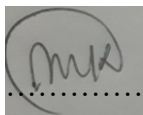


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Supervisor's Signature

Date



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Chairperson's Signature

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mother, Naume Zinyuku, whose unwavering love, sacrifices, and encouragement have been my greatest source of strength. Your endless support, both emotionally and intellectually, has guided me through every challenge and triumph in this journey. Your faith in me, even in the moments when I doubted myself, has been a beacon of inspiration. I am forever grateful for your wisdom, patience, and the values you have instilled in me. This achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

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I extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor for their invaluable guidance, patience, and encouragement throughout this research. Your insightful feedback and unwavering support have been instrumental in shaping my work. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to Bindura University of Science Education for providing with the platform to conduct this research.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCT-Conditional Cash Transfer

GBV- Gender-Based Violence

FAPs – Food Assistance Programmes

FAO-Food and Agriculture Organisation

FFA-Food Assistance for Assets

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

RDP-Rural Development Programme

SADC-Southern African Development Community

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

PDS-Public Distribution System

PSND-Productive Safety Net Programme

SNAP-Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme

VGD-Vulnerable Group Development

WAG-Women Action Group

WFP – World Food Programme

WHH – Women Headed Households

ZANU PF- Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLES

Table 4.1 Response Rate of Participants	56
Table 4.2 Number of Children in the household	58
Table 4.3 Monthly income of Participants	60

FIGURES

Figure 4.1 Age of Participants	57
Figure 4.2 Marital Status of Participants	58
Figure 4.3 Education Level of Participants	59
Figure 4.4 Employment Status of Participants	60
Figure 4.5 Food Assistance Programmes for Women Headed Households	62
Figure 4.6 Impact of food assistance programmes	66
Figure 4.7 Challenges in the Implementation of Food Assistance Programmes	71

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
DECLARATION FORM	3
DEDICATION	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	6
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	7
CHAPTER ONE	11
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	11
1.1 Background of the study	11
1.2 Purpose of the Study	13
1.3 Statement of the Problem.....	13
1.4 Research Objectives.....	14
1.5 Research Questions	14
1.7 Significance of the Study.....	15
1.6 Assumptions of the Study	15
1.8 Delimitations of the Study	17
1.9 Limitations of the Study.....	17
1.10 Definition of Keywords	18
1.11 Dissertation Outline	18
CHAPTER TWO	20
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	20
2.1 Introduction.....	20
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	20
2.2.1 Systems theory	20
2.2.2 Food Security Model.....	22
2.3 Food Security.....	23
2.4 Concept of Food Insecurity.....	24
2.4.1 Dimensions of Food Insecurity	26
2.5 Causes of Food Insecurity.....	26
2.6 Effects of Food Insecurity.....	32

2.7 Women Headed Households.....	35
2.7.1 Characteristics of Women-Headed Household.....	36
2.8 Food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households	37
2.8.1 Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes	37
2.8.2 Women's Empowerment through Food Assistance	38
2.8.3 Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Programmes	39
2.8.4 Direct Food Distribution	39
2.9 The impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households.....	40
2.9.1 Increased Food Availability	40
2.9.2 Economic Empowerment.....	41
2.9.3 Nutritional Improvements.....	42
2.9.4 Reduction in Poverty.....	42
2.9.5 Resilience to Shocks	42
2.9.6 Empowerment through Economic Stability.....	43
2.10 The challenges faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households.....	43
2.10.1 Access and Stigma	43
2.10.2 Cultural Norms.....	44
2.10.3 Economic Instability	44
2.10.4 Corruption and Mismanagement.....	45
2.10.5 Resilience to Shocks	46
2.11 Summary	46
CHAPTER THREE	47
3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	47
3.1 Introduction.....	47
3.2 Research Philosophy.....	47
3.3 Research Methodology	48
3.4 Research Design.....	48
3.5 Study Population and Sample	49
3.6 Purposive Sampling methods.....	49
3.7 Data Collection Methods	50
3.7.1 Key Informative Interviews	50
3.7.3 Secondary Data	52
3.8 Validity and Reliability.....	52

3.9 Data Presentation and Analysis	53
3.10 Pilot Testing	53
3.11 Ethical Considerations	53
3.12 Summary	54
CHAPTER FOUR	55
4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	55
4.1 Introduction.....	55
4.2 Response Rate	55
4.3 SECTION A: Biographic Information of Participants.....	56
Figure 4.1 Age	56
Figure 4:2 Marital Status	57
Figure 4:3 Level of Education	58
Figure 4:4 Employment status	59
4. 4 SECTION B: Food Assistance Programmes for Women Headed Household	61
4.5 SECTION C; The Impact of Food Assistance Programmes.....	65
Figure 4:5.1 Impact of Food Assistance Programmes	65
4:6 SECTION D Challenges in the implementation of Food Assistance Programmes.....	71
4.7 Summary	75
CHAPTER FIVE	77
5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.....	77
5.1 Introduction.....	77
5.2 Summary	77
5.3 Conclusions.....	81
5.4 Recommendations.....	83
5.5 Areas for further research	84
References.....	85
Appendices.....	95

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Globally, there are various initiatives aimed at giving food assistance to women headed households. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2022), highlighted that approximately 811 million people worldwide were experiencing hunger, with women and children disproportionately affected. Food assistance programmes are designed to alleviate hunger and improve food security by increasing food availability for women-headed households in vulnerable populations. These programmes can take various forms, including direct food distribution, cash transfers, and food vouchers. Globally, these initiatives have shown significant effects on food availability. In 2020, World Food Programme (WFP) reached 115 million people in 84 countries, significantly enhancing food availability in conflict-affected and women headed household benefited World Food Organisation (WFO 2022).

In Africa, there are also food assistance programmes that are dedicated to supporting women-headed households and addressing food security challenges on the continent (Thome et al., 2022). For example, Women for Women International operates in countries like Nigeria, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, providing women with training in business skills, vocational skills, and access to microfinance opportunities to improve their economic stability and food security (Women for Women International, 2024). Action Aid is another organisation working across several African countries, advocating for women's rights, promoting gender equality, and supporting women in accessing resources for sustainable livelihoods (Moghadam, 2020). Additionally, Oxfam has programmes in various African

countries focusing on agriculture, sustainable food production, and women's empowerment to enhance food security in female-headed households (Moghadam, 2020). These organisations help women-headed households to access critical support and resources to overcome challenges and improve their food security outcomes. Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia provides food or cash transfers to food-insecure households in exchange for community service. This programme has improved food availability for millions, leading to a 40% reduction in food insecurity among participants (International Food Policy Research Institute 2022)

Moghadam, (2020) argued that food assistance programmes in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) aims to address food security and improve nutrition among women headed households. These programmes often involve a combination of direct food aid, cash transfers and support for Agriculture development. In Mozambique the World Food Programme (WFP) implemented School feeding Programmes providing meals to children in schools to improve nutrition and to encourage attendance (WFP 2021). Integrated Rural Development Programme (RDP) in South Africa was focusing on improving food security in rural areas through Agriculture development and support of women headed households' farmers. The programme includes training, infrastructure development and access to markets for local produce. The World Food Programme (WFP) in Malawi gave cash transfer programmes to help women headed households and other essential items (WFP 2021)

In Zimbabwe, food assistance programmes have been pivotal in fostering economic empowerment, especially for women-headed households. There are various assistance programmes that are dedicated to supporting women-headed households and one prominent

organisation is Women's Action Group (WAG), which focuses on women's rights advocacy and empowerment programmes (Gandidzanwa & Togo, 2020). World Food Programme (WFP) operates in Zimbabwe, providing food assistance, nutrition programmes, and it provides food assistance and cash transfers to vulnerable households in places like Epworth and Mabvuku peri-urban settlement (Gandidzanwa & Togo, 2020). The Food for Assets (FFA) Programme in Zimbabwe not only provides immediate food relief but also allows participants to work on projects that improve community infrastructure. Food assistance programmes in Zimbabwe play a crucial role in supporting household food security, especially for women-headed households. However, several challenges hinder their effectiveness. Not all vulnerable households receive assistance due to insufficient resources or logistical challenges in reaching remote areas (Gandidzanwa & Togo, 2020). Rigid eligibility requirements can exclude some women-headed households who are in need but do not meet specific criteria. Gender norms can restrict women's ability to access programmes or make decisions about food resources, impacting their food security (Bayu, 2021). This study, therefore, will be meant to investigate the impact of food assistance programmes on household food security on women headed households in Mabvuku suburb.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of food assistance programmes on household food security on women headed households in Mabvuku suburb.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Women headed households often face unique barriers, such as economic marginalization, limited access to resources, and social stigmas which exacerbate their vulnerability to food insecurity. UN (2023) highlighted that 85% of women headed household in Zimbabwe are on the verge of starvation, which makes the food assistance programmes

important. The economy of Zimbabwe has been characterized by a multicurrency situation with a run-away inflation rate of 57.5% and a high unemployment rate of 94%, which is exacerbating the food insecurity of women-headed households (FAO, 2023). Furthermore, economic challenges, including hyperinflation, lead to rising food prices, reducing the purchasing power of cash transfers and undermining food security. Due to food insecurity, women end up becoming vulnerable to vices such as gender-based violence, suicide and substance abuse.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To identify the food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households that have been implemented in Mabvuku Suburb
2. To analyse the impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.
3. To ascertain the challenges and barrier faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households that have been implemented in Mabvuku Suburb?
2. What is the impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb?
3. What are the challenges and barrier faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb?

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The assumptions of the study included the following;

1. The study assumes that participation in Food assistance Programmes positively impacts the food security status of women headed households.
2. The study assumes that socio economic factors, such as income level, education and employment status, influence the effectiveness of food assistance programmes on food security outcomes.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Ministry of women Affairs Community, Small and Medium and Enterprises Development

This study was focused on women headed households which falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Women Affairs and small and medium enterprises. This study is likely to provide policymakers at the ministry with important insights into the effectiveness of food assistance programmes in addressing the needs of women headed households in Mabvuku suburb. For example, the Ministry of Women Affairs is responsible for empowering vulnerable women, in this regard the findings are likely to help policymakers design and implement more targeted interventions to improve food security outcomes for women headed households.

Women headed households

The study sought to identify the food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households that have been implemented in Mabvuku Suburb. By so doing, this

research was able to fish out the challenges of food security faced by women-headed households. In this regard these challenges faced by women headed household will likely help NGOs and government to come up with sustainable solutions to solve their problems.

Non-Governmental Organisations

The research may have revealed gaps in existing Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) assistance programmes or approaches that are not adequately addressing challenges such as economic empowerment or social barriers. NGOs such as Women's Action Group (WAG), which focuses on women's rights advocacy, gender equality, and empowerment programmes, can use these insights to modify their strategies and interventions accordingly. For community members, particularly those in women-headed households, this research has the potential to give voice to their experiences and shed light on the daily struggles with food insecurity. The recommended solutions may help community organisations develop programmes that better support women's needs and empower them to achieve food security. Understanding the impact of food assistance programmes can inform policy decisions and improve the design and implementation of these programmes, ultimately enhancing food security for vulnerable populations.

Academics

The study sought to fill the knowledge gap provided by various researchers with respect to the impact of food assistance programmes on household food security on women headed households, which exists generally in newspaper articles and reports, and some data which is not consolidated. The rising poverty levels in women-headed households was a turning point of this study and the findings were likely to be an eye opener and broadened the researchers'

theoretical and conceptual understanding of the impact of food assistance programmes on household food security on women headed households. The research sought to assess the impact of food assistance programmes on household food security on women headed households, and to redress unsupported claims so as to proffer solutions. The Bindura University of Science Education will likely to benefit from this research as it adds to the body of knowledge on the food security challenges faced by women-headed households in Zimbabwe.

1.8 Delimitations of the Study

The study was focused on the impact of food assistance programmes on household food security on women headed households in Mabvuku suburb. The study focused on only the period ranging from 2020-2024. The study also focused on one locality as the focal area which is Mabvuku Suburbs found in Harare as part of delimitation although there are some suburbs which have similar issues which can be researched. The study was confined to only women headed households in Mabvuku. In its methodology, the study was confined to a qualitative approach. Also, the food assistance programmes are not only done to women headed households they are also done to other vulnerable groups in local communities which can be another area of study which was not covered by this study.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

The research faced challenges in locating women headed households in Mabvuku. There was possible inherent of biases in the study, which could have affected the validity and generalisability of the findings and to counter this, the researcher managed to gain documented information from Ministry of Women Affairs and Department of Social Welfare. The research faced another challenge of unwillingness to participate by other participants and to counter this,

the researcher gained consent from the participants and to uphold the ethics such as confidentiality.

1.10 Definition of Keywords

Women-headed households are defined as households where a woman is the primary provider and decision-maker (Klein, 2015).

Economic empowerment is increasing women's real power over economic decisions that influence their lives and priorities in society (Bayu, 2021).

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (World Food Summit 1996)

Gender inequality is differential treatment of individuals based on their gender, and social perceptions and expectations based on whether one is male or female (Peters, 2020).

Livelihoods are the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living (Moghadam, 2020).

1.11 Dissertation Outline

This study was focused on the impact of food assistance programmes on household food security on women headed households in Mabvuku suburb. The dissertation was crafted in form of 5 chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction

The first chapter, provided an introduction to the study highlighting all important aspects of the study and what it seeks to tackle. Chapter 1 also provided the problem statement that offered a trajectory to the study. This chapter further, highlighted research objectives and questions, which were the corner stone of this study.

Chapter two: Literature Review and Theoretical framework

Chapter 2 presented reviewed literature, which was in line with the topic under study. The chapter further captures the theoretical framework, which influenced the study. All the literature that was in line with the objectives of the study, were reviewed under this chapter.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter 3, provided the research design and methodology. This chapter also captured the targeted population which was the focus of the study. This chapter further outlines the tools for gathering data and the sampling techniques that were used during gathering data. Chapter 3 also secured ethical consideration that were pertinent to the study.

