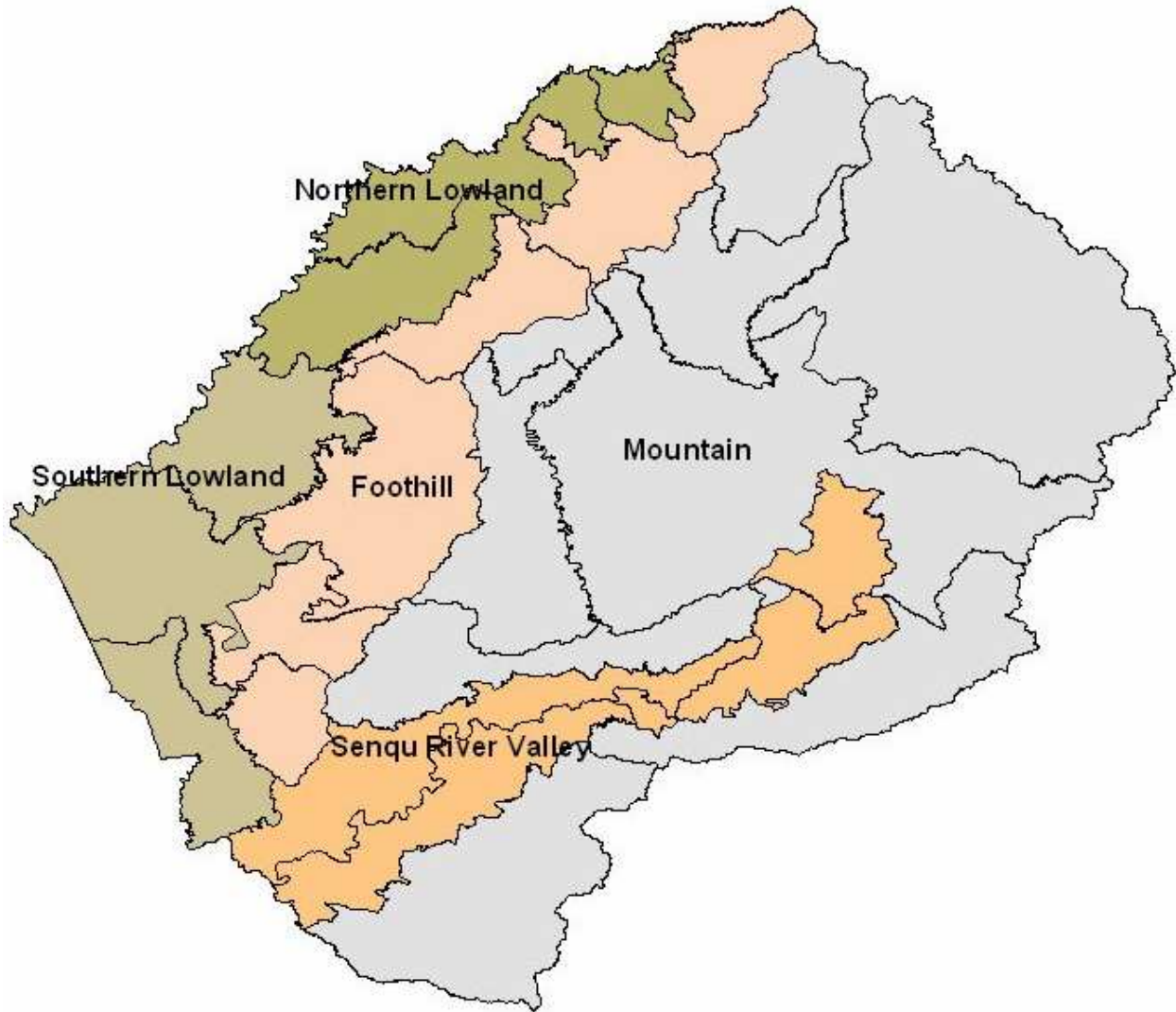


Lesotho Livelihoods Profile Report



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Above all, special thanks go to the men and women in the villages that were visited during the exercise. We hope this report will trigger appropriate interventions for the affected communities.

Mapalesa Mothokho
Chair, LVAC
July 2006

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1 Introduction and Methodology

The Lesotho Vulnerability Assessment Committee (LVAC) is a government led multi disciplinary committee responsible for livelihood vulnerability analysis and aims to provide timely analysis for emergency interventions as well as long term programming.

LVAC was formed in 2002 as part of the regional effort to respond to the food security crisis that faced six SADC countries at the time. The Regional Vulnerability Assessment committee under the Directorate of Food and Natural Resources (FNR) spearheaded the effort to help governments establish vulnerability assessment committees to deal with the increasing demand for reliable and timely analysis of Livelihood vulnerability. Since then, the LVAC has been undertaking annual livelihood vulnerability assessments to inform decision making for interventions.

In 2003 the LVAC carried out a baseline updating exercise that covered all the identified six Livelihood zones. The baseline updating exercise identified three wealth groups in each zone i.e. the 'poor' 'middle' and 'better off' and the corresponding livelihoods profiles for each wealth group. These baselines were used thereafter for monitoring impacts of shocks such as poor production and high food prices.

The baseline profiles developed in 2003 had major gaps in them such as lack of detailed data on expenditure and income by wealth group. In addition, the baseline profiles depicted the 'poor' as 50% of the rural population thereby not distinguishing those households in the near destitute situation that would need social protection programmes from the rest of the 'poor' that would require food security/livelihoods promotion programmes. The inadequate detail in the baseline profiles limited the level of analysis that LVAC could undertake and these issues were also picked up by the Food security Policy that was approved in April 2005.

To address the above problems, the LVAC undertook a new baseline development exercise in January – February 2006. The activity involved a 2 day training session for the teams that participated in assessment, 14 days of field work and 5 days of analysis.

The exercise involved interviews with community leaders who did a wealth breakdown of the households into four categories namely; the 'Very poor', the 'Poor', the 'Middle', and the 'Better off'. This included identifying key differentiating characteristics of each of the wealth groups in terms of land and livestock ownership and key income activities. Interviews were then held with representatives of each wealth group to determine sources of food, income and expenditure patterns in the baseline year (2004/05). Interviews were also held with business people to collect market related information, and with selected government officials on production and livestock related information.

2 Foot Hills Livelihood Profile

Main conclusions and implications

The zone is one of the high agricultural productive zones in the country and cuts across a number of districts from Butha Buthe in the north to Mohale's Hoek District in the southern part of Lesotho. Although the soils are generally fertile due to the alluvial deposits from the mountains, there is still need for agriculture inputs such as fertilizer and high quality seed. Most of the poor households cannot afford these inputs due to low incomes and rising input prices. This has a negative impact on food production for the affected households. Targeted programmes aimed at improving access to inputs for the affected households in the short term are a potential way to improve the situation.

Crops grown in this zone include maize, sorghum, wheat, beans and potatoes. Maize is the main staple food and therefore the most widely grown. Maize is often susceptible to erratic rainfall patterns and this leaves many households vulnerable to food insecurity especially in recent years when erratic weather patterns have increasingly become frequent. Sometimes when rainfall is not a problem, early frost attacks the maize leading low crop production. However the 'very poor' and 'poor' households do not, even in normal years, produce enough to last them the whole season and have to rely on purchase and labour exchange to meet their annual food requirements.