Chapter Four: Data presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings

Chapter 4 presented the findings as well as the analysis of the study. The presentation of data under this chapter was gathered by the research instruments presented in chapter 3. The presentation of data was aligned with research objectives of the study. All the research questions are answered under this chapter.

Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations, and Areas for further research

The last section of the dissertation is Chapter 5. This chapter presented the research conclusions and summary. Chapter 5 also secured recommendations and further studies

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature and theoretical frameworks to understand the impact of food assistance programmes on food security among women-headed households in Mabvuku, Zimbabwe. Systems theory and Food security model were used as theories which influenced this study. Key concepts related to food insecurity are defined, specifically focusing on the dimensions of availability, accessibility, utilization and stability. An overview of women-headed households is presented, highlighting their unique vulnerabilities to food insecurity. Several food assistance programmes targeting this demographic are described, as well as their potential impacts and challenges. The chapter establishes the necessary context on food security, food assistance interventions, and the study population to inform further research on this topic.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is influenced by Systems theory and the Food security model.

2.2.1 Systems theory

Systems theory is an interdisciplinary approach that studies complex systems and their interactions within larger contexts (Beven, 2019). It emphasizes the interconnectedness of various components within a system and how changes in one part can affect the whole. In the context of food security, systems theory helps to analyze the intricate relationships between agricultural production, economic factors, social dynamics, and environmental conditions. The theory provides that all components of a system are interrelated. Changes in one area such as

agricultural practices, can impact others that is food availability and prices (Wilkinson, 2021).

This theory resonates with the topic under study in various ways. Systems theory to food security highlights the complexity of interactions among various factors affecting women-headed households in Mabvuku. Food assistance programmes, while providing immediate relief, can also foster long-term resilience and empowerment by addressing the interconnected components of food security. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for designing effective interventions that not only alleviate food insecurity but also promote sustainable development within the community.

In Mabvuku, a suburb characterized by high levels of poverty and food insecurity, particularly among women-headed households, food assistance programmes play a critical role in addressing immediate food needs. Food security in Mabvuku is influenced by several interconnected factors: The capacity of local farmers to produce food affects overall availability. Assistance programmes may enhance agricultural inputs or training. Furthermore, employment opportunities and income levels determine households' purchasing power for food. Assistance programmes can alleviate financial burdens. Women-headed households often rely on community support. Food assistance can strengthen social ties and networks, facilitating greater access to resources. Food assistance programmes can have multifaceted impacts in Mabvuku. For immediate time they provide direct food support, improving immediate food security. For long term drive, by integrating education on nutrition and sustainable practices, programmes can help households develop better food management skills. Assistance can empower women by reducing their workload and allowing them to engage in income-generating activities. The implementation of food assistance programmes can create positive feedback loops. Better access to food can lead to improved health and nutrition, which

in turn enhances productivity and economic opportunities for women. As households benefit from assistance, community cohesion may increase, leading to greater collective action and advocacy for further support.

2.2.2 Food Security Model

The food security framework is a conceptual model that outlines the various dimensions and components of food security. It serves as a guide for understanding how different factors influence food availability, access, utilization, and stability (Söderström, 2020). The framework encompasses various components such as food availability, which refers to the physical presence of food in a region, which can be influenced by agricultural production, imports, and food stocks. It encompasses both the quantity and quality of food produced and distributed. This model also strengthens the aspect of food access, which involves the ability of individuals and households to obtain sufficient food, which is influenced by economic resources, purchasing power, and social networks. Food access can be affected by factors such as income, food prices, and social inequality. Lappé, (2019) notes that aspect of food utilization, which refers to the proper use of food for nutritional purposes, including food safety, dietary diversity, and the knowledge of food preparation. Another key aspect of the model is stability which refers to the consistency of food availability, access, and utilization over time. It emphasizes the need to withstand shocks, such as economic downturns, natural disasters, and political instability. A stable food system is crucial for long-term food security, ensuring that individuals and communities can maintain access to food even in times of crisis.

The Food Security Framework provides a valuable lens for understanding the multifaceted impact of food assistance programmes on women-headed households in Mabvuku, Zimbabwe. By addressing availability, access, utilization, and stability, these

programmes can significantly enhance food security for vulnerable populations. The interplay of these components highlights the importance of comprehensive and integrated approaches to tackling food insecurity, particularly in contexts where women bear the brunt of economic and social challenges.

In Mabvuku, Zimbabwe, food assistance programmes are crucial for addressing the specific needs of women-headed households. Food assistance programmes often include direct food distribution or support for local agricultural initiatives. This can increase the quantity of food available to households, particularly in urban settings where access to fresh produce may be limited. Many women-headed households face economic barriers to accessing food. By providing food vouchers or direct assistance, these programmes enable households to purchase food items that they might otherwise be unable to afford, thereby improving economic access. Education and training components of food assistance programmes can teach women about nutrition, food preparation, and safe handling practices. This knowledge enhances the ability of households to utilize food effectively, leading to better health outcomes. Consistent support from food assistance programmes helps women-headed households withstand economic shocks. By ensuring a reliable food supply, these programmes can mitigate the impacts of unemployment, price fluctuations, or crises.

2.3 Food Security

Food security is a complex, multidimensional concept that encompasses availability, access, utilization, and stability dimensions (Olabiyi, 2022). At the most basic level, food security refers to access by all people at all times to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain an active and healthy life. Food availability addresses whether sufficient quantities of food are

consistently available on a national or regional level through production, stock, imports, or food aid. Variables like agricultural productivity and trade affect overall supply (Olabiyi, 2022). Food access looks at affordability and allocation of food at a household or individual level. It is determined by household income, expenditure, markets, and distribution. Allocation within the household is also crucial, especially for vulnerable groups. Ngamu (2022) asserts that food stability refers to continued access, impacted by sudden shocks or cyclical events. It measures ability to acquire food without major fall in quality or quantity consumed. Factors like unemployment, seasonality, conflict and climate risks affect stability. Ngamu (2022) further notes food security is affected by various factors. As an example, household income and poverty levels determine food security. In that regard, low or unstable incomes constrain people's ability to purchase nutritious food even when it's available. Food insecurity rises with poverty. Therefore, the study aims to investigate how women headed households are affected by food assistance programmes.

2.4 Concept of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is defined as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food (FAO 2021). It encompasses not only the lack of food but also the inability to obtain food that is nutritious and culturally appropriate. Food insecurity can lead to hunger, malnutrition, and a range of health issues, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly, and low-income families. Food insecurity is described as “limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways”. (American Dietetic Association 2023). Those individuals whose food intake decreases below their minimum calorie requirements are coming under the food insecure category, as well as the

person who is physically not fit, or have some disease due to the lack of food and hunger or unbalance diet. (FAO. 2021)". Thomas (2020) defines food insecurity as "Food insecurity exists when people do not have adequate physical, social or economic access to the sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

Phillips, (2020) argued that, according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), food insecurity falls into three types. Acute food insecurity is the most serious and happens when people face extreme hunger and malnutrition that quickly lead to death, such as during famines. Occasional food insecurity happens for a short time due to temporary situations like natural disasters or economic crisis. Chronic food insecurity is when people regularly do not get enough food to meet their daily needs over a long period. Food insecurity is a complex issue that affects different people in different ways. Women and children are especially vulnerable. Factors such as poverty, lack of education, gender inequality and overpopulation contribute to the problem. In areas with large populations, especially in rural communities, the limited availability of food often results in malnutrition among children. (Torero, 2021). Girls are more affected by food insecurity than boys because, in some cultures, boys are given food first due to beliefs about male superiority. A lack of knowledge among women about proper nutrition and breastfeeding also adds to the problem (Upadhyay & Palanivel, 2021). While poverty is a major cause of food insecurity in children, other issues also play a role, such as mothers physical or mental health, unstable housing, absence of parents, lack of financial support, substance abuse by the mother, and having immigrant parents (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2021). The leading cause of food insecurity in developing countries is the lack of purchasing power for food due to poverty. Africa has the highest proportion of food insecurity which

worsened since 1970 and the malnourished population remained in the 33-35 per cent range in Sub-Saharan Africa. Malnutrition is highest in central Africa with 40 per cent while the lowest in northern Africa with 4 per cent. (Mwaniki, 2021).

2.4.1 Dimensions of Food Insecurity

There are various dimensions of food insecurity. The first one is availability. This refers to the physical presence of food in a region, which can be influenced by agricultural production, food imports, and food distribution systems. For example, a drought can severely limit food availability in a region, leading to increased food prices and scarcity (Bayu, 2021). Access is another aspect of food insecurity. Access involves the economic and physical ability to obtain food. This can be affected by income levels, food prices, and the availability of food retailers. For instance, families living in food deserts areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food often experience higher levels of food insecurity (Barrett, 2020). Utilization is another dimension of food security. This dimension focuses on the nutritional quality of food and how well individuals can utilize the food they consume. Factors such as cooking knowledge, food safety, and dietary diversity play a crucial role here. For example, a household may have access to food but may not have the knowledge to prepare nutritious meals (Chakravarty, 2020). Stability is also another dimension of food insecurity. Stability refers to the consistency of food availability, access, and utilization over time. Households may experience temporary food insecurity due to economic downturns, natural disasters, or personal crises, such as job loss or illness (Bayu, 2021).

2.5 Causes of Food Insecurity

Food insecurity is both a cause and a consequence of violence, contributing to a vicious cycle or “conflict trap” (Moghadam, 2020). Food security is critical for political stability. It is

linked to increased risks of social unrest, such as protests, riots, communal violence, and even civil wars. In return, violent conflict worsens food insecurity, leading to malnutrition and sometimes famine. This cycle is most severe in countries with weak political systems and unstable markets (Collier et al ,2019. In many developing countries, poverty is the main reason people cannot access enough food. While global poverty has generally declined, Sub Saharan Africa continues to struggle. Without urgent action, the situation is expected to worsen. Since the 1970s, food insecurity in Africa has declined, with malnutrition levels in Sub Saharan Africa staying between 33% and 35%. The rate of malnutrition differs across the continent lowest in North Africa about 4% and highest in Central Africa around 40% (Mwaniki, 2021).

2.5.1 Population growth

Population growth significantly contributes to food insecurity in Africa through several interconnected mechanisms. As the population increases, the demand for food rises, often outpacing agricultural production capabilities. As Africa's population continues to grow projected to double from 1.3 billion today to about 2.5 billion by 2050 the demand for food will increase dramatically (UNICEF, 2020). This surge in population means that more food must be produced to meet the dietary needs of a larger number of people. Many countries, especially African countries face constraints in expanding agricultural land due to factors such as urbanization, land degradation, and climate change. As more land is converted for housing and infrastructure to accommodate growing populations, the area available for farming diminishes. This reduction in arable land exacerbates food insecurity, as there is less space to cultivate crops (FAO, 2019). Sub-Saharan Africa has some of the highest fertility rates in the world, with women averaging about 5.1 children. This high birth rate contributes to a rapidly growing population, which places additional pressure on food systems (WHO, 2020). Despite

some improvements in child mortality and life expectancy, the sheer number of births continues to challenge food security efforts. Population growth often exacerbates existing inequalities in resource distribution. In many regions, economic growth does not keep pace with population increases, leading to higher levels of poverty and food insecurity. Inequality can limit access to food, as wealthier individuals may hoard resources while poorer populations struggle to afford basic necessities. For example, as the most populous country in Africa, Nigeria faces significant food insecurity challenges. Despite its large population, agricultural production has not kept pace, leading to increased hunger and malnutrition among its citizens

2.5.2 Conflict and Political Instability

Food insecurity can be both a cause and consequence of conflict and political instability. The relationship between conflict and food security affects each other as food scarcity leads to market collapse (Porrit, 2021). As a result, food availability in the market decreases, which create greater havoc in public. Because of persistent conflicts and food insecurity millions of helpless people ready to migrate away from their homeland to a better place. These migrated people become a refugee in many countries. Sometimes the asylum country because of some reason is not able to fulfil the adequate support to the refugees, then again, the food insecurity arises in that particular place (IFPRI, 2019). Andersen and Shimokawa (2018) find that the population with poor health and nutrition are more responsible in the civil conflict in the food-insecure region.

Food security is most critical for political stability. It is related to increased risk of democratic failure, protests and rioting, communal violence and civil conflict. As a result, these conflicts create food insecurity, malnutrition and in some cases famine (Brinkman & Hendrix, 2021). In recent scenario, the major problem is human is the destroyer of the human being as

we have seen in the Syria and Yemen, where armed forces and rebels destroy the country which causes food insecurity and civil war. But after that, they also block the aids from the NGOs and international organizations. Elver, (2019) argued that "it is crucial that the international community understands that it is an international crime to intentionally block access to food, food aid, and to destroy the production of food."

2.5.3 Urbanisation

The world population will increase from 6.7 to 9.2 billion from 2007 to 2050 in the urban areas of less developed countries (United Nations, 2021) and FAO (2021) estimates that global food production should be increased up to 60 per cent by 2050 to meet population demands. According to Sova (2020), it is projected that around two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas. It shows an expected decline in the rural population, which means the population at worldwide will need to produce more food with fewer farmers to meet the growing caloric demands in cities. This adds to an already problematic task for the world's farmers side by side, the agricultural land is decreased by the expansion of urban settlements (Matuschke & Kohler, 2020). It displays that the agriculturally productive land should be limited up to less attractive locations (Matuschke, 2019). In developing countries, urban growth and the growing number of megacities indicate that more food is available to the people who live in an environment that has traditionally been supposed as inappropriate for agriculture (Szabo, 2020).

2.5.4 Climate change

It leaves a deep impression on food security in different ways. It affects the crops, livestock, forestry, fisheries, and aquaculture (Shakeel, 2021). Thus, climate change indirectly affects the socio-economic conditions of people through agriculture, market effects, among others. The social and economic disturbance is observed with the changes in agricultural incomes, food markets, prices and trade patterns, and investment patterns. At the farm level, they can reduce revenues. They can influence physical capital and force farmers to sell productive capital, for instance, cattle, field, to absorb income shocks (World Food Programme, 2020). As a result, farmers become poorer and lack the strength and resources to invest in their work. This situation negatively affects their daily lives, making it hard to afford basic needs like healthcare, education and a decent standard of living (FAO, 2020).

Environmental changes, such as droughts and floods, can disrupt food production and supply chains. These disruptions can lead to food shortages and increased prices, exacerbating food insecurity. Events like hurricanes and earthquakes can destroy agricultural infrastructure and displace communities, leading to immediate food shortages (FAO, 2020). Natural disasters such as drought, floods, tropical cyclones, hurricanes, earthquakes and disease cause food unavailability and therefore food insecurity. These disasters have driven vulnerable groups of people near the poverty line in many parts of the world. Drought and other climatic extremes are major factors contributing to vulnerability to food insecurity, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP 2020).

Climate change negatively affects access to clean water and sanitation , which can lead to diseases like diarrhea that interfere with the body's ability to absorb nutrients. It also increases the spread of vector borne diseases, reducing people's ability to benefit from the food

they eat and lowering productivity due to illness (Zewdie, 2021). The impact of climate change on food security results from both the climate changes themselves and the weakness in food systems. These impacts move through different levels from environmental to economic, social and finally to household food security (Verchot, 2021). More frequent and intense droughts and floods threaten the stability of food production, both locally and globally (FAO, 2020). These conditions may also increase food crises, especially where conflict, migration and competition for limited resource are present.

2.5.5 The financialisation of food

Financialisation of food refers to the increasingly significant role played by financial markets in the agri-food sector (Clapp, 2020). The financialisation process affected food systems in recent decades and financial actors, markets and motivations play a more significant role in society, and in all sectors of the economy (Epstein, 2019). Food is being used as a commodity in international markets by speculators. The sole purpose of these speculators is only to earn profits. They have no direct interest in the foodstuffs, and they only used them as a source of income. Speculation is a valuable tool which is used for food price volatility. As many organisations assure that food is a human right and food cannot be used as a commodity for exploit. In November 2014, Pope Francis said that it is painful to see “the struggle against hunger and malnutrition hindered by market priorities, the primacy of profit, which reduce foodstuffs to a commodity like any other, subject to speculation and financial speculation in particular” (West 2019).

2.5.6. Poverty

Poverty is a significant driver of food insecurity in Africa, creating a cycle that perpetuates both conditions. Poor households often lack access to essential resources such as land, water, and capital needed for agricultural production (Gandidzanwa, 2022). In many rural areas, the majority of the population relies on subsistence farming, but poverty restricts their ability to invest in better farming techniques or inputs like seeds and fertilizers. For instance, in Ethiopia, a significant portion of farm households operates on less than 0.5 hectares of land, making it difficult to produce enough food for their families (Flecko, 2019). Poverty leads to low agricultural productivity due to inadequate investment in technology and infrastructure. Many farmers in Africa use traditional farming methods, which yield lower outputs compared to modern techniques. The lack of access to irrigation and improved crop varieties further exacerbates this issue. In the Horn of Africa, agricultural systems are characterized by low input and low output, resulting in widespread food insecurity. Poverty makes households more vulnerable to economic shocks, such as price increases for food and other essentials. When food prices rise, poor families often cannot afford to buy enough nutritious food, leading to malnutrition and hunger. In Sub-Saharan Africa, many people spend a large portion of their income on food, making them particularly susceptible to fluctuations in food prices (FAO,2021). For example, Ongoing conflicts and economic instability have resulted in high poverty rates, which directly contribute to food insecurity. Many people in Sudan rely on humanitarian aid to meet their basic food needs

2.6 Effects of Food Insecurity

The global food crises imperil the lives of millions of people in the most vulnerable communities, particularly in the countries where poverty, malnutrition and death from hunger are upswings day by day (FAO,2020). The combined effect of rising food prices and lack of

health care could be catastrophic for the poor. The countries, like India, experiencing constant food shortages and distribution problems leading to chronic and often widespread hunger amongst significant numbers of people. It effected on the social as well as economic well-being such as education, health, living of standard, behavioral challenges, among others in the society (WHO, 2020). Therefore, food insecurity enables malnutrition and leaves children weak, vulnerable, and less able to fight common childhood diseases like diarrhea, acute respiratory infections, malaria, and measles among others. Adolescents and adults also grieve adverse effects of food insecurity. Food insecurity can lead to low levels of energy, growth failure, delay in maturation, impaired cognitive ability, reduced capacity to learn, less ability to resist from infections and illnesses, reduced life expectancy, growth in maternal mortality, and low birth weight (FAO, 2021). The pressure of trying to secure food can disrupt household relationships, often resulting in negative emotions such as frustration, hopeless, and tension.

2.6.1 Poverty and Hunger

Poverty and food insecurity have a very close relationship. This view strongly stressed that food insecurity is a direct result of poverty. When you are hungry, you cannot do anything. As a result, you will continue to be poor and hungry. Hunger, poverty and disease are interlinked, with the contribution of hunger, the disease is generated. Hunger reduces the immunity against most diseases, and make prone to the illness (UNICEF,2021). Poor people often cannot produce or purchase enough food to eat and so are more vulnerable to disease.

2.6.2 Malnutrition

Limited access to food, especially nutritious options, contributes to different norms of malnutrition including undernutrition, overweight and obesity (Elver, 2019). Malnutrition raises the chances of low birth weight, stunted growth in children, and anemia among women of childbearing age. Food insecurity can lead to stunting,

wasting, and lack of essential nutrients in children by reducing the amount and quality of food they consume. A diet lacking in vital nutrients like vitamins, proteins, calories, and minerals can also hinder proper growth and minerals can also hinder proper growth and development during pregnancy, infancy and childhood (World Health Organization 2018). Undernutrition results in stunted growth, wasting, and increased susceptibility to diseases, particularly among children. In Africa, approximately 40% of children under five are affected by stunting due to malnutrition, which is a direct consequence of food insecurity (WHO,2019). Food insecurity contributes to the prevalence of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, as individuals may resort to cheaper, calorie-dense foods that lack essential nutrients

2.6.3 Depression

Food insecure people are very much prone to mental health problems. Poverty and mental health problems have a great linkage, basically emotional and psychological disorders (Griffin et al., 2022). The study presents three principal findings. First, after controlling for conventional socioeconomic and socio-demographic variables, food insufficiency increases the risk of depression and predicts this risk better than measures of low income, the primary source of income, and education. Second, the negative effect of food insufficiency is not attributable to social resources disparities, even though these resources significantly reduce the size of the impact. Generally, we have seen that the problem of depression through food insufficiency is stronger in women than men, but this study shows that single fathers face more depression than any other groups, including single mothers from the food insufficient households (Wu & Schimmele, 2021)

2.7 Women Headed Households

As stated by Yoosefi et al. (2020) women-headed household can be defined as a home where a woman assumes the role of the primary decision-maker and provider. This type of family structure arises due to circumstances such as divorce, separation, abandonment, death of a spouse or children's father (Yoosefi et al., 2020). Women-headed households have some distinguishing characteristics compared to male-headed or nuclear families. Primarily, the responsibility of earning incomes, caring for children and managing domestic duties falls predominantly on the female head of household (Yoosefi et al., 2020). Peters (2020) asserts that this triple burden can make them more vulnerable economically. In addition, they may lack the social support traditionally provided by male partners. For example, male relatives are less likely to assist with childcare, farming labor or financial contributions (Peters, 2020). This diminishes household resilience in times of hardship.

Also, in conservative societies, women household heads face greater stigma and obstacles accessing resources. Prevailing gender norms can undermine their decision-making authority within communities and limit livelihood opportunities (Sabri et al., 2021). Furthermore, the household composition tends to be larger, with more dependents relying on one primary earner. Children, elderly relatives or other family members may depend on the woman for food, healthcare, education and shelter. Food insecurity risks are heightened for women-headed households due to these socioeconomic vulnerabilities (Sabri et al., 2021). Targeted interventions are needed to empower them through skills training, social safety nets, financial inclusion and other measures that promote self-sufficiency and well-being. Understanding their lived realities and challenges is crucial.

2.7.1 Characteristics of Women-Headed Household

Women in these households are typically responsible for the financial support and well-being of their families (Klein, 2020). WHHs often face unique social challenges, including stigmatization and discrimination, particularly in patriarchal societies. The experiences of women-headed households can differ based on socio-economic status, cultural backgrounds, education levels, and access to resources. Women-headed households often experience higher rates of poverty compared to male-headed households. This economic vulnerability can limit their ability to afford sufficient and nutritious food (Bayu, 2021). Many women in these households work in low-wage or informal sectors, which can lead to unstable incomes. Economic instability directly correlates with food insecurity. In many cultures, women have less access to land ownership, agricultural inputs, and financial services. This limitation can hinder their ability to produce food or generate income, exacerbating food insecurity.

Bayu, (2021) argued that women-headed households may have lower levels of education and training related to agricultural practices and nutrition, impacting their ability to secure food effectively. Women-headed households may face social isolation, reducing their access to community support systems. This isolation can limit their knowledge of resources and assistance programs available to them. Strong social networks can provide support in times of need. However, women-headed households may struggle to build these networks due to stigma or economic pressures (Klein, 2020). Women are often responsible for food preparation and nutrition within the household. Limited resources can lead to poor dietary choices, affecting the health of family members, particularly children. Food insecurity can lead to malnutrition, which disproportionately affects women and children. Malnutrition can have long-term effects on physical and cognitive development. Women-headed households often

develop coping strategies, such as relying on community food banks, participating in food assistance programmes, or engaging in barter systems. These strategies are essential for managing food insecurity (Klein, 2020). Despite challenges, many women show resilience and agency in improving their circumstances. Empowerment programs aimed at women can enhance their ability to secure food and resources.

2.8 Food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households

2.8.1 Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes

Brown (2023) argued that families receive cash transfers conditioned on school attendance and health check-ups, which has led to increased household income and improved access to education and health services. This was also implemented in Kenya. The Kenya's Cash Transfer Programme, the Inua Jamii Programme provides cash transfers to vulnerable women headed households, stimulating local economies. Beneficiaries use the funds to invest in small businesses, leading to improved economic stability and empowerment. WFP (2022) indicated that participating households experienced a 15% increase in their income in Kenya. In Zimbabwe, the WFP's cash-based transfer programmes allow beneficiaries to purchase food locally, stimulating local markets. In Brazil, the Bolsa Familia programme has been instrumental in supporting women-headed households by providing monthly cash transfers to families living in poverty (Neves et al., 2022). This programme has not only helped to alleviate poverty but has also contributed to improving health and education outcomes for women and their families. By targeting women as the primary recipients of cash transfers, Bolsa Familia has empowered women to make informed decisions about their households' well-being and future (Neves et al., 2022). Cash transfer programmes play a crucial role in supporting women-headed households in developing countries, providing them with a vital lifeline to meet their basic needs and improve their socio-economic status (Neves et al., 2022). These programmes offer a sense of financial security and empowerment to women who often face heightened

vulnerabilities and barriers in accessing resources and opportunities. It has been suggested as a strategy to mitigate the effects of poverty in these households.

2.8.2 Women's Empowerment through Food Assistance

Food assistance programmes play a significant role in empowering women by addressing their nutritional needs, enhancing their economic opportunities, and promoting their overall well-being. These programmes not only provide essential sustenance but also offer women a pathway to greater independence, agency, and empowerment. The WFP's Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) programme encourages community development projects, such as irrigation systems and road construction (WFP, 2021). These projects create jobs and empower women, who often dominate the labor force in these initiatives. The Food for Assets (FFA) Programme in Zimbabwe not only provides immediate food relief but also allows participants to work on projects that improve community infrastructure. This dual approach has created employment opportunities and increased community resilience. WFP (2021) indicate that participants have seen a 30% increase in income-generating activities following their involvement in FFA projects. In India, the Public Distribution System (PDS) has been instrumental in supporting women's empowerment by ensuring access to subsidized food grains for vulnerable populations (Thomas & Chittedi, 2021). By targeting women as the primary beneficiaries and decision-makers in managing food distribution within households, the PDS has helped improve women's nutrition status, economic security, and social standing in their communities (Thomas & Chittedi, 2021). Furthermore, organisations like CARE International have implemented food assistance programmes that focus on women's empowerment through a gender-transformative approach (Brown, 2023). By addressing gender norms, increasing women's access to resources, and promoting their participation in decision-making processes related to food security and nutrition, CARE's programmes have catalyzed positive changes in women's lives and communities.

2.8.3 Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture Programmes

Nutrition-sensitive agriculture programme plays a critical role in addressing malnutrition and improving food security by integrating nutrition considerations into agricultural practices and policies. These programmes focus on enhancing the nutritional quality of food, promoting dietary diversity, and supporting smallholder farmers to ensure sustainable and healthy food production. Chimombe (2021) highlighted that programmes like the Zimbabwe Agricultural Input Support Programme provide farmers with seeds and fertilizers while incorporating nutrition education. This approach has led to improved crop yields and dietary diversity, with households reporting a 40% increase in the consumption of nutritious crops. Another example of a successful nutrition-sensitive agriculture programme is the Homestead Food Production Initiative in Bangladesh. Tumpa (2023) asserts that this programme promotes the cultivation of diverse food crops, backyard gardening, and livestock rearing to improve the dietary intake and nutritional status of vulnerable households. Integrating nutrition education and agricultural training, has helped increase dietary diversity and improving the overall health of participating communities (Tumpa, 2023). In Ethiopia, the Enhanced Homestead Food Production programme has demonstrated the impact of nutrition-sensitive agriculture interventions on improving household food security and nutrition outcomes (Jilo et al., 2021). By promoting the cultivation of nutrient-rich crops, supporting women farmers, and providing access to agricultural resources, the programme has contributed to reducing malnutrition and enhancing the resilience of rural communities in the face of food insecurity (Jilo et al., 2021).