Crop production and livestock are the main sources of food and income for the 'middle' and 'better off' wealth groups in this zone while the 'very poor' and 'poor' households depend mostly on food purchases and labour exchange for food. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households are therefore more vulnerable to market price fluctuations of the commodities they normally buy for food such as maize meal. In bad agricultural seasons the prices tend to go up, pushing many 'poor' and 'very poor' households into risk of food insecurity.

Although crop sales contribute significantly to household income especially for the 'better off', this source of income is usually affected by the low market prices especially given that cheaper maize from South Africa is available on the market. The cheaper maize from South Africa comes into the country through both official imports and informal trade that is not monitored at present.

Livestock keeping in the zone (especially cattle) has been seriously affected by theft. A number of households have lost their cattle due to theft. There is need to devise preventive measures such as branding and increase security to prevent these animals from being easily stolen.

Black quarter is the most common disease that affects cattle in this area and results in death of cattle. Efforts to minimise the effects of this disease need to be put in place.

Zone Description

The Foot Hills zone occupies a long stripe of rugged and broken country that separates the mountains from the lowlands and supports a population of 235,106 people. The Foot hills livelihood zone spreads across 6 Districts namely; Butha Buthe, Leribe, Berea, Maseru, Mafeteng and Mohale's Hoek. The hilly parts of the zones are mainly used for grazing while the low lying areas, which are characterised by streams and rivers are used for crop production.

Livestock holding in the area are high and the 'middle' and 'better – off' wealth groups have large flocks of sheep and goats exploiting the extensive rangelands. Many households in the area use animal manure to boost crop production. This is because animal manure is readily available due to the large number of animals found in the zone. However, those who can afford fertilizer do apply it or a combination of both. This is mostly done by the households in the 'better-off' wealth group. The many streams and rivers that pass through the zone also provide animals with a reliable source of water to drink. The zone is therefore suitable for both crop and animal production.

The most important food crop grown in the area is maize. Other crops include sorghum, wheat, potatoes and beans. The sorghum is used for both consumption and beer brewing. There are no special cash crops grown in the area. The same food crops are sold when there is need. This is mostly done by the 'better-off' households whose crop production is high.

Markets

There are no organised open markets in the area to sell or buy food. The buying and selling of food commodities takes place within the villages, that is, households buying/selling to and from one another informally. Alternatively, they buy maize meal and wheat flour from the shops within or outside the zone. Other food crops traded in the area include sorghum, beans and peas.

There are not many traders who come to buy crops from farmers within the zone. The few who come to buy the commodities generally offer the farmers very low prices. The farmers are forced to sell at the low prices because of lack of alternative. However, the price trend reverses during the hunger months when the households are in need of buying food from the traders. The buyers take advantage of the lack of competition and high demand for the commodities to charge high prices making it not easily accessible by majority of the 'very poor' and 'poor' households.

Some of the food traded in the zone comes from South Africa. This helps to ensure that food is readily available in the shops in the zone. However some of the better-off farmers complained that maize from South Africa is cheaper and making it difficult for farmers within the zone to compete. It is therefore difficult for the farmers in the zone to engage in and expand crop production as a means of earning income.

The market infrastructure for sale of livestock and livestock products is also not well developed. With the exception of wool and mohair, there are no established markets where farmers can sell their livestock and livestock products. Trading in these commodities is on an individual household level basis including traders who come to the zone to purchase livestock.

Wool and mohair are sold through farmers associations in the area to buyers in South Africa. However the problem with this arrangement is that the local farmers are not involved in determining the price for their commodity and the buyer decides what price to offer which sometimes ends up in the farmers getting very low prices for their commodity.

Seasonal Calendar for Foot Hills

| Foot Hills | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|--------------------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Rains | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Summer Planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Land Preparation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sowing/Planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sorghum | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maize | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beans | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvesting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maize | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beans | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sorghum | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Winter Planting (Peas & Wheat) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Land Preparation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sowing | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvest | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vegetable Prod/Sales/trade | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beer brewing | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Wealth Breakdown

Four wealth groups were identified in the zone. The 'very poor' households accounted for about 13% of the households in the zone, the poor (28%), the middle (44%) and the better-off (15%). Crop production and livestock holdings are the major determinants of wealth in this zone. Crop production is mainly dependent on area planted and yield.

Land ownership in the zone does not vary much across wealth groups in the zone, averaging about 2 acres across the wealth groups. This is because most of the land is acquired through inheritance. However the actual land cultivated increases with the wealthier groups. The table below shows the average land cultivated and livestock ownership by the different wealth groups in the zone.

The households in the 'poor' and 'very' poor categories cultivate an average of about 2 acres each, which means that they just cultivate the land which they own. The households in the middle and better-off wealth groups cultivate an average of about 3.5 and 6 acres respectively. This is because these two groups acquire additional land for cultivation. This is made possible through sharecropping especially with the poor households who do not have enough resources to efficiently utilise the land they own. This eventually results in differences in crop production among the various wealth groups with the levels of production increasing for wealthier households. The yield levels obtained by the different wealth groups also increase with the increase in wealth group level. This is because the better-off households can afford various

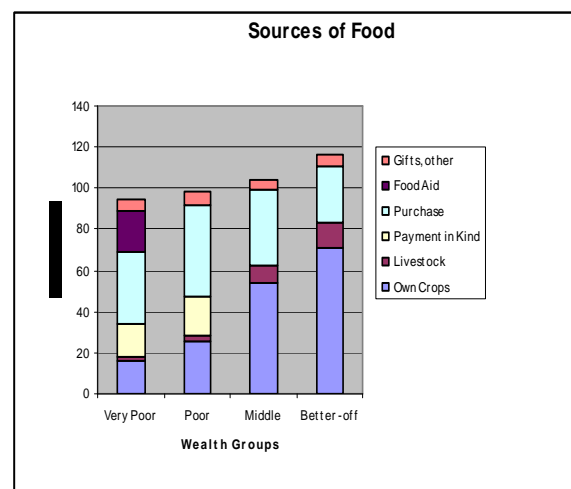
| | | Wealth Group Information | | |
|------------|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| | | H size | Area planted and how | Livestock |
| Very poor |  13% | 5-7 members | 1-3 acres | No livestock |
| Poor |  28% | 5-7 members | 2-3 acres | 0-2 pigs |
| Middle |  44% | 5-8 members | 2-4 acres, manure, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 3-5 cattle, 5-15 sheep, 10-20 goats, 0-2 pigs |
| Better-off |  15% | 6-8 members | 4-10 acres, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 5-13 cattle, 25-50 sheep, 20-50 goats, 0-2 pigs |

types of inputs such as fertilizer and seed to enable them produce more from a piece of land than the households in the very poor or poor categories.

Livestock holdings are also major determinant of wealth in the zone. Majority of the very poor and poor households do not own livestock. The middle wealth group has some livestock while the better-off households have the highest number of livestock that includes goats, sheep and cattle. These contribute significantly to household incomes and cattle are used for providing draught power. All livestock provide manure for the crops.

Sources of Food

There are five main sources of food in the zone and these include crop production, livestock products, purchases and payments in form of food. In the graph, food access is expressed as a percentage of minimum food requirements, taken as an average food energy intake of 2100kcal per person per day. Own crop production for the poor households contributes less than 20% of the food needs for group. This means that the very poor households have to obtain a big part their food needs from other sources. One of the sources is purchase, which account for over a



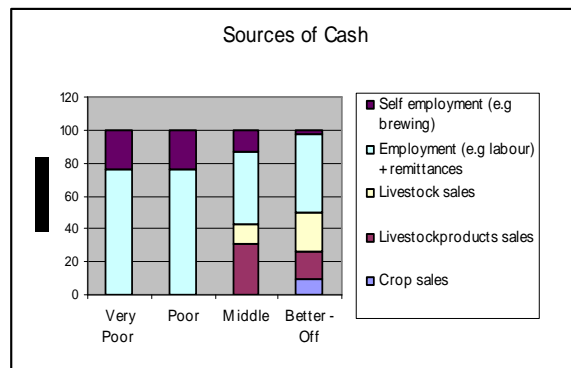
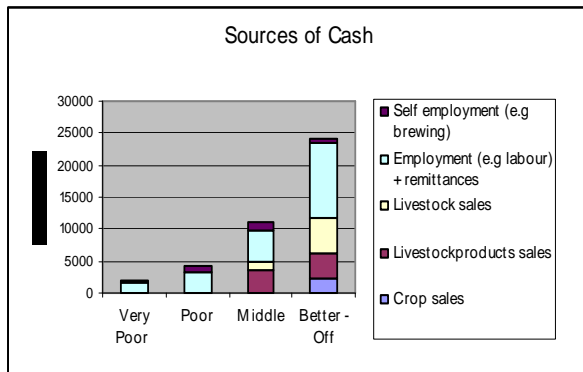
third of the food intake in this group. The biggest source of food in the very poor category is purchase followed by food aid which includes food-for-work programmes, own crop production and finally payment in kind. With these sources, the households in the 'very poor' wealth group are able to meet almost all their food requirements. The contribution of own crop and livestock production to total food intake increases with wealth. The 'better-off' households are able to cover almost 80% all their food requirements from their own crop and livestock products, the 'middle' access about 60% while the 'very poor' and 'poor' can only access about 20% and 30% from own crop. The 'very poor', 'poor' and 'middle' access about 30% to 40% of their food requirements from food purchases. Although the 'better-off' buy some food, it is mainly none staple foods to complement their diet. The 'middle' households also purchase substantial quantities of non staple food. All wealth groups benefited from school feeding programmes that provided meals at school. This accounted for approximately 5% of total food access across the wealth groups.

Sources of Cash

The main sources of cash income in this zone are employment, remittances, petty trade, sale of livestock and livestock products and self employment e.g. firewood sale.

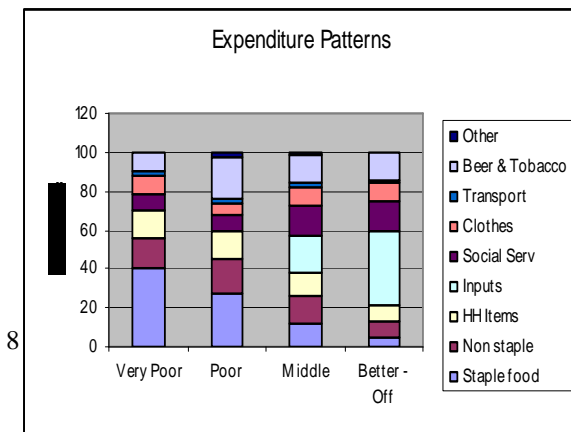
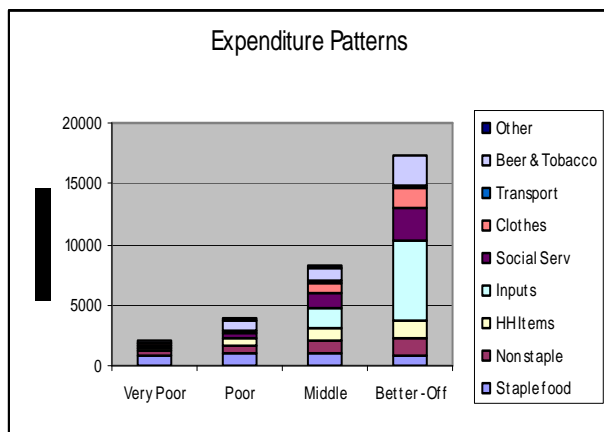
Majority of the households in the 'very poor' and 'poor' wealth groups do not own livestock and have no crops for sale. They consume all that they produce. This leaves them with few income source options. These two groups are highly dependent on labour as a source of income. Most of them do piece jobs especially in the fields of the 'better-off' group to generate income.

Remittances also play a significant role as a source of income for this group. This is because some of the households have members working in South Africa and in the towns within the country. The households in the 'middle' and 'better off' wealth group get income from sale of livestock and livestock products. In addition, the 'better-off' households obtain income from sale of crops. Income from crops, livestock and livestock products, account for almost half of all the income in the better -off wealth group. The rest comes from employment and remittances



Expenditure patterns

The expenditure patterns vary from one wealth group to another. The graph below shows a significant proportion of household expenditure for the poorer wealth groups is on food items and the reverse is true with wealthier households. Close to half of the expenditure by the



households in the 'very poor' wealth group is on food compared to only 10% in the better-off wealth group. Another significant difference in expenditure by the different wealth groups is that the 'better-off' also have a big proportion of expenditure on agricultural inputs compared to the households in the 'middle' wealth group. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households have no expenditure on agricultural inputs as majority of them can not afford. The graph above shows the expenditure pattern for the various wealth groups.

Hazards

The main hazards in the zone are drought, worms that attack maize crop, frost and animal disease mainly black quarter. Crop production in the zone has in recent years been negatively affected by drought. Drought significantly reduce crop production and the 'very poor' and 'poor' households are the worst affected since they do not have a strong asset base to fall back on. Many farmers across all wealth groups complained about stalk borer. Frost is another serious problem in the area as it affects maize production. When there is frost, pollination is affected hence results in significant drops in crop production.

All these hazards result in significant drops in crop production leaving a lot of households vulnerable to food insecurity. In case of animals, especially cattle, black quarter disease has been killing many animals in the zone.

Response strategies

People usually employ a number of strategies in order to try and cope with a hazard and some of the key response strategies in the zone include;

Switching expenditure from non essential commodities such as beer, clothes etc to staple food. This is a common initial response in the event of a hazard that affects food access. All wealth groups spend considerable amounts on beer and other 'luxury' items, which they reduce in order to buy staple food.

Reduction in number of meals eaten per day is the most common strategy employed by households in the zone. Some of the households reduce the number of meals or quantity of food eaten per day for their food stocks to last longer than would otherwise be the case. This is especially common among the very poor and poor households.

Kinship support is common but not a reliable strategy because sometimes even the wealthier households are hard hit and therefore unable to extend a helping hand to the poorer households. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households receive significant amounts of food from the wealthier households in the zone. This is a common community support mechanism that happens even in normal times. The 'very poor' and the 'poor' will seek for more assistance from the 'middle' and 'better - off' during a bad year.

Increased sale of livestock and livestock products is a common strategy for households with significant numbers of livestock. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households in this zone do not own livestock. The 'middle' and 'better-off' households do increase the number of livestock sold in order to obtain cash to buy food when faced by a shortage.