2.8.4 Direct Food Distribution

Programmes that provide direct food aid, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) initiatives, ensure that women-headed households receive essential food items. For instance, during the 2019-2020 lean season, the WFP targeted vulnerable communities, providing food

assistance to over 1.1 million people, including many women-headed households (WFP 2021). This support directly increased the availability of staple foods, reducing immediate hunger. Food for Assets (FFA) Programme, in Zimbabwe enables communities to engage in public works projects while receiving food assistance. This programme has empowered women by allowing them to participate in income-generating activities. Reports indicate that women-headed households involved in the FFA programme experienced a 25% increase in food security due to improved community resources and enhanced agricultural production (WFP 2020)

2.9 The impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households

2.9.1 Increased Food Availability

Globally, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has been instrumental in providing food assistance to millions of people in crisis-affected regions around the world. By distributing food aid, implementing nutrition programmes, and supporting smallholder farmers, the WFP has helped increase food availability and ensure that those in need have access to essential nourishment. In addition, initiatives such as food banks, community kitchens, and school feeding programmes have also played a key role in increasing food availability for vulnerable populations (WFP, 2021). These programmes not only provide immediate relief but also contribute to building resilient food systems and addressing long-term food security challenges. Food assistance programmes provide direct food aid or financial support, improving the availability of food for women-headed households. For example, in Bangladesh, the Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme has significantly improved food security among women-headed households by providing food rations and skill development (White 2023). Increased access to a variety of foods leads to enhanced dietary quality. Women-headed households that participate in food assistance programmes show higher rates of

consuming balanced meals, which is critical for the growth and development of children. Hungwe (2023) noted that targeted food assistance can significantly reduce malnutrition, particularly among children. In Zimbabwe, programmes that provide fortified foods and nutritional support have been shown to decrease stunting and wasting rates among children in women-headed households.

2.9.2 Economic Empowerment

Cash transfer programmes, such as the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes in Mexico, have been shown to enhance food security by allowing households to spend on food according to their needs. Rodriguez (2023) argued that this programmes in Mexico have led to a 10% increase in household food consumption among participants, particularly benefiting women. When individuals and communities are economically empowered, they are better positioned to actively participate in the economy, generate income, and contribute to overall economic development (Surya et al., 2020). By providing individuals with the tools, resources, and opportunities to enhance their economic capabilities, economic empowerment programmes can have a significant impact on poverty reduction, wealth creation, and economic sustainability. Initiatives such as financial literacy training, access to credit and savings mechanisms, and entrepreneurship support can empower individuals to start businesses, create employment opportunities, and stimulate economic growth at the grassroots level (Surya et al., 2020). Furthermore, economic empowerment programmes can help bridge the gender gap in economic participation and empower marginalized groups to access economic opportunities (Rodriguez, 2023). By promoting inclusive economic growth and fostering entrepreneurship among underrepresented communities, these programmes contribute to a more equitable and thriving economy.

2.9.3 Nutritional Improvements

Chikozho, (2022) argued that access to diverse food options through food assistance programmes has led to improved dietary quality among women-headed households. Studies show that such households reported an increase in the consumption of fruits, vegetables, and proteins, which are critical for the health and well-being of family members. Food assistance programmes often include nutritional support. For instance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programme (SNAP) in the United States has helped improve dietary quality among low-income households, including those headed by women. SNAP Report (2022) highlighted that participation was associated with a 25% increase in the likelihood of consuming fruit and vegetables.

2.9.4 Reduction in Poverty

Dzvimbo, et al. (2022) highlights that understanding the impact of food assistance programmes on food security for women-headed households is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policy recommendations to improve their overall well-being and nutritional outcomes. Economic factors, such as lack of stable incomes and employment opportunities, create barriers for women to access nutritious food for themselves and their families (Dzvimbo, et al., 2022). By alleviating food insecurity, food assistance programmes can help reduce poverty rates. The World Bank estimates that cash-based food assistance can lift approximately 50 million people out of poverty each year, with a significant portion of beneficiaries being women-headed households (WB 2023).

2.9.5 Resilience to Shocks

Another advantage that has been cited in assistance programmes is that they provide social safety nets for women, headed households. For women-headed households, social safety nets such as cash transfer programmes, food assistance initiatives, and healthcare subsidies can

make a significant difference in ensuring their economic stability and social protection (Surya et al., 2021). By providing financial support, nutritional assistance, and access to healthcare services, these programmes help alleviate the burden of poverty and enhance the overall well-being of women and their families. Hungwe (2023) argued that women-headed households often face greater vulnerability to economic and climatic shocks. Food assistance programmes help build resilience by ensuring that these households have access to food during crises. For example, the Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZimVAC) reported that targeted food aid during drought years significantly mitigated food insecurity for women-led households, allowing them to maintain their livelihoods (Zim VAC 2022).

2.9.6 Empowerment through Economic Stability

Gandidzanwa & Togo, (2020) highlighted that by improving food availability, these programmes enhance the economic stability of women-headed households. Cash transfers and food assistance allow these women to allocate resources towards other essential needs, such as education and healthcare for their children, thereby fostering long-term household resilience. Empowered women are more likely to invest in their children's education and health. Studies indicate that women who control household resources tend to allocate a higher percentage of their income towards family nutrition and education, leading to improved long-term outcomes for children.

2.10 The challenges faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households

2.10.1 Access and Stigma

Many women-headed households face barriers in accessing assistance due to social stigmas or lack of information. In India studies show that only 30% of eligible women participate in food programmes due to these barriers (UNICEF, 2022). Social stigma can further exacerbate these challenges, leading to isolation and psychological distress. There are

certain negative stereotypes that are sometimes attributed to women headed households. Women sometimes also face limited access to resources, such as education and employment opportunities (Bayu, 2021). This can impede their ability to secure stable incomes and provide adequate food for their households. The lack of support systems, including social networks and government assistance programmes, can also leave women in female-headed households without the necessary resources and assistance to address their food security needs effectively (Bayu, 2021). Also, not all vulnerable households receive assistance due to insufficient resources or logistical challenges in reaching remote areas. Rigid eligibility requirements can exclude some women-headed households who are in need but do not meet specific criteria.

2.10.2 Cultural Norms

In some regions, cultural norms may prevent women from seeking help, affecting their food security status. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa, women may prioritize male household members in food distribution, limiting their own access. As stated by Peters (2020) one of the primary obstacles is cultural norms, as many women in female-headed households may face cultural challenges that limit their participation in food aid programmes. Women may face stigma when seeking assistance, particularly in patriarchal communities where men are traditionally seen as heads of households. Gender norms can restrict women's ability to access programmes or make decisions about food resources, impacting their food security.

2.10.3 Economic Instability

Economic challenges, including hyperinflation, lead to rising food prices, reducing the purchasing power of cash transfers and undermining food security. Women-headed households may struggle to access local food markets due to transportation costs or lack of infrastructure. As stated by Hungwe (2023) women-headed households in Zimbabwe face significant challenges in achieving food security. This stems from economic constraints, limited access to

resources, and social inequalities. While food assistance programmes aim to alleviate hunger and malnutrition, there is a need to assess their effectiveness in addressing the specific needs of women in female-headed households (Hungwe, 2023). Political instability and conflict disrupt production, markets and supply chains in some regions. Women face additional challenges as primary caregivers in such fragile contexts. Furthermore, Unemployment and underemployment are common in many developing nations, restricting stable income sources for women. Loss of livelihoods during economic downturns increases reliance on food assistance.

2.10.4 Corruption and Mismanagement

Reports of corruption and misallocation of resources can undermine the effectiveness of food assistance programmes. A lack of coordination between governmental and non-governmental organizations can lead to duplications or gaps in service delivery. Clinton (2022) argued that many food aid programmes especially in Africa, are faced by corruption scandals, which is affecting the intended beneficiaries. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems make it difficult to track how resources are utilized within these programmes (Olabiyi, 2022). Without robust accountability mechanisms, there is room for resources to be diverted to unintended purposes. In some cases, political influence has led to the prioritization of certain groups over more vulnerable populations in the selection of food aid beneficiaries (Olabiyi, 2022). Favoritism diminishes the ability of assistance to reach those most in need. Bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of coordination between different stakeholders involved in food assistance have also been cited. This leads to delays in providing support and duplication of efforts in some areas (Clinton, 2022). Corruption reduces public trust in food assistance initiatives. When corruption is prevalent, some vulnerable groups may opt out of programmes, undermining their effectiveness in improving food security.

2.10.5 Resilience to Shocks

Martin (2023) argued that increased frequency of droughts and floods affects agricultural production, making women-headed households more vulnerable even with assistance. Events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted food supply chains and reduced access to assistance, exacerbating food insecurity. Climate change impacts like rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and more frequent extreme weather events are exacerbating food insecurity. Women-headed households tend to have fewer resources to adapt to or recover from climate shocks. More frequent droughts caused by climate change threaten livelihoods.

2.11 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has provided a comprehensive exploration of the impact of food assistance programmes on food security among women-headed households in Mabvuku, Zimbabwe. Through an examination of the Systems Theory and Food security Framework, as well as an overview of key concepts related to food insecurity and the vulnerabilities faced by women-headed households, it is evident that targeted interventions are crucial in empowering these households and addressing their unique challenges. By understanding the theoretical underpinnings and practical implications of food assistance programmes, policymakers, organisations, and communities can work towards enhancing food security outcomes and promoting the socio-economic well-being of women-headed households. Further research and action in this area are essential to creating inclusive and sustainable solutions that benefit women and their families in Mabvuku and beyond. This chapter paves way for the following chapter, which will outline the research methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study aims to investigate the impact of food assistance programmes on women headed households in Mabvuku. This chapter comprises the research philosophy and methodology. This chapter also elaborates on the research design and the data collection methods such as in-depth interviews that will be used in the study. There is also mention about ethical considerations and how the research will adhere to university standards for research. This chapter also gives an outline of the population of the study and the sampling methods will be used.

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy encompasses the beliefs, principles, and assumptions that guide a researcher's approach to their studies (Schwandt, 2019). This research will be conducted using the constructivist paradigm. According to Cohen and Crabtree (2018), the constructivist paradigm in social science research emphasizes the significance of subjective interpretations, social contexts, and the co-construction of meaning among individuals. It focuses on how people construct their understanding of the world through their interactions and experiences. Using the constructivist paradigm will allow for an exploration of the life experiences of women-headed households, providing them with a platform to share their insights on the impact of food assistance programmes. Schwandt (2019) notes that one of the strengths of this paradigm lies in its capacity to reveal the meanings individuals create from their experiences, beliefs, and actions. Another key advantage of the constructivist approach is its potential to generate rich, detailed insights into the complexities of human behavior and social interactions.

3.3 Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the systematic process of planning, conducting, and analysing research (Creswell & Poth, 2019). The research shall be conducted using qualitative research methods. As stated by Creswell and Poth (2019) qualitative research is a method of inquiry that seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences, focusing on words and descriptions rather than numerical data. According to Patton (2020) one of the main advantages of using qualitative research methods is that they generate in-depth, nuanced data. This illuminates the complexities of social phenomena. In the context of the study, the focus is on the impact of food assistance programmes in women-headed households in Mabvuku. Through techniques like open-ended interviews and participant observation, researchers can uncover rich insights into participants' subjective interpretations, beliefs, and behaviors (Patton, 2020). This detailed qualitative data allows researchers to explore the unique meanings and perspectives that individuals attach to their experiences, shedding light on the underlying dynamics of social interactions (Creswell & Poth, 2019). These are the advantages of using qualitative research methods.

3.4 Research Design

Creswell (2017) describes a research design as a plan or blueprint for conducting research that involves the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. The research will be conducted using the case study research design. Bryman and Bell (2019) highlight that a case study design is an instrumental case study to understand a particular issue or problem in-depth. The emphasis is on gaining insights into a specific issue or problem to inform theory or practice (Bryman & Bell, 2019). In the study, the focus will be on women-headed households that receive food assistance in Mabvuku. As stated by Flick (2019) case studies allow researchers to explore complex issues in great detail. By focusing on a specific case, researchers can dive deeply into the details and gain a rich understanding of the subject matter. Case studies often

involve multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents (Flick, 2019). This rich array of data sources can provide a comprehensive picture of the case being studied. Case studies provide researchers with the opportunity to examine phenomena in their natural setting (Flick, 2019). This real-world context can enhance the external validity of the study findings and make them more applicable to practical situations.

3.5 Population and Sampling

A population in research refers to the entire group of individuals, items, or events that meet certain criteria and are of interest to the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2019). In the context of the research, the population of the study comprises of women-headed households in Mabvuku. It also comprises of NGOs and other stakeholders in food assistance programmes. There are also academics and employees from the local authority that will be included in the study. A sample in a study refers to a subset of individuals or units selected from a larger population to represent and generalize findings to the entire population (Palinkas et al., 2015). In the study, the sample comprised of 43 participants. There were 40 women who were leaders of female-headed households. There were also 3 key informants, one from the NGOs, one from the academics as well as one policymaker. All the participants took part in in-depth interviews and questionnaires.

3.6 Sampling methods

The researcher used two sampling techniques, which were purposive and snowball sampling. According to Etikan et al. (2016) purposive sampling is a method used in research to select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the study's goals and objectives. Researchers choose participants intentionally to gather in-depth information and gain insights into the research topic (Etikan et al., 2016). This sampling technique allows researchers to target individuals who possess the characteristics or experiences that align with the study's

purpose (Etikan et al., 2016). In that regard, key informants were purposively selected. This was done so that they could give valuable information to the study. The advantage of purposive sampling was that it allowed researchers to focus on specific characteristics or experiences relevant to the research objectives, ensuring that the data collected directly addresses the study's purpose (Palinkas et al., 2015).