Increased seeking of casual labour opportunities is a key strategy for the poorer households to increase access to food and cash in periods of hunger. The availability of casual labour opportunities in the zone is limited especially given that majority of the poorer households depend on it as a main source of income. However, during bad years, there is increased search for casual labour and often this involves travelling longer distances than would normally be the case. The younger members of households are even able to move into South Africa in search of labour opportunities. Due to the limited labour opportunities both within the zone and in South Africa, it is difficult to estimate how much extra income this option may provide.

3 Mountains Livelihood Profile

Main Conclusions and Implications

The Mountains are the least densely settled part of the country and the communities tend to be much more isolated from services and markets. This limits labour and market opportunities that the households have compared to other zones where there is more interaction and opportunities to work or sale products in another zone. This therefore means that households in this zone are potentially subject to unreasonable price manipulation by traders due to the isolation from the rest of the country.

Efforts to improve market access to remote areas in the mountains should assist in alleviating market access problems in the zone. This could include opening up more access roads that will quickly link the zone with the neighbouring zones.

Livestock and crop production are main sources of food and income in the zone especially for the 'middle' and 'better- off' households. The main livestock products sold are wool and mohair and most households are keen to promote this source of income because it provides income at the same time preserves the main asset unlike if the animal is sold. The main problem though is that formal livestock markets organised by government (ministry of Agriculture and Food Security) offer very low prices for livestock. This forces some household to travel all the way to lowlands in search of market for their livestock.

Better organised livestock markets that take into consideration the realistic market prices will be necessary to boost incomes from livestock.

Livestock theft is a major problem facing the zone and policing is problematic due to the difficult terrain of the zone. Most of the stolen livestock are sold in urban areas in the lowlands including Maseru city but also some of the livestock are sold in South African towns. There is an urgent need to improve security in terms of policing as well as investing in measures such as livestock branding that can dissuade potential thieves.

Livestock diseases such as sheep scab and black quarter are common and do compromise the price of livestock and livestock products especially wool which attracts very low prices once it is not of the best quality. The department of Livestock services needs to invest more in control of these diseases to protect and promote livelihoods in the zone.

Although crop production is a main source of income especially for the 'better- off' households, income from sale of crops is affected by cheaper commodities that come in from South Africa. The cheaper commodities such as maize from Kwazulu Natal have a double edged impact on the zone. On one hand, it out competes local maize sales and thus affects income for the 'better- off', on the other hand, the lower maize price benefits the 'poor' and 'very poor' who purchase over 20% of the total food consumed annually. Some of this maize trade is through informal channels and this needs to be tracked to measure the extent to which the zone is affected.

Employment is the main source of income for the 'very poor', 'poor' and 'middle' households. For the 'very poor' and 'poor', casual labour is the key income activity and this largely depends on the agricultural season. In times of long dry spells, income from agricultural labour is severely reduced and yet these households must spend a significant amount of cash on purchase of staple food. Efforts to establish additional sources of employment will help to reduce reliance on just a few agricultural related sources.

Zone Description

The Mountains are the least densely settled part of the country and the communities tend to be much more isolated from services and markets. The zone supports a population of 385,991 people and spreads across all Districts except Mafeteng and Berea. The main elements in this economy are livestock, crops, employment and non food production. Livestock plays an

important role in the economy of this livelihood zone and sale of livestock and livestock products such as wool and mohair are significant sources of income especially for the 'middle' and 'better – off' households who own large herds of cattle, sheep and goats. Due to isolation and difficulties in travel, there is a high dependency on the local employment markets for the 'very poor', 'poor' and the 'middle'.

The main food crops grown in the zone are Maize, wheat, beans and peas. Other crops such as potatoes and sorghum are grown on a smaller scale. Mixed cropping is significantly the preferred method of cultivation in this zone and there are two crop seasons namely the winter and summer cropping seasons. The summer crops include maize, sorghum, wheat potatoes and beans while the main winter crops are wheat and peas.

Land ownership in the zone is mainly through inheritance and is usually not significantly different across the wealth groups. The land size holding ranges from 0.5 to 10 acres though the majority of 'very poor' and 'poor' cultivate approximately 0.5 acres on average. The 'middle' and 'better –off' practice sharecropping and this increases their acreage cultivated. Although maize is the most commonly grown crop, a large section of the mountain zone grows wheat at the expense of maize.

All the produce is mainly for consumption. Where wheat is the main crop, it is exchanged with either maize or sorghum. This clearly indicates that there is a strong bartering system that is practiced in the mountain. The use of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and hybrid seed is not a common practice especially amongst the poorer households who cannot afford buying inputs. The wealthier households use fertilizers and manure to improve soil productivity. Seed is usually saved from previous harvest and this is common across wealth groups.

Consumption of Wild food (vegetables) is common amongst all wealth groups during the months of September to March and these are collected at least for five days per week. However, dried wild vegetables are an important source of income for the 'very poor' during the winter months. It should be noted that consumption of wild food is by all wealth groups and it is out of preference rather than due to lack of access to other food items. The difference is that poorer households will put more effort into looking for wild foods (vegetables) as a sauce, while the wealthier will consume wild vegetables just because they taste good.

The main livestock kept in the zone are sheep, goats, cattle, horses and donkeys. Although the poorer households do not own livestock, the 'middle' and 'better – off' wealth groups own large herds of Sheep and goats which accounts for a significant portion of their incomes. Due to the difficult mountain terrain, draught power is the most prominent form of cultivating the fields. The Horses and donkeys are used mainly for transport.

The main income sources in this zone are livestock sales, crop sales, formal employment and casual labour irrespective of good or bad year. For the poorer households weeding is a major source of food and cash income even though the weeding period is fairly short.

The hungry season normally coincides with the peak agricultural labour season when agricultural activities such as weeding are taking place. For some households, wheat is usually exchanged with maize and in some cases sold and the cash income used to purchase maize. Another common feature of the hungry season is the sale of assets such as livestock to obtain cash for food purchase.

Markets

Although the mountains zone is generally isolated from major markets in the Country, internal market systems seem to function fairly well.

Local markets within the zone are accessible through local road networks that have been constructed through the rugged terrain. This however, is not the case for all areas in the mountains and there are areas where access is problematic due to lack of roads and over

flowing rivers during rainy season. In addition, the terrain requires powerful vehicles which some of the local traders do not have. Horses and donkeys are widely used for transportation of food to local markets and they are particularly helpful where the road infrastructure is bad.

The supply for all staples is available throughout the year but the demand is highest during hungry season and this comes with high prices that fall during harvest season. During the hunger period, most households rely on purchases from local markets for maize. The grain is mainly sourced from wholesalers in Maseru, Butha Buthe and Natal (RSA).

There is a formal livestock market which is organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MOAFS) once in a year. This market offers low prices which are unfavourable to farmers. As a result, households wishing to sell livestock seek market elsewhere such as Maseru and neighbouring RSA towns.

Seasonal Calendar

| Mountains | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|---|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Rains | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Summer Planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Land Prep & planting Maize, sorghum, beans, wheat | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Potatoes | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weeding/pesticide | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvesting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maize | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beans | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sorghum | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wheat | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peas | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Potatoes | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Threshing | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Wealth groups

Four wealth groups were identified in the zone. The 'very poor' accounted for 15% of the households in the zone, the 'poor' accounted for 40%, the 'Middle' 25% and the 'Better – off' 20%. Crop production and livestock are major determinants of wealth in the zone. The 'middle' and 'better – off' households own large stocks of livestock that include sheep, goats and cattle. The poorer households on the other hand barely own any livestock except for a few that own small numbers of chickens. Livestock diseases and theft were identified as major problems in the zone and this was part of the reason households owned fewer livestock than expected. Sheep and goats are preferred because of the wool and mohair in addition to actual livestock sales. In general, the communities indicated a high prevalence of livestock diseases especially for sheep, goats and chickens. Anthrax and sheep scab were identified as prevalent. The big problem is access to and availability of drugs to treat these diseases, resulting in high losses. Stock theft still prevails as a threat to their livelihoods.

Land ownership across the wealth group is not significantly different mainly because land allocation is done by community leaders regardless of wealth. The main difference comes in at land cultivation where the better off households cultivate more land than the poorer households. Sharecropping is common amongst the wealthier households and this enables them to access more land for crops. The poorer households do not use inputs such as fertilizer and this leads to low crop yield as compared to the wealthier households.

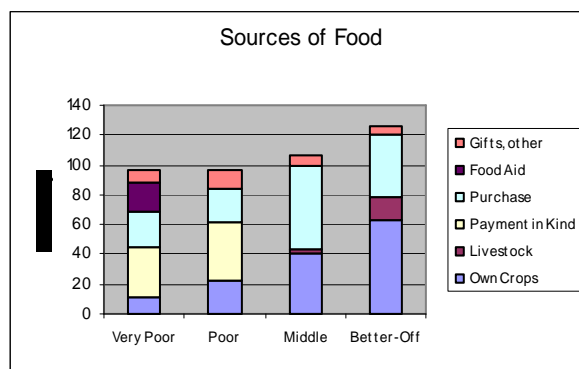
| | | Wealth Group Information | | |
|------------|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| | | HH size | Area planted and how | Livestock |
| Very poor |  15% | 6-10 members | 0-1.3 acres | 2-5 chickens |
| Poor |  40% | 6-10 members | 0-1.3 acres | 0-3 cattle, 6-8 chickens |
| Middle |  25% | 6-8 members | 2-8 acres, manure, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 2-5 cattle, 8-10 sheep, 5-10 goats |
| Better-off |  20% | 8-12 members | 8-12 acres, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 10-15 cattle, 50-100 sheep, 30-80 goats |

Sources of Food

The main food crops grown among all the wealth groups are maize, beans, peas, wheat, potatoes and vegetables. Due to the small size of land owned by the 'poor' and 'very poor', maize is the main crop grown while the middle and better-off grow a variety of crops that includes maize, wheat, potatoes, beans and peas. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households heavily rely on labour exchange for food (payment with food) amounting to 30% - 40% of their annual food consumption.

Food purchase is common amongst all wealth groups but the 'very poor' and 'poor' purchase more of the staple as compared to the middle and better – off. The 'very poor' and 'poor' sell part of their own production especially those who produce sorghum and wheat. The wealthier groups sell/exchange a significant proportion of their own production and tend to purchase more of non staple food items.

Wild food consumption across all wealth groups is common though the main wild food is green leaves and this contributes an insignificant percentage of the total annual household food needs. All wealth groups benefited from school feeding programmes that provided meals at school. This accounted for approximately 5% of total food access across the wealth groups.



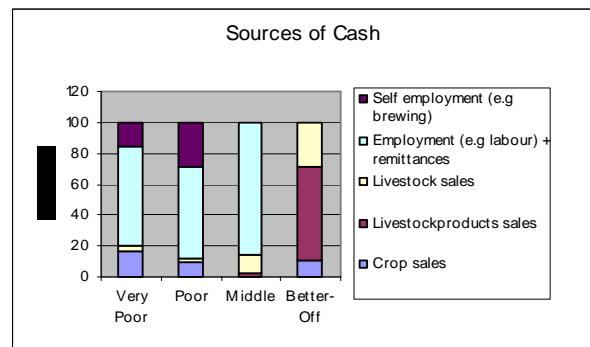
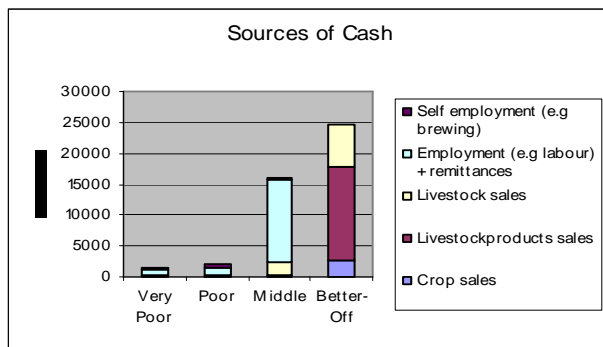
Sources of cash

The main sources of income in the zone are crop sales, livestock products sales, livestock sales, employment and remittances.

The main sources of income for the very poor and the poor is casual labour and remittances contributing about 60% and 50% of the total income respectively. The casual labour opportunities include activities such as weeding, sowing house smearing, domestic work and cattle herding.

The 'middle' households obtain most of their income (about 80%) from employment and remittances. Remittances are got from members of the household who work in places like Maseru and other towns in Lesotho or in South Africa. Much of the employment opportunities for the 'middle' are in the skilled and semi skilled sectors e.g. working in factories, supermarkets and local business enterprises. In addition to employment, the middle households obtain cash income from sale of livestock e.g. sheep and goats.

The better off on the other hand obtain most of their income from sale of livestock and

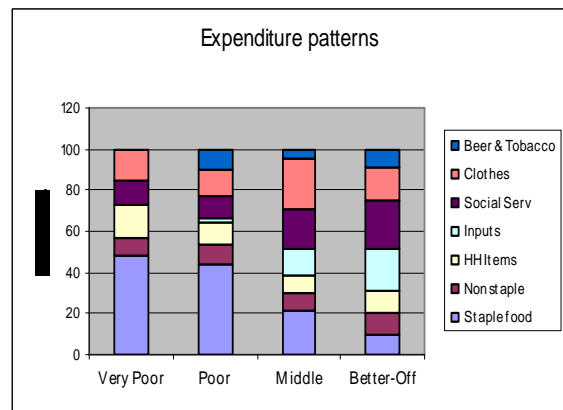
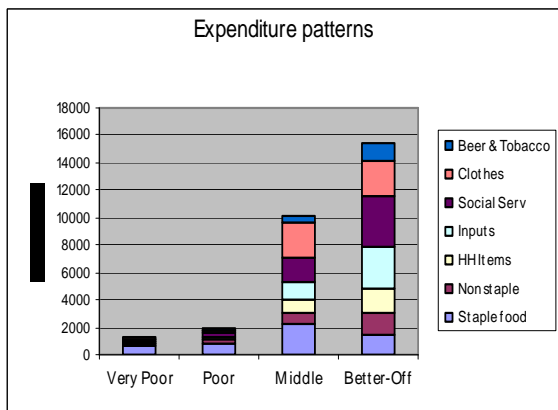


livestock products such as wool and mohair. Crop sales are a supplementary source of income for the better off who produce more than they need for household consumption.