The researcher employed snowball sampling to identify households led by women. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method frequently employed in qualitative research, especially when the population is difficult to reach or recognize. The researcher started by locating a few women-led households in Mabvuku via community centers, local NGOs, and recommendations from other families. After the initial participants were recognized, they were requested to recommend other women-led households facing comparable issues related to food security. The researcher verified that the chosen women-led households met particular requirements, such as obtaining food aid or being greatly affected by food insecurity, which helped sustain the emphasis of the study. Snowball sampling offered several benefits. It enabled the researcher to connect with participants who could be hard to locate using conventional techniques. Snowball sampling allowed participants to feel more at ease discussing their experiences when introduced by someone familiar to them. Nonetheless, the sample did not reflect the whole population since it was largely dependent on personal connections

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 Key Informative Interviews

Charmaz (2020) noted that in-depth interviews are a qualitative research method where researchers conduct detailed, one-on-one conversations with participants. This allows the researcher to gather rich and detailed information on a particular topic or issue. These

interviews delve deeply into the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of participants to uncover in-depth insights and perspectives (Charmaz, 2020). In-depth interviews allow researchers to gather in-depth and detailed information from participants, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic being studied (Charmaz, 2020). In-depth interviews enable researchers to capture the unique perspectives, experiences, and emotions of individual participants, providing a nuanced understanding of the topic under study (Charmaz, 2020). In this study, there were a set of questions prepared and follow up questions, so as to enhance the depth and richness of the data collected during the interview process (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2020). Follow-up questions allowed the researcher to probe deeper into participants' responses, uncovering additional insights and perspectives that may not have emerged through the initial set of questions. The research questions of the study, formed the basis for the questions for the interviews. This iterative process of questioning enabled the researchers to explore unexpected avenues and delve into complex topics more thoroughly.

3.7.2 Surveys

The survey for this study targeted forty women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb. The researcher creates a structured survey that includes open-ended questions. The surveys were crafted to be straightforward and simple to understand. The surveys included essential questions for the research. The surveys were conducted through a face-to-face method. Surveys enabled uniform data gathering among participants, aiding in the comparison and extrapolation of results. Surveys were able to reach a significant number of participants in a brief period, making them ideal for research with constrained resources. Participants managed to identify the impact of Food Assistance and changes in food security before and after receiving aid.

3.7.3 Secondary Data

Bowker and Starr (2018) argued that, types of secondary data or documentary data in research refer to information that has already been collected and documented by other sources. Published materials such as books, academic journals, reports, and newspapers will be used in the study. This type of data is considered secondary because it is not collected directly by the researcher but rather obtained from external sources. These sources provide a wealth of information that has been analysed, interpreted, and made public for research purposes (Bowker & Starr, 2018). The research used data collected and documented by previous research studies or surveys. The researcher managed to leverage existing research reports to supplement her own findings and building upon the existing knowledge in their field of study.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Golafshani (2018), reliability in research refers to the consistency and dependability of research findings or measurements. In order to enhance the reliability of results, the researcher used multiple sources of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, to corroborate and validate the research findings. By triangulating data from different sources, the researcher managed to strengthen the reliability of her results. In order to enhance reliability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research methodology, including data collection techniques, sampling procedures, and data analysis methods. McGrath and Brinberg (2019) highlighted that validity in research refers to the extent to which a study accurately measures or assesses what it aims to measure or assess. It reflects the degree to which the research findings and conclusions are credible, meaningful, and applicable to the research question or hypothesis. In order to ensure validity, the researcher also ensured that the sample selected for the study was representative of the population of interest.

3.9 Data Presentation and Analysis

Saldana (2021) argued that qualitative data analysis refers to the systematic process of examining non-numerical data to identify patterns, themes, and meanings. Qualitative data analysis was used to describe the findings of this study and coding was also used. This was used to identify key concepts, themes, or categories in the data and assign descriptive labels or codes to segments of text. Saldana (2021) asserts that coding helps categorize and organize the data for further analysis. Qualitative data analysis also involves transcribing interviews, transcribing textual sources and organizing observation notes (Saldana, 2021). The data is then prepared for analysis by ensuring accuracy and completeness. To complement these ideas, thematic analysis was used for this study. Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis that involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data (Saldana, 2021). Thematic analysis was a flexible and systematic approach to interpreting textual or visual data, such as interview transcripts.

3.10 Pilot Testing

Pilot testing is a preliminary stage in research or project development that involves conducting a small-scale trial to evaluate the feasibility of data collection tools (Robinson, 2020). Before the collection of data, pilot testing of the methodology was done. For Robinson (2020), pilot testing is important in research to ensure the validity, reliability, and effectiveness of the research instruments. For this study, pilot testing allowed the researcher to uncover any flaws, ambiguities, or inconsistencies in the research design, data collection instruments, or procedures.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

American Psychological Association (2017) highlighted that, ethical considerations in research refer to the principles and guidelines that govern the conduct of research to ensure the

protection and welfare of participants. For this study, the researcher upheld various ethical considerations. The researcher first, obtained permission from the university and authorities before initiating the study. The researcher also adhered to strict ethical guidelines to safeguard participants' rights and well-being. Informed consent was secured from all participants. The researcher provided them with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures and benefits. Participants were clearly informed that their involvement was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative repercussions. Furthermore, confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously upheld throughout the research process. To protect participants' privacy, all collected data remained confidential, with any identifying information removed or disguised to prevent connections between participants and their responses. Strategies such as using pseudonyms or coding systems were implemented to ensure participants' identities were protected.

3.12 Chapter Summary

In summary, the constructivist paradigm was used as the research philosophy. The constructivist paradigm allowed the researcher to understand the subjective experiences faced by participants. The study followed the case study research design. The focus of the case study was on women headed households who benefited from food assistance programmes in Mabvuku. Data was collected from academics, women from female headed households and community leaders. In-depth interviews were used as primary data collection methods. Documentary data was also used to enhance the research findings. When the data was being collected, there was adherence to ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a comprehensive analysis data related to food assistance programmes in Mabvuku, focusing on their effectiveness and impact on vulnerable populations, particularly women-headed households. This chapter explores the various forms of assistance available, including direct food aid, cash transfers, and nutrition education, while examining the challenges faced in implementation. Through qualitative insights from participants, the chapter highlights the significance of these programmes in addressing food insecurity, improving health outcomes, and fostering economic empowerment within the community. Additionally, it discusses the multifaceted nature of food assistance and the critical need for sustainable solutions that address the root causes of food insecurity.

4.2 Response Rate

Table 4. 1 Response Rate of Participants

Participants	Expected	Participants	Response Rate
Women from Female Headed Households	40	40	100%
NGO Representatives	1	1	100%
Academics	1	1	100%

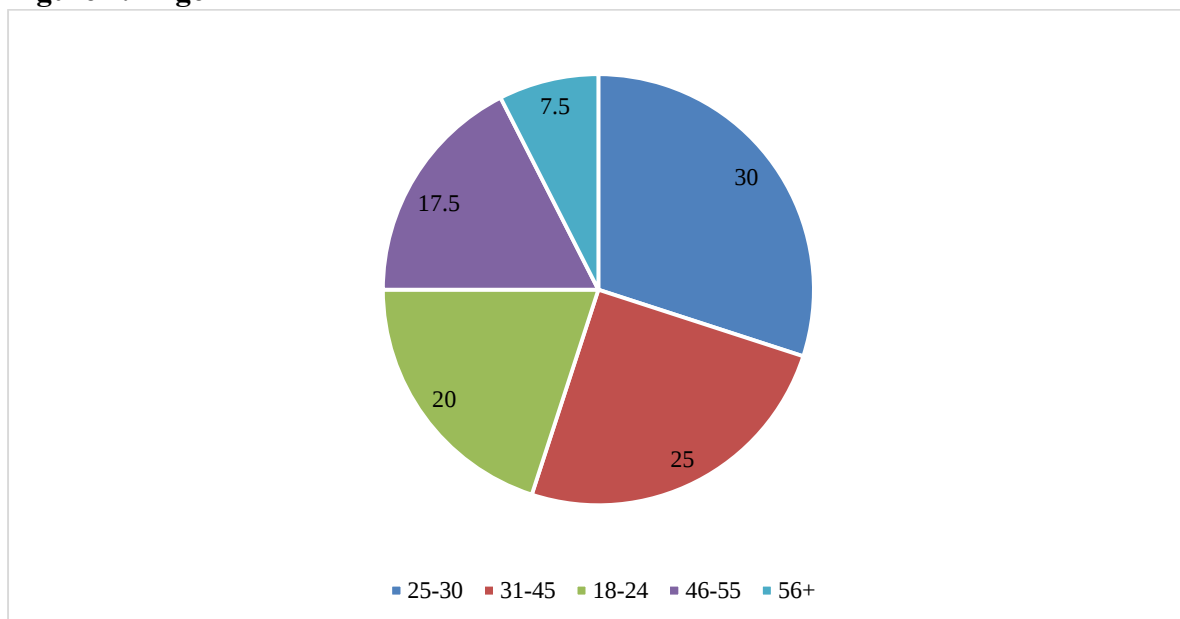
Local Authority Employees	1	1	100%
Total	43	43	100%

4.3 SECTION A: Biographic Information of Participants

This section will present the composition of participants' biographic data, which was based on their questionnaire responses. The biographic information is only for the 40 women from women headed households, which were selected for this study.

1. Age

Figure 4.1 Age

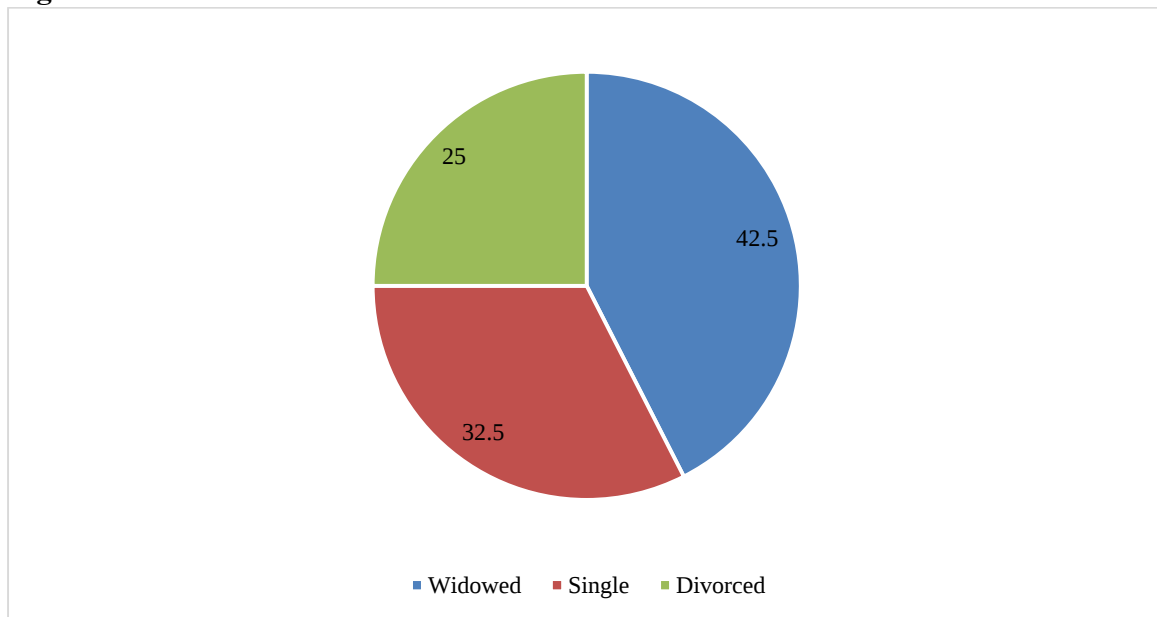


From the results presented in figure 1.1, the highest number of participants 30%, were in the 25-30 years age group. This was followed by the 31-45 years age group which constituted 25% of the total participants. The 18–24-year age group constituted 20% followed by the 46–55-year age group 17.5%. The least of the participants in the study were in the 56+ age group

and constituted 7.5% of the study participants. This proved that most women headed households were aged between 25-30 years, which is common in most urban areas.

2. Marital Status

Figure 4:2 Marital Status



Most participants 42.5% indicated that they were widowed. Furthermore, 32.5% of the participants also indicated that they were single. Lastly, 25% shared that they were divorced. Most women headed households in Mabvuku were widowed. They have taken the responsibility of taking care of their families as their husbands passed on, due to various reasons. Also, the researcher noted a large number that these women headed households were also single and not having any source of income, hence vulnerable.

3. Number of Children

Table 4. 2 Number of Children in the household

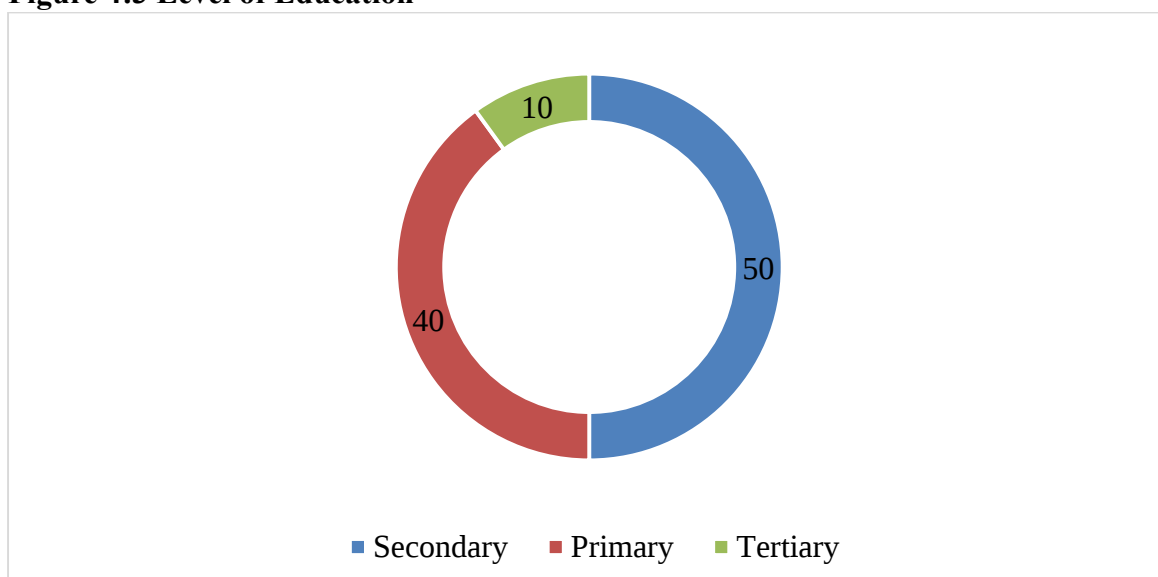
Number of Children	N=40	Percentage
3	14	35%
2	11	27.5%
4	9	22.5%

1	6	15%
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Most participants 35% indicated that they had 3 kids. Also 27.5% participants indicated that they had 2 kids. Furthermore, 22.5% of participants indicated that they had four or more kids. Also 15% noted that they had a single child.