Expenditure patterns

The expenditure patterns vary according to wealth group and generally the poorer household spend much of their cash on food purchase unlike the wealthier households who spend more on social services and inputs. For the 'poor' and 'very poor' households, expenditure on staple food accounts for over 30% of total household expenditure. In contrast, expenditure on staple food for the 'middle' and 'better -off' accounts for about 10% of total expenditure. This is because the 'poor' and 'very poor' food production is not adequate to meet the household food needs. For this reason they heavily depend on purchase and labour exchange for food.

The 'middle' and 'better - off' households spend on farm inputs such as fertilizer and livestock drugs because they own large numbers of livestock and crop production is a major source of cash income so inputs become very crucial.



Hazards

Common hazards in the zone are drought, pests such as stalk borer, hail storms and early frost.

Drought is the single most crucial hazard affecting the zone and this affects both crop production and livestock keeping. Successive years of erratic weather patterns and drought were pointed out as the biggest problem for the community. Drought conditions not only affects crop and livestock production, it also affects incomes for the very poor and poor who obtain a big proportion of their income from agricultural labour activities such as weeding. Due to repeated crop failure resulting from erratic weather patterns, there is a tendency for many of the poorer households to engage in other income generating activities such as brewing and sale of food items in the villages. Although this diversification is good, the market is limited and many households will not find the market for their commodities.

Pests and diseases are another common hazard in the zone. Crop pests are widespread and for households without the means to control them, the damage is really significant. The poorer households rely on traditional herbs to control the pests but this has not been very successful.

Animal diseases especially anthrax and sheep scab were said to be a big hazard in the zone and this mainly affects the middle and better –off households who own livestock. For the poorer household, chicken diseases especially Newcastle was pointed as a major problem. In fact most of poorer households were no longer relying on chicken keeping for income mainly because of the dreaded Newcastle disease.

Early frost is a major problem in the mountain zone and quite frequent as well. It mainly affects the maize crop and results in heavy crop losses.

Response strategies

People usually employ a number of strategies in order to try and cope with a hazard and some of the key response strategies in the zone include;

Switching expenditure from non essential commodities such as beer, clothes etc to staple food. This is a common initial response in the event of a hazard that affects food access. All wealth groups spend considerable amounts on beer and other 'luxury' items, which they reduce in order to buy staple food.

Reduction in number of meals eaten per day is the most common strategy employed by households in the zone. Some of the households reduce the number of meals or quantity of food eaten per day for their food stocks to last longer than would otherwise be the case. This is especially common among the very poor and poor households.

Kinship support is a common strategy but not a reliable one because during severe crises, even the wealthier households are seriously affected and cannot afford to support the poorer households. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households receive significant amounts of food from the wealthier households in the zone. This is a common community support mechanism that happens even in normal times. The very poor and the poor will seek for more assistance from the 'middle' and 'better – off' during a bad year.

Increased sale of livestock and livestock products is a common strategy for households with significant numbers of livestock. Households who own livestock especially the 'middle' and 'better-off' households do increase the number of livestock sold in order to obtain cash to buy food when faced by a shortage.

Increased seeking of casual labour opportunities is commonly practiced by the poorer household to increase access to food and cash during periods of hunger. The availability of

casual labour opportunities in the zone is limited especially given that majority of the poorer households depend on it as a main source of income. However, during bad years, there is increased search for casual labour and often this involves travelling longer distances than would normally be the case. The younger members of households are even able to move into South Africa in search of labour opportunities. Due to the limited labour opportunities both within the zone and in South Africa, it is difficult to estimate how much extra income this option may provide.

4 Peri – Urban Livelihood Profile

Major Conclusions and Implication for Programming

Successive drought conditions have occurred over the past four years and the most affected areas are in the Southern Districts. Although crop production is not a main source of food for the poorer households, agricultural activities are a major source of income for the 'very poor' and the 'poor'. In addition to cash income, the 'very poor' and 'poor' are often paid with food for agricultural labour.

Reliance on food aid is a major concern in the Zone. In the reference year the 'very poor' received relief food aid for 9 months and this constituted 35% of their annual food requirements. This is a high level of reliance which could have negative implications on local coping strategies as well as food markets. To reduce this reliance, it may be prudent to consider other safety – net programmes that target the chronically food insecure who are heavily dependent on food handouts.

Land degradation particularly in the southern Peri – urban areas has reduced arable land. A significant proportion of households in the zone do not own land and this affects their food access through own production. Soil conservation methods need to be introduced in the zone along with re forestation efforts.

The 'very poor' and the 'poor' have no access to draught power. These wealth groups do not own livestock and hence rely on the 'middle' and 'better off' for draught power. They also cannot afford hiring tractors due to low incomes. The effect of this reliance of the 'middle' and 'better – off' for draught power is that they always cultivate their own fields very late, when the households with draught power have completed their fields. This late planting often results into poor crop yields.

Inadequate access to agricultural inputs: There are no localised markets for inputs and when available, inputs such as fertiliser are too expensive for the poorer households. It would be helpful if commercially operated input distribution centres are set up in small towns. Although this will address the availability issues, affordability may need to be addressed through properly targeted input subsidies for the most vulnerable.

Lack of employment opportunities: Many of the households in the zone especially in the northern areas depended on employment for example in the textile factories. With the closure of some factories and limited employment opportunities else where, majority of households are facing serious difficulties accessing food and income.

Zone description

The zone comprises of areas close to the main urban areas in Lesotho and stretches from Butha Buthe to Mhale's Hoek. The key feature of this zone is that it has characteristics of both urban and rural Lesotho. The majority of poorer households engage in agricultural activities as a source of income in addition to selling labour in exchange for food. The zone supports a population of 93,648 people and is characterised by extensive land degradation especially as you move southwards towards the Southern Lowlands. The terrain in the southern parts becomes rocky and very dry, and dry river beds are common features.

Markets

The main markets in the area are shopping centres which typically have several retail outlets open every day. The shops sell groceries and household goods mainly though some will stock farm inputs as well. Main foods purchased by the community are maize meal, bread, cooking oil, vegetables and meat. The road network in the area is very good from Maseru to the urban wholesalers and prices of food items especially maize meal are low compared to some other zones. This is because the main traders in the zone buy maize meal in large quantities from Maseru thereby get big discounts and are able to sell at lower prices in the villages thus

undercutting the local business people. Although this is good to the consumer in terms of accessing cheaper food items, it may discourage local business entrepreneurship as the local business people find themselves forced out of business.

Livestock markets are not developed and buying or selling takes place at household level but due to proximity of the zone to urban centres, there is almost ready market for any item be it crop or livestock. The big market base and good road infrastructure in zone is important to the livelihoods of households in the zone. The ready market for crops and livestock in the peri urban areas in addition to availability of labour opportunities potentially makes it easier for poorer households to make ends meet. The very poor for instance obtain over 20% of their income from sale of crops and this is mainly vegetables whose market is readily available.