4. Level of Education

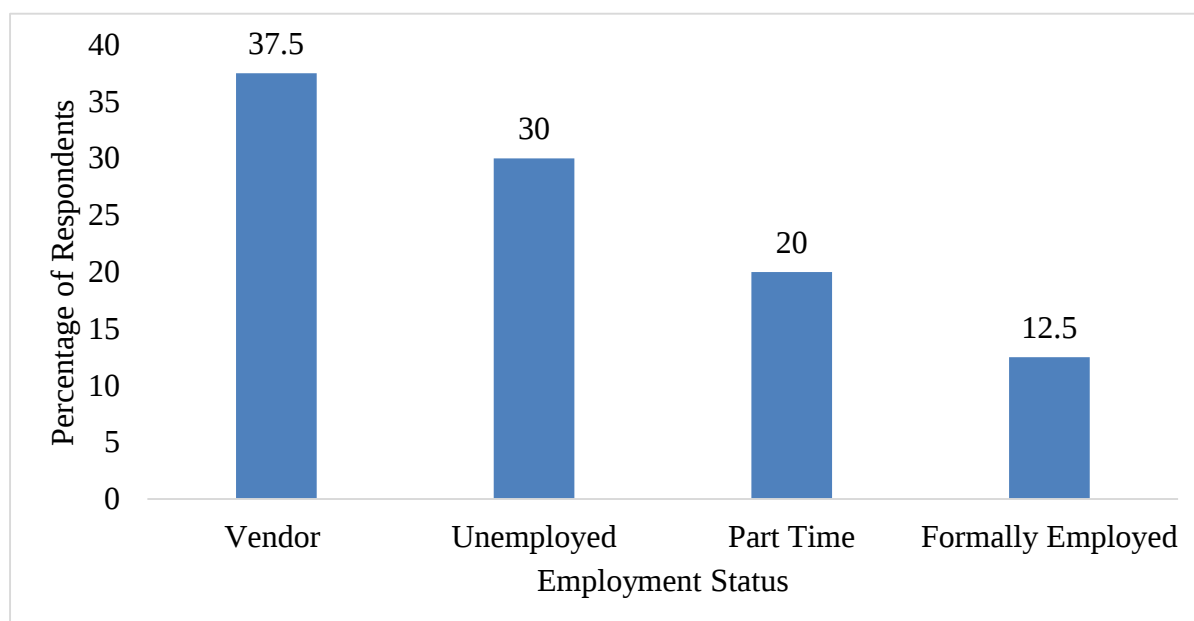
Figure 4:3 Level of Education



Most participants, 50% of participants indicated they have secondary level education. Another 40% indicated they have primary school education. Lastly, 10% of participants indicated they have tertiary level educational qualifications. The results explain the high literacy rate in Zimbabwe, because majority of these women had secondary education level. However, due to economic hardships in the country, it is difficult for them to get formal employment.

5. Employment status

Figure 4:4 Employment status



Most participants 39% were vendors. The vendors relied on selling second hand clothes or market produces. Furthermore, 30% participants indicated that they were unemployed. Also 23% of participants indicated that they were part time workers. The least number 8% indicated that she was formally employed in government. The results showed that most headed households were headed by women who are not employed, which makes the sustainable projects essential to them.

5. Monthly Income

Table 4. 3 Monthly Income of Participants

Income	Frequency	Percentage
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Below \$50	12	30%
\$51-\$100	16	40%
\$101-\$200	8	20%
Above \$200	4	10%

Most participants 40% indicated that they earn 51 - 100 US dollars per month. Another 30% indicated that they earn around 0 to 50 US dollars per month. Additionally, 20% of participants indicated they earn about 101 to 200 US dollars per month. Lastly, about 10% of participants highlighted that earn more than 200 US dollars per month.

4.4 SECTION B; Food Assistance Programmes for Women Headed Household in Mabvuku

All the participants were asked about the food assistance programmes that currently exist in Mabvuku Suburb. Various food assistance schemes were mentioned in the findings.

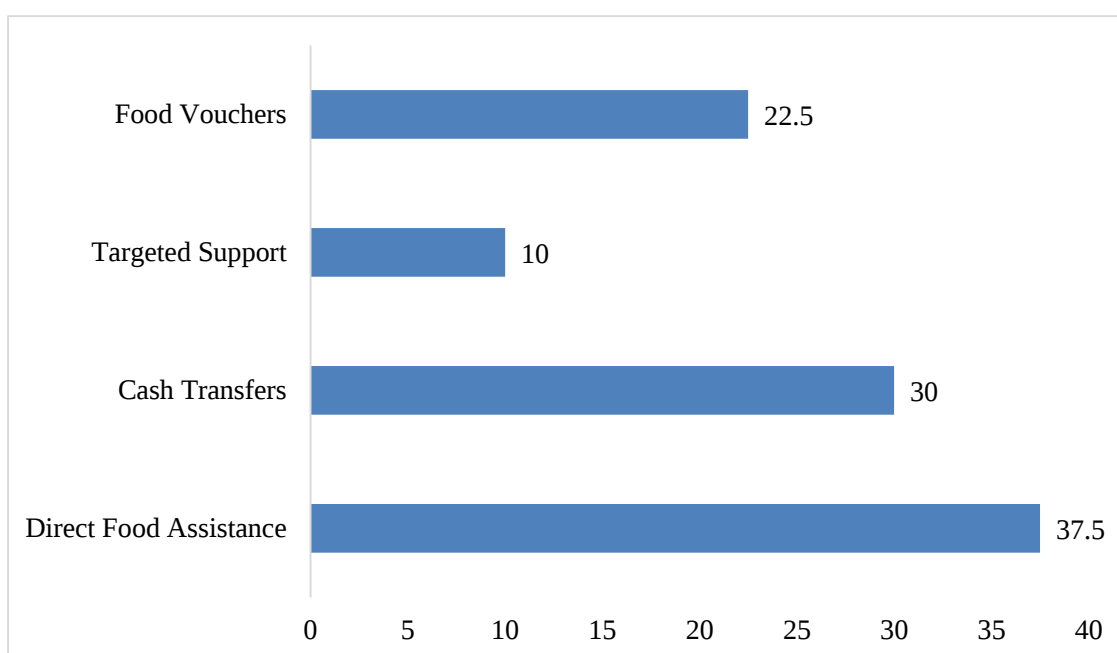


Figure 4. 1 Food Assistance Programmes for Women Headed Household

4.4.1 Direct Food Assistance

Most participants 37.5% indicated that there are organisations which offer direct food assistance to women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb. One government official from the Women's Affairs stated,

It is a common practice for some organizations in Mabvuku to provide direct food assistance to vulnerable families. The aim is to meet their nutritional needs and alleviate food insecurity in these households. This assistance is crucial, especially for women-headed households that often face unique challenges in accessing food and resources,

One participant indicated,

I have experienced the support provided by Dan Church Aid (DCA). DCA provides food assistance for essential items like maize meal, beans, and cooking oil. This food support helps ensure that my family has access to nutritious meals.

Similarly, another participant stated,

I have benefitted from the food assistance that is provided by Goal. They provide maize and pulses to vulnerable families. This has been helpful because it contributes to our monthly budget.

These findings show that direct food assistance is a common form of humanitarian aid that is provided to vulnerable individuals in Mabvuku. This is supported by Muchetu (2020) who highlights that DCA works in partnership with the European Civil Protection and

Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) to provide direct food assistance in vulnerable communities. Muchetu (2020) highlights it has programmes across various suburbs in Zimbabwe such as Mzilikazi in Bulawayo, Harare South, Mabvuku and Tafara.

4.4.2 Cash Transfer

Also 30% indicated that there are cash transfer programmes available for female headed households in Mabvuku. NGO Worker argued that;

Our organisation has implemented cash transfer programmes specifically for women-headed households. We found that providing cash, rather than food parcels, allows these women to choose what they need most. It also fosters a sense of dignity and independence, which is essential for their well-being.

One government official stated,

Cash transfers are an effective tool in our vulnerability assistance strategy. They help in immediate crisis situations. They also enable women to invest in their small businesses.

The strategy of cash transfer has been used to enhance food security in women-headed households. They are given money to purchase essentials. Organisations such as DCA give financial assistance to women headed households (Muchetu, 2020). Another participant stated,

I receive cash transfers monthly and it has made a significant difference in our lives. I can prioritize buying nutritious food and pay for my children's school fees. The empowerment that comes from managing our budget helps me feel more in control and less stressed about our daily needs.

Chiparausha (2021) asserts that organisations such as DCA and ACT provide support and protect highly food insecure, vulnerable, and at-risk urban and peri-urban households in Mzilikazi, Reigate, Epworth, Hatcliff, Harare South, Mabvuku/Tafara, Chitungwiza and Dzivarasekwa districts with monthly multi-purpose cash transfers. Women headed households are high priority groups in their programmes. This proves how cash transfers are used as forms of assistance to buffer food security in women headed households.

4.4.3 Food Vouchers and Coupons

It also emerged that some organizations provide food vouchers to individuals in Mabvuku. Individuals are given food vouchers that they can exchange for foodstuffs or other essentials that they may need, which was selected by 22.5%. One NGO employee highlighted,

We sometimes offer food vouchers that can be exchanged for essential items. Unlike pre-packaged food assistance, vouchers empower families to choose the food items that best meet their dietary preferences and nutritional needs. This flexibility is particularly important for households with specific cultural or health-related food requirements. This is why we implement them.

As an example, one participant shared,

DCA offers a monthly voucher worth \$12. This is a small amount, but it significantly impacts our household budget. This financial support allows us to cover other essential needs that may not be included in the food package.

The above statements are supported by The WFP (2020) which cited that it uses the distribution of food vouchers as a strategy to deal with the effects of adverse occurrences such

as climate change or extreme poverty. Food vouchers help vulnerable families adapt to changing circumstances by providing them with the flexibility to choose food that meets their immediate needs. The use of food vouchers allows the WFP to tailor its assistance to various cultural and regional contexts, ensuring that support is relevant and effective across different communities.

4.4.4 Targeted Support

Also 10% of participants showed there are some who receive nutrition assistance programmes based on specific traits or health conditions. These are specialized nutrition programmes that are given to people with specific vulnerabilities. One woman said,

Many nutrition assistance programmes are designed to support vulnerable populations, including people living with HIV. These programmes recognize the unique nutritional needs of individuals managing chronic health conditions.

In relation to the matter, another woman noted,

NGOs such as Mavambo Trust and Destiny offer targeted support. It has been crucial for people living with HIV. Their nutritional needs are different, and having access to specific programmes that provide healthy food options can make a significant difference in their health.

These remarks show that targeted support is an integral part of food assistance programmes in Mabvuku. One NGO worker noted,

We offer targeted assistance to people living with disabilities. People living with disabilities often face significant challenges when it comes to accessing food

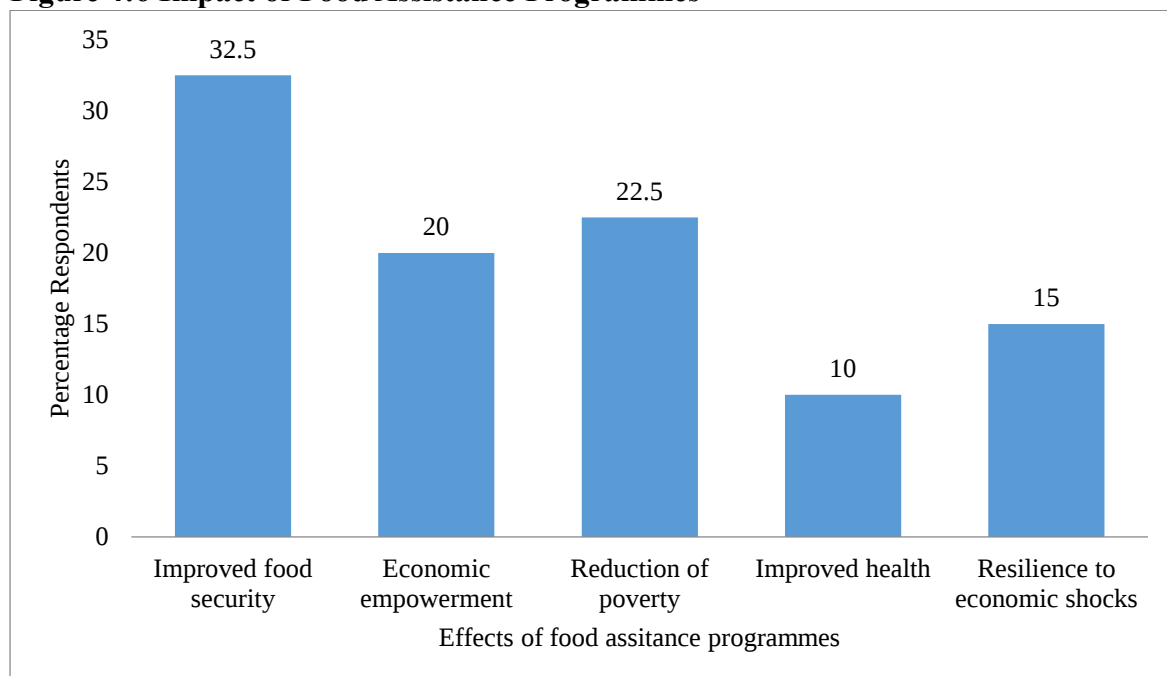
and nutrition. We recognize that they need food assistance to ensure their health and well-being.