Seasonal calendar

| Peri-Urban | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|---|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Summer Planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Field preparation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sowing | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvesting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Green maize | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beans | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sorghum | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| maize | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Winter Planting (Peas & Wheat) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Field preparation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sowing | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvest | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vegetable prod & sales | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Wealth Breakdown

A significant proportion of the population (40%) is classified as 'poor' while the 'very poor' and 'better - off' each constitute 18% and the 'middle' constitute about 24%. Land cultivated rather than land owned is a major determinant of household capability to rely on its own production to meet its consumption needs. Poorer households lack the means (inputs, draught power) to fully utilise the land they own and therefore rent it out to the 'better' off for cash or for a share of the harvest. The 'better - off' and the 'middle' have productive assets such as ploughs, cultivators and planters. In addition, the 'better - off' also own tractors and these assets are important for increasing crop production and are also hired out for income. In this zone there is a tendency of poverty being generational in that the 'very poor' for example are comprised of households that did not inherit any land.

| | | Wealth Group Information | | |
|------------|-----|--------------------------|---|---|
| | | H-Size | Area planted and how | Livestock |
| Very poor | 18% | 5-8 members | 0-3 acres | 0-2 chickens |
| Poor | 40% | 5-10 members | 0-3 acres | 0-1 cattle, 0-3 chickens, 0-2 pigs, 0-2 sheep |
| Middle | 24% | 5-6 members | 3-5 acres, manure, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 2-6 cattle, 10-15 sheep, 1-3 pigs |
| Better-off | 18% | 3-7 members | 5-10 acres, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 3-10 cattle, 10-12 sheep, 2-6 pigs |

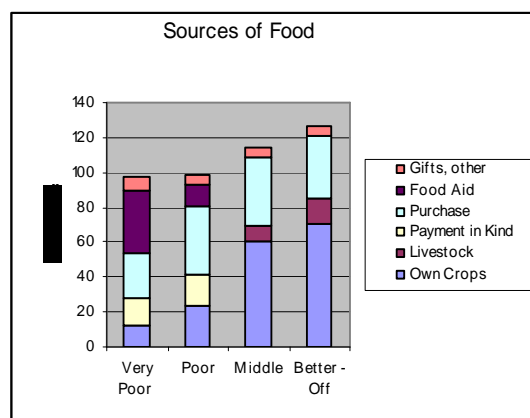
Livestock ownership is a fairly significant source of livelihoods in the zone though increasing livestock theft has turned livestock ownership into an unattractive investment especially for the

'better – off'. The most commonly owned livestock by the 'middle' and 'better' – off are cattle, pigs, sheep, donkey and horses. The 'very poor' and 'poor' do not own significant number of livestock though some own a small number of chickens.

The gap between the 'very poor' and the 'better-off' in this zone is extremely high and key distinction amongst wealth groups is income level. The 'very poor' income is about 5% that of the 'better – off', while income for the 'poor' is 10% that of the 'better-off'.

Food sources

All wealth groups have own crop production as a food source. Own crops are the major food source for the 'middle' and 'better- off' comprising about 60% and 70% of the annual food consumption respectively. The 'very poor' and 'poor' access about 10% and 20% of food needs from own crop production. Crop production for the very poor and the poor is constrained by limited access to land, agricultural implements, draught power and labour availability. The labour constraint is particularly significant because the poor and very poor households are always engaged in several labour activities to gain income. This limits their capacity to engage in cultivation, though other factors such as lack of draught power, implements and land itself are probably as important.



Major crops produced are maize and sorghum. Wheat, beans and vegetables are also planted mainly by the 'middle' and 'better – off'. The main sources of food for the 'very poor' in the reference year were purchase and food aid which contributed 25% and 35% of total food requirements respectively. The main sources for the 'poor' are purchase and own crop contributing about 40% and 20% respectively. Labour exchange for food (payment in kind) is also a key source of food for both the 'poor' and 'very poor' contributing about 20% and 15% of total requirements respectively.

The 'middle' and 'Better –off' on the other hand, access 60 % to 80% of total annual consumption from own crops. This looks quite strange in a Peri urban set up but is largely explained by the fact that these wealth groups manage to accumulate large portions of land by renting from the poorer households. In addition, livestock and livestock products contributed about 10% - 15% of the total consumption for the 'middle' and 'better – off'. All wealth groups benefited from school feeding programmes that provided meals at school. This accounted for approximately 5% of total food access across the wealth groups.

Sources of Cash

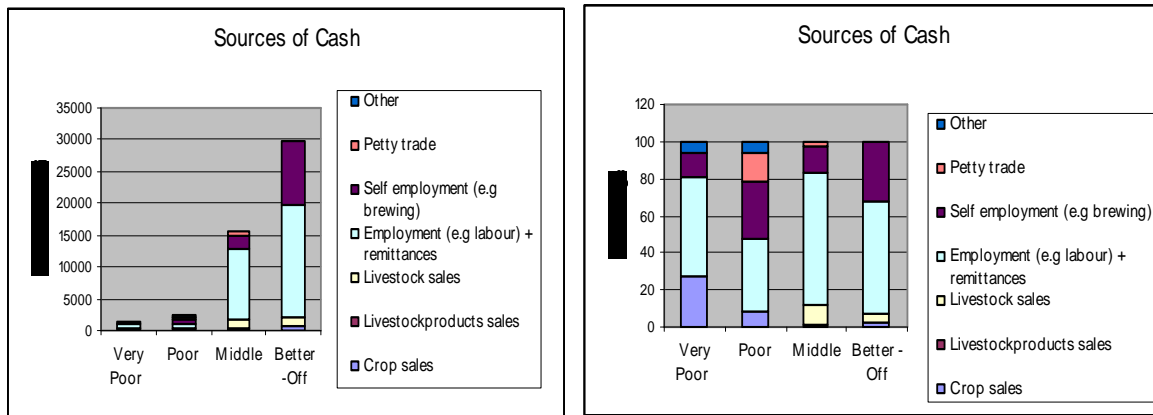
The gap between income for the poorer and the better-off households is extremely wide in this zone. For example, the 'very poor' incomes amount to 5% of the 'better-off' incomes while the 'poor' incomes amount to about 10% of the 'better-off' incomes. The income gap between the 'middle' and the 'better off' is also very large in that the 'middle' incomes are about half the 'better –off' incomes. This is quite unique compared to the other zones.

Crop sales provide income for all wealth groups. However, it is most significant for the 'very poor' who derive about 30% of their total income from crop sales. The 'very poor' are mainly engaged in vegetable production for sale. Other crops sold are maize, sorghum and beans.

Sale of livestock is mainly by the 'middle' and 'better-off' who earn about 5% - 10% of total income from this source. The 'middle' earn higher cash income from livestock sales than the 'better- off' and the reason given is that rampant stock theft has discouraged the 'better – off' from engaging in this activity. The 'better – off' have opted to engage more in formal and self employment activities.

Sources of income for the 'poor' and 'very poor' are predominantly casual labour opportunities in weeding, house smearing, home brewing, washing and wood collecting. Casual labour plus some remittances contribute between 40% and 50% of total annual income for the 'very poor' and the 'poor'. Employment and remittances is the major source of income for the 'middle' and the 'better – off' as well contributing about 70% and 60% of total income respectively. The difference in employment activities for the wealthier and the poorer households is that while the poorer households predominantly depend on casual labour, the 'middle' and 'better- off' are engaged in skilled and semi – skilled labour activities.

The 'middle' and 'better – off' earn much of their income from salaried employment as civil servants, miners in South Africa, and as business people mainly shop owners. Other activities for the 'middle' and 'better – off' include renting out agricultural equipment and knitting/sewing business.

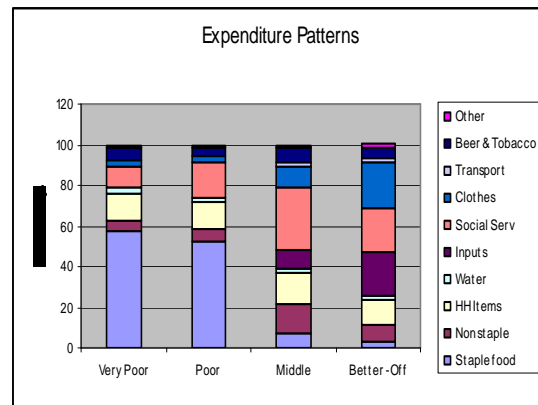
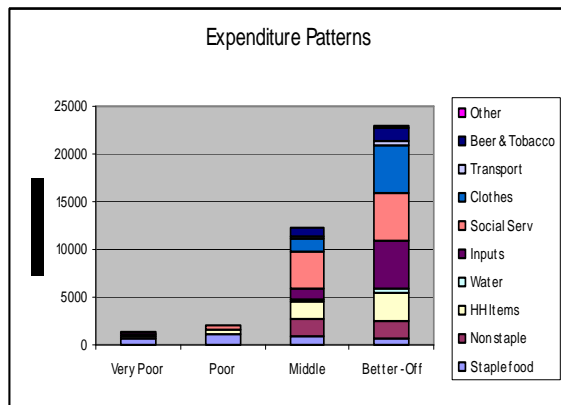


Expenditure patterns

Similar to income, the expenditure patterns in this zone show very big gaps between the poorer and the wealthier households.

The 'very poor' and 'poor' households use most of their cash income to purchase staple food especially maize meal. This accounts for 50 -60% of total expenditure as compared with the 'middle' and 'better – off' for whom expenditure on staple food accounts for less than 10% of total expenditure. Main food purchases for all groups are maize meal, oil, sugar and beans. The 'better – off' and the 'middle' expenditure patterns show higher percentage spend on clothes, education and agricultural inputs. The 'poor' and 'very poor' spend more on food, education, household items nothing at all on inputs. The zero spend on inputs is a major concern especially given that crop sales account for almost 30% of the income for 'very poor' households.

It is worth noting that although percentage spend on things such as household items and water is more or less the same across wealth groups, the major difference is in the amount spend. For example although percentage spend on household items for the 'very poor' and 'the better –off' is 14% and 12% respectively, the actual cash spend is M180 for the 'very poor' and M2744 for the 'better – off' that is approximately 15 times higher than for the 'very poor'. The poorer households are only able to afford free primary education while the wealthier households can afford higher education and better schools. The same pattern is evident when it comes to other social services like health. The poorer households rely more on herbs and the inadequately stocked government facilities for treatment, while the wealthier households can afford to access better facilities even in private clinics.



Hazards

Perennial Drought Conditions have affected this zone since 2000. As a consequence, crop production has been low and there has been greater reliance on food aid to meet household food requirements, particularly for the 'very poor'. The drought hazard is particularly serious for the 'poor' and the 'very poor' because it affects them from different angles namely; reduced crop production, reduced casual labour opportunities for both cash and in kind payment and reduced gifts from better-off households.

Land degradation and poor soil quality is prevalent in the zone. Widespread soil erosion results in deep gullies and soil erosion also results in diminishing soil quality and lower yields. This increasingly means that crop production as a livelihood strategy is being reduced and households have to look for alternative strategies though options are limited.

Hailstorms are frequent and they completely destroy crops especially maize and pumpkins. This usually results in heavy losses for those who will have invested in crop production and acts as a disincentive to further agricultural production.

Livestock theft has been a major problem in this zone as is the case in other zones. This has discouraged livestock ownership and investment and partly affected land cultivation due to reduced draught power.

Response strategies

People usually employ a number of strategies in order to try and cope with a hazard and some of the key response strategies in the zone include;

Switching expenditure from non essential commodities such as beer, clothes etc to staple food. This is a common initial response in the event of a hazard that affects food access. All wealth groups spend considerable amounts on beer and other 'luxury' items, which they reduce in order to buy staple food.

Reduction in number of meals eaten per day is the most common strategy employed by households when faced by hunger. Some of the households reduce the number of meals or quantity of food eaten per day for their food stocks to last longer than would otherwise be the case. This is especially common among the 'very poor' and 'poor' households.

Kinship support is commonly practiced but not very reliable because sometimes even the wealthier households are seriously affected as well. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households receive significant amounts of food from the wealthier households in the zone. This is a common community support mechanism that happens even in normal times. The 'very poor' and the 'poor' will seek for more assistance from the 'middle' and 'better-off' during a bad year.

Increased sale of livestock and livestock products is a common response strategy to increase access to cash for food purchase. Households with significant numbers of livestock especially the 'middle' and better-off' households do increase the number of livestock sold in order to obtain cash to buy food when faced by a shortage.

Increased seeking of casual labour opportunities is commonly practiced by the poorer households. The availability of casual labour opportunities in the zone is limited especially given that majority of the poorer households depend on it as a main source of income. However, during bad years, there is increased search for casual labour and often this involves travelling longer distances than would normally be the case. The younger members of households are even able to move into South Africa in search of labour opportunities. Due to the limited labour opportunities both within the zone and even in South Africa, it is difficult to estimate how much extra income this option may provide.

5 Northern Lowlands Livelihood Profile

Main Conclusions and implications

The Northern lowlands Livelihood zone is the food basket for the country. It has very good and productive soils, receives good amounts of rainfall and the road networks are of good quality. This creates ample opportunities for access food through own production and purchase because access to agricultural labour for the 'very poor' and 'poor' is fairly reasonable.

There is insufficient farm implements in the zone and the poorer households are mostly affected because they have to borrow implements from the 'middle' and 'better -off' households who will only release the tools when work on their own fields is completed.

Late arrival of agricultural inputs was cited as a problem by many interviewees. Seeds and fertilizers are brought in late and are not easily accessible due to the long distance to the shops with inputs. In addition, the price of fertiliser and other inputs is high for the average farmer and this results in some farmers especially the poorer ones missing out.

Zone description

The Northern Lowlands livelihood zone covers the lowland areas of Butha – Buthe, Leribe and Bera Districts and supports a population of 430,658 people. The zone occupies the most productive arable lands in the country and is thus the food basket for Lesotho.

The main elements of the economy are crops, livestock, paid employment and trade. The most important crop is maize followed by sorghum, wheat and beans. Vegetable are also grown both for food and cash income. Although the 'very poor' and the 'poor' do not produce enough food to meet household needs, the 'middle' and 'better- off' are able to produce surplus and therefore crop sales is a major source of income for them.

Markets

The main markets in the zone, like in the rest of the Country are the shopping centres and super markets. Other than these, households simply buy and sell amongst one another in the villages and traders from other zones and towns come to the villages to buy produce or livestock.

Access to food markets is good as several shops are located in different areas around the zone. The zone has a high population including workers in the main urban areas as well as textile factories. This creates some reliable market for commodities in the Zone. The problem, however, is that traders import food commodities from South Africa