Thomas and Chittedi (2021) concur that targeted support is a strategy that is used by NGOs to address vulnerability in communities. The aim is to focus on individuals with specific attributes that make them vulnerable.

4.5 SECTION C: The Impact of Food Assistance Programmes

The participants were asked about the impact of food assistance programmes on food security of women headed households. Various themes emerged from the findings.

Figure 4:6 Impact of Food Assistance Programmes



4.5.1 Improved Food Security

Participants 32.5% noted that food assistance programmes significantly contribute to improved food security for women-headed households in Mabvuku. Most participants reported that these programmes help ensure consistent access to nutritious food, thereby reducing hunger and malnutrition. By providing immediate access to food, these initiatives help households meet their daily nutritional needs and significantly reduce hunger. Chipato and Wang (2019) assert that these programmes provide critical support that allows households to access nutritious food consistently, thereby reducing food insecurity and improving overall well-being.

An NGO worker stated:

Our food assistance initiatives are designed to provide women-headed households with the resources they need to secure regular meals. This stability is crucial for their overall well-being

A participant shared her experience,

Thanks to the food assistance I receive, my family has enough to eat every day. We no longer worry about where our next meal will come from, which has greatly relieved our stress.

The findings also indicate that the availability of food assistance has led to notable improvements in the nutritional quality of diets among these households. This is supported by Tirivangasi et al. (2023) posit that food assistance programmes play a crucial role in alleviating adverse socioeconomic conditions, particularly for vulnerable populations such as women-headed households. Furthermore, by improving food security, these programmes enable

households to be more resilient during economic downturns, making it easier for them to recover (Tirivangasi et al., 2023).

4.5.2 Reduction in Poverty

Most participants 22.5% also argued that food assistance programmes help in reducing poverty faced by women headed households. This is supported by Dzvimbo, et al. (2022) who highlights that understanding the impact of food assistance programmes on food security for women-headed households is crucial for developing targeted interventions and policy recommendations to improve their overall well-being and nutritional outcomes. An NGO employee emphasized the importance of these programmes,

Food assistance programmes are very important in improving the life of these women. Most of the women in this area, do not go to work, which makes them to rely on these programmes.

Economic factors, such as lack of stable incomes and employment opportunities, create barriers for women to access nutritious food for themselves and their families (Dzvimbo, et al., 2022). By alleviating food insecurity, food assistance programmes can help reduce poverty rates. The World Bank estimates that cash-based food assistance can lift approximately 50 million people out of poverty each year, with a significant portion of beneficiaries being women-headed households (WB 2023).

4.5.3 Resilience to Economic Shocks

Some participant 15% highlighted that food assistance programmes significantly enhance the resilience of women-headed households in Mabvuku to economic shocks. By

providing consistent access to food and financial support, these initiatives help families better withstand economic hardships such as inflation or unforeseen expenses. One female household leader noted,

When the prices of basic goods skyrocketed, the food assistance helped us get through that tough time without going hungry. Even if we are given minimal support, it makes a huge difference.

This statement shows that the food assistance has been helpful for the families. Another beneficiary shared her experience:

During the pandemic, many of us lost our jobs. The food aid ensured that we had enough to eat while we looked for new work. It was a crucial support during a very uncertain time.

Some were able to cope during times of economic shock such as the pandemic. An NGO employee emphasized the importance of these programmes,

Food assistance creates a safety net for families. When they know they have support, they can take risks, whether it's starting a small business or investing in education, without the fear of falling into starvation.

Research indicates that food assistance programmes play a critical role in building resilience against economic shocks. Chipenda and Tom (2021) found that households with access to food aid are better equipped to navigate financial crises, as they can allocate resources to essential needs without sacrificing nutrition.

4.5.4 Economic Empowerment

The participants 20% noted that food assistance programmes play a significant role in empowering women economically. Half of the participants indicated that these programmes free up financial resources, allowing women to invest in small businesses or education for their children. An NGO worker explained:

By providing food aid or cash transfers, we enable women to allocate their limited resources more effectively, which is crucial for their economic stability.

A beneficiary shared her experience,

With the support I receive, I was able to save money that I would have spent on food. I used those savings to buy materials for my tailoring business, which has started to thrive.

The financial relief provided by food assistance programmes also enables women to invest in other essential needs. These remarks show how food and financial assistance positively affect the food security of women headed households. DCA (2024) mentions that its programmes are meant to foster economic empowerment in vulnerable groups.

4.5.5 Health and Nutrition

Participants 10% noted that by providing consistent access to nutritious food, these initiatives help reduce hunger and malnutrition. Most participants noted that the availability of diverse food options has led to significant improvements in their families' health. One woman remarked,

Before we started receiving food assistance, our meals were often just maize meal. Now, we have access to vegetables, beans, and even some fumi. This variety has not only filled our stomachs but also made us healthier.

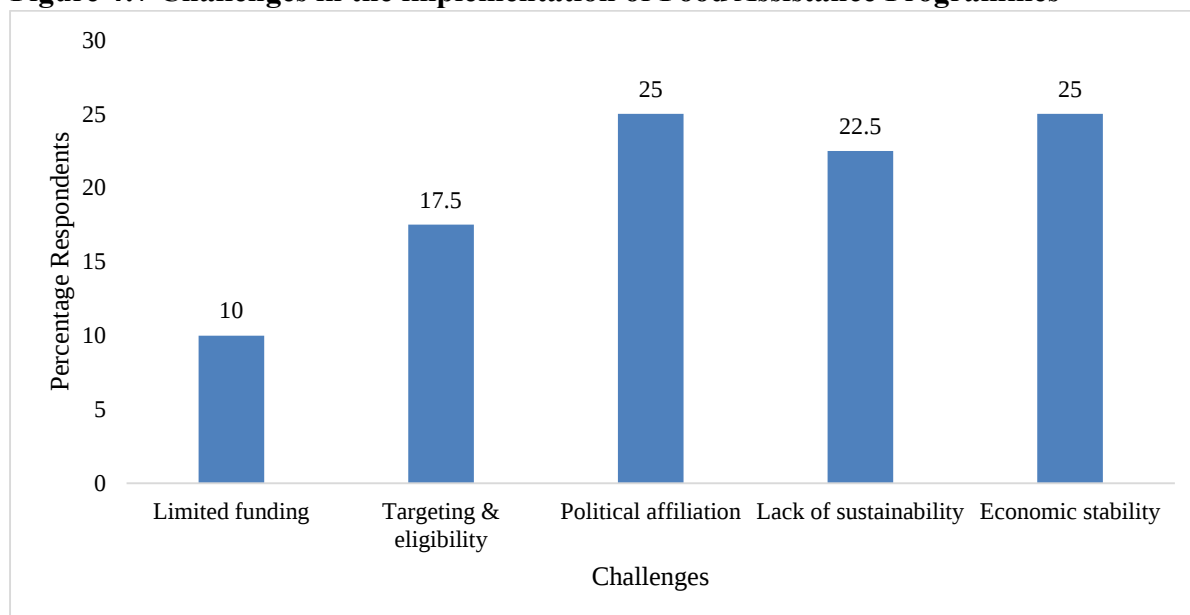
A healthcare worker emphasized the impact on children's health,

Many of the children in our community suffered from malnutrition. With the food aid, we've seen improvements in their growth and development. Proper nutrition is essential for their future, and these programs are making a real difference.

According to Chiparausha (2021) assert that food assistance programmes help improving the health and wellbeing of recipients.

4.6 SECTION D; Challenges in the Implementation of Food Assistance Programmes

The participants were asked about the challenges that are faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes for women headed households in Mabvuku. The following responses were given regarding the matter.

Figure 4:7 Challenges in the implementation of Food Assistance Programmes

4.6.1 Allocation of Assistance Based on Political Affiliation

One of the critical challenges facing food assistance programmes in Mabvuku is the perception and reality of assistance allocation based on political affiliation which was selected by 25% participants. This issue raises concerns about fairness, equity, and the effectiveness of these programmes in truly addressing food insecurity. A participant expressed her frustration:

It feels like the aid is given to those who support certain political parties. Many of us who need help are overlooked simply because we don't share the same views.

Another participant noted,

I've seen friends and neighbors receive assistance while others in dire need get nothing. It makes it hard to trust the programmes when it seems like politics is involved in who gets help.

Batsell (2018) asserts that when assistance is allocated based on political affiliation, it can lead to increased divisions within the community and a lack of trust in the programmes.

This can discourage those in need from seeking help and can undermine the overall effectiveness of food assistance initiatives.

4.6.2 Sustainability of Food Assistance Programmes

Many food assistance programs in Mabvuku are designed as short-term solutions, which can inadvertently lead to dependency among beneficiaries rather than addressing the root causes of food insecurity which was selected by 25% participants. While these programmes provide immediate relief, a lack of long-term strategies can perpetuate cycles of dependence. A participant echoed:

While the food aid helps us now, I worry about what happens when it ends. We need sustainable solutions that empower us to be self-sufficient.

Another participant echoed this sentiment:

Relying on food assistance makes it hard to break out of poverty. We need job training and opportunities to earn a living instead of just receiving food.

The findings show that there are challenges regarding the sustainability of food assistance programmes. Chipenda and Tom (2021) concur that food assistance programmes can create dependency in the recipients.

4.6.3 Economic Instability

Economic instability in Zimbabwe significantly affects the effectiveness of food assistance programmes in Mabvuku, was selected by 22.5% participants. Factors such as inflation, unemployment, and fluctuating currency values contribute to a challenging environment for both beneficiaries and program implementers.

A participant described the impact of inflation:

Every month, prices for basic goods keep rising. Even with food assistance, it's hard to make ends meet when everything else costs so much.

Another participant highlighted the issue of unemployment:

Many people in our community are out of work or underemployed. Food assistance helps, but without stable jobs, it feels like we're just surviving day to day.

Moyo (2024) concurs that the current economic instability poses significant challenges for food assistance programs in Zimbabwe. While these initiatives provide crucial support to vulnerable families, the broader economic context can undermine their effectiveness. Addressing the root causes of economic instability and ensuring adequate funding and resources for food assistance programs is essential for fostering resilience and improving food security in the community.

4.6.4 Targeting and Eligibility Challenges

Food assistance programmes in Mabvuku, while beneficial, face significant challenges related to targeting and eligibility and 17.5% highlighted this. These issues can lead to gaps in support, leaving some families without the aid they desperately need. A member from Women's Affairs explained the complexities:

Determining eligibility is a delicate process. We aim to help those most in need, but the criteria can sometimes exclude vulnerable families who don't meet specific requirements.

One participant shared her experience with the eligibility criteria,

I applied for food assistance but was told I didn't qualify. My family struggles every day, yet because I have a small income, we fell through the cracks.

Ncube (2016) asserts that gender and social security in Zimbabwe: An analysis of the efficacy of social security for women with disabilities in the informal sector. These targeting and eligibility challenges can lead to unequal access to resources and support, exacerbating food insecurity among the most vulnerable populations. When families who need assistance are overlooked, it undermines the overall effectiveness of the programs.

4.6.5 Funding Limitations

While food assistance programmes in Mabvuku have made significant strides in addressing food insecurity, funding limitations pose a substantial challenge to their effectiveness and sustainability. Most of participants 10% indicated that insufficient financial resources hinder the reach and impact of these vital initiatives. A member from Women's affairs highlighted the issue,

Our funding is limited currently. The demand for food assistance is high and we struggle to meet it with our current resources.

A participant echoed this concern:

I know many families who would benefit from food assistance but aren't receiving help. It's unfortunate to hear about their struggles when we know there are programmes that could support them.

The limitations in funding often lead to reduced programme availability, smaller food packages, and inconsistent support. This can undermine the progress made in improving food security and health outcomes in the community. Chiparausha (2021) highlights that funding limitations present a significant challenge to the effectiveness of food assistance programmes in Zimbabwe. NGOs often do not have adequate resources to address social challenges. While these initiatives have positively impacted many families, insufficient financial resources hinder their ability to reach those in need fully. Addressing these funding challenges is crucial for ensuring the sustainability and expansion of food assistance programmes, ultimately enhancing the well-being of vulnerable communities.

4.7 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter underscores the pivotal role that food assistance programmes play in alleviating food insecurity among vulnerable populations in Mabvuku, particularly for women-headed households. The findings reveal that these initiatives not only provide essential resources for daily sustenance but also contribute to improved health, nutrition, and economic empowerment. However, the effectiveness of these programmes is often hindered by challenges such as funding limitations, targeting issues, and the influence of political affiliations on aid distribution. To enhance the impact of food assistance efforts, it is crucial to develop sustainable strategies that address the underlying causes of food insecurity, including poverty and unemployment. This chapter ensured that all research questions were answered in

a holistic manner. This chapter paves way for the next chapter which will conclude and summarize the research.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides concluding remarks on the study's findings regarding the impact of food assistance programmes on food security for women-headed households in Mabvuku suburb. It summarizes key insights from the research, outlines recommendations for enhancing programme effectiveness, and identifies areas for further investigation.

5.2 Summary

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study on the impact of food assistance programmes on food security among women-headed households in Mabvuku suburb. It began by highlighting the global context of food insecurity, emphasizing that approximately 811 million people faced hunger, with women and children disproportionately affected. The chapter discussed various food assistance programmes designed to alleviate hunger and improve food security, including direct food distribution, cash transfers, and food vouchers. It noted significant achievements by organisations such as the World Food Programme (WFP), which reached millions worldwide, and highlighted specific initiatives in Africa aimed at supporting women-headed households. The chapter also focused on the situation in Zimbabwe, where food assistance programmes played a pivotal role in fostering economic empowerment for women. It mentioned organisations like the Women's Action Group (WAG) and the WFP, which provided crucial support through food assistance and cash transfers to vulnerable households. Despite these efforts, the chapter identified several challenges, including insufficient resources, rigid eligibility requirements, and gender norms that restricted women's access to these programmes. The purpose of the study was clearly stated: to investigate the impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women-headed households in Mabvuku. The

chapter outlined the research objectives and questions, aiming to identify existing food assistance programmes, analyze their impact, and ascertain the challenges faced in their implementation. It emphasized the significance of the study for policymakers, NGOs, and community members, aiming to inform targeted interventions that could enhance food security outcomes for women-headed households in the area. Overall, Chapter One set the stage for a comprehensive exploration of the study's themes and objectives.

Chapter Two reviewed relevant literature and theoretical frameworks to understand the impact of food assistance programmes on food security among women-headed households in Mabvuku, Zimbabwe. It began by discussing key concepts related to food security, emphasizing its multidimensional nature, which includes availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability of food resources. The chapter highlighted the unique vulnerabilities faced by women-headed households, noting that these households are often marginalized and disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. Theoretical frameworks such as Systems Theory and the Food Security Model were introduced to provide a conceptual lens for the study. Systems Theory emphasized the interconnectedness of various factors influencing food security, including agricultural production, economic dynamics, and social contexts. It underscored those changes in one area, such as agricultural practices, could significantly impact food availability and household food security. Additionally, the Food Security Model was presented as a framework to analyze food availability, access, utilization, and stability over time. This model helped contextualize how food assistance programmes could enhance food security by addressing the specific needs of women-headed households. The chapter cited various food assistance initiatives targeting women, such as conditional cash transfer programmes and nutrition-sensitive agriculture programmes, which aimed to improve dietary quality and empower women economically. The literature review revealed that while food assistance programmes have shown positive impacts on food security, challenges such as

political instability, economic barriers, and cultural norms often hinder their effectiveness. The chapter concluded by emphasizing the need for comprehensive and integrated approaches to food assistance, highlighting the importance of understanding the local context and the specific challenges faced by women-headed

Chapter Three provided an overview of the methodology employed in the study, focusing on the impact of food assistance programmes on women-headed households in Mabvuku. The chapter began by outlining the research philosophy, which was based on the constructivist paradigm, allowing for an exploration of the subjective experiences of participants. The study utilized qualitative research methods, emphasizing the collection of rich, detailed data to understand the lived experiences of women in the context of food security. A case study research design was adopted, concentrating on women-headed households receiving food assistance. This design facilitated an in-depth examination of specific issues related to food security within the community. The chapter detailed the population of the study, which included women-headed households, representatives from NGOs, and local authority employees. A purposive sampling method was employed to select participants based on their relevance to the research objectives. Data collection primarily involved in-depth interviews, which enabled participants to share their thoughts and experiences in their own words. Ethical considerations were also addressed, ensuring that informed consent was obtained, and participants' confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. The chapter concluded by highlighting the importance of using multiple data sources to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. This comprehensive methodology aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges and impacts of food assistance programmes on the food security of women-headed households in Mabvuku.

Chapter Four presented the findings of the study, focusing on the impact of food assistance programmes on food security for women-headed households in Mabvuku. The chapter began by detailing the demographic characteristics of the participants, which included a diverse group of women from various age groups, marital statuses, and educational backgrounds. This context was essential for understanding the lived experiences of the participants. Participants highlighted various forms of support available in Mabvuku, including direct food distribution, cash transfers, and food vouchers. Many participants expressed appreciation for these programmes, noting that they significantly improved their access to nutritious food and alleviated hunger within their households. The food assistance programmes were described as lifelines, ensuring that families had enough to eat on a daily basis. The chapter also showcased the positive impacts of these programmes on economic empowerment. Many women reported using cash transfers to invest in small businesses or cover essential expenses, such as school fees for their children. The flexibility provided by cash assistance allowed participants to prioritize their family's needs more effectively. However, the findings revealed several challenges in the implementation of food assistance programmes. Participants cited issues such as political bias in aid distribution, funding limitations, and rigid eligibility criteria that excluded some vulnerable families. These barriers led to feelings of frustration and distrust towards the programmes designed to help them. Overall, Chapter Four highlighted the multifaceted effects of food assistance on food security in women-headed households, revealing both the successes and the ongoing challenges that need to be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Chapter five, was the last chapter of this study. This chapter provided concluding remarks on the study's findings regarding the impact of food assistance programmes on food security for women-headed households in Mabvuku suburb. It summarized key insights from

the research, outlines recommendations for enhancing programme effectiveness, and identifies areas for further investigation.

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 To identify the food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households that have been implemented in Mabvuku Suburb

The findings indicate that several food assistance programmes have been implemented in Mabvuku suburb, specifically targeting women-headed households. These programmes include direct food distribution, cash transfers, and food vouchers, all aimed at enhancing food security and alleviating hunger within the community. Participants reported that direct food distribution initiatives provided essential staples such as maize meal, beans, and cooking oil, which were crucial for daily nutrition. Brown (2023) argued that families receive cash transfers conditioned on school attendance and health check-ups, which has led to increased household income and improved access to education and health services. These distributions were often organized by local NGOs and government agencies, ensuring that vulnerable households received immediate support. Cash transfer programmes emerged as a significant form of assistance, allowing recipients the flexibility to purchase food according to their specific needs and preferences.

5.3.2 To analyse the impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.

The findings reveal that food assistance programmes significantly impact food security for women-headed households in Mabvuku suburb. Participants reported that these initiatives have substantially improved their access to nutritious food, reducing instances of hunger and malnutrition within their families. The direct provision of food staples through distribution programmes ensured that households had a reliable source of essential food items.

Additionally, cash transfer programmes were highlighted as transformative, allowing women to purchase food according to their specific needs. This flexibility not only improved dietary diversity but also empowered women to make informed choices about their family's nutrition. Many participants noted that these cash transfers enabled them to invest in small businesses or manage other crucial expenses, further enhancing their overall economic stability. When individuals and communities are economically empowered, they are better positioned to actively participate in the economy, generate income, and contribute to overall economic development (Surya et al., 2020). Moreover, the findings indicated that food vouchers provided an important avenue for women to access a variety of food products at local markets, fostering community engagement and supporting local economies.

5.3.3 To ascertain the challenges faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.

The findings reveal several challenges faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes for women-headed households in Mabvuku suburb. Participants identified political bias in aid distribution as a significant concern. Many participants felt that assistance was not always allocated based on need, leading to frustrations among those who were overlooked despite being vulnerable. This is supported by Hungwe (2023) who argued that politics in Zimbabwe affects implementation of food assistance programs due to party affiliation. Funding limitations were another critical barrier highlighted in the study. Several participants noted that inadequate resources often resulted in inconsistent support and limited availability of food items. This scarcity sometimes forced beneficiaries to rely on less nutritious options, undermining the programmes' goals of improving food security. Rigid eligibility criteria also emerged as a prominent challenge. Many women expressed that the criteria excluded some of the most vulnerable households, leaving them without access to essential

assistance. This issue was particularly pronounced among families that did not fit neatly into predefined categories but still faced significant food insecurity. Additionally, logistical challenges, such as delays in food distribution and inadequate infrastructure, hindered the timely delivery of assistance. Clinton (2022) argued that many food aid programmes especially in Africa, are beset by corruption scandals, which is affecting the intended beneficiaries. Participants mentioned that these delays not only affected their immediate food needs but also contributed to a sense of uncertainty regarding future support. Overall, the findings underscore that while food assistance programmes are crucial for enhancing food security, various challenges hinder their effectiveness.

5.4 Recommendations

5.4.1 Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development

They should develop policies that integrate food security initiatives with women's economic empowerment programmes.

5.4.2 Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-governmental Organisation should expand sustainable livelihood programmes alongside food aid to reduce long term dependence on assistance.

5.4.3 Harare City Council

Must facilitate community led urban Agriculture initiatives to supplement food assistance and enhance food security.

5.4.4 World Food Programme

The United Nations World Food Programme can improve coordination with local actors to align food assistance programmes with community specific needs and challenges.

5.4.5 Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare

It needs to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of food assistance programmes to ensure efficient targeting and minimize leakages.

5.5 Areas for further research

The research is based on the impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb. Further research could explore the long-term sustainability of food assistance programmes in Mabvuku.

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APPENDICIES

Questionnaire for participants

My name is Rasayi Kundai, a student at Bindura University of Science Education undertaking a Bachelor of Science Honors Degree in Peace and Governance and my registration number is B211253B. I need your help in completing the questionnaire and the information you provide will only be used for academic purposes. I am carrying out research on the topic, **The Impact of Food Assistance Programmes on Food Security on Women Headed Households in Mabvuku Suburb**. Your input will be greatly appreciated. Participation in this research is voluntary and your **confidentiality** is guaranteed. Names or any personal information is not needed.

NB: Tick where applicable and please answer honestly.

Section A

1. Age group:

- a. 18-24 ☐ b. 25-30 ☐ c. 31 – 45 ☐ d. 45 – 55+ ☐

2. Marital Status:

- a. Married ☐ b. Divorced ☐ c. Single ☐ d. Widowed ☐

3. Level of Education

- a. Didn't go to school ☐ b. Primary ☐ c. Secondary ☐ d. Tertiary ☐

4. Number of children:

- a. 1 ☐ b. 2-3 ☐ c. 3-4 ☐ d. 5 + ☐

5. Employment Status

- a. Formally employed ☐ b. Unemployed ☐ c. Vendor ☐ d. Part time ☐

6. Monthly income (USD);

- a. 0 – 100 ☐ b. 101 - 200 ☐ c. 201 - 300 ☐ d. 300+ ☐

Section B

Objective 1: To identify the food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households that have been implemented in Mabvuku Suburb

1. What food assistance programmes are currently being implemented in Mabvuku Suburb?

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2. What food assistance programmes for women headed households are being implemented in Mabvuku?

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Section C

Objective 2: To analyse the impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.

3. What is the impact of the food assistance that have been provided on women headed households?

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4. How have the food assistance programmes contributed towards food security in women headed households?

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Section D

Objective 3: To ascertain the challenges and barrier faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.

5. What challenges have emerged in the implementation of food assistance programmes for women headed households?

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6. What solutions can be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of food assistance programmes for women headed households?

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THANK YOU

Interview guide for Ministry of Women Affairs

My name is Kundai Rasayi, I am a student of Peace and Governance Studies at Bindura University of Education (BUSE). I am participating in bachelor's degree programme in the field. I need your help in completing the interview guide and the information you provide will only be used for academic purposes. I am carrying out research on the topic, **The Impact of Food Assistance Programmes on Food Security on Women Headed Households in Mabvuku Suburb**. Your input will be greatly appreciated. Participation in this research is voluntary and your **confidentiality** is guaranteed. Names or any personal information is not needed.

Section A

b. Age group:

- b. 18-24 ☐ b.25-30 ☐ c.31 – 45 ☐ d.45 – 55+ ☐

c. Marital Status:

- b. Married ☐ b. Divorced ☐ c. Single ☐ d. Widowed ☐

d. Level of Education

- b. Didn't go to school ☐ b. Primary ☐ c. Secondary ☐ d. Tertiary ☐

e. Number of children:

- b. 1 ☐ b. 2-3 ☐ c. 3-4 ☐ d. 5 + ☐

f. Employment Status

- b. Formally employed ☐ b. Unemployed ☐ c. Vendor ☐ d. Part time ☐

g. Monthly income (USD);

- b. 0 – 100 ☐ b. 101 - 200 ☐ c. 201 - 300 ☐ d. 300+ ☐

Section B

Objective 1: To identify the food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households that have been implemented in Mabvuku Suburb

1. What food assistance programmes are currently being implemented in Mabvuku Suburb?
2. What food assistance programmes for women headed households are being implemented in Mabvuku?

Section C

Objective 2: To analyse the impact of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.

3. What is the impact of the food assistance that have been provided on women headed households?
4. How have the food assistance programmes contributed towards food security in women headed households?

Section D

Objective 3: To ascertain the challenges and barrier faced in the implementation of food assistance programmes on food security on women headed households in Mabvuku Suburb.

5. What challenges have emerged in the implementation of food assistance programmes for women headed households?
6. What solutions can be implemented to enhance the effectiveness of food assistance programmes for women headed households?

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DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

17 January 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: REQUEST TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN YOUR ORGANISATION

This serves to introduce the bearer, KUNDAI RASAYI, Student
Registration Number B211253B, who is a **HBSC PEACE AND
GOVERNANCE** student at Bindura University of Science Education and is carrying out a research
project in your area/institution.

May you please assist the student to access data relevant to the study, and where possible,
conduct interviews as part of a data collection process.

Yours respectfully

J. KUREBWA (DR)
Acting Chairperson

**From the Office of the Secretary for Women Affairs,
Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development**

All correspondence should be addressed to
"THE SECRETARY"
Telephone: (0242) 708398, 735186/8
251559
E-mail: pswomenaffairs@gmail.com
7th Floor Kaguvu Building
Cnr Simon Muzenda/Central Ave



Reference:
**SECRETARY FOR WOMEN AFFAIRS,
Community, Small and Medium
Enterprises Development
Kaguvu Building
Simon Muzenda/Central Avenue
Harare, Zimbabwe**

Ref: Kundai Rasayi

28 January 2025

Kundai Rasayi
Bindura University of Science education

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH ON ' THE IMPACT OF
FOOD SECURITY ON WOMEN HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN MABVUKU
SUBURB': MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS, COMMUNITY, SMALL
AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT.**

Please be advised that your request to conduct research on, **"The impact of food security on women headed households in Mabvuku suburb"**, is approved.

The approval is on the condition that the information obtained will be used strictly for academic purposes and you will be required to share your research project with the Ministry.

We wish you well in your studies.

**Dr. Mavis Sibanda
SECRETARY FOR WOMEN AFFAIRS, COMMUNITY, SMALL AND
MEDIUM ENTERPRISES DEVELOPMENT.**

Min. of Women Affairs, Community,
Small & Medium Enterprises Dev
PERMANENT SECRETARY

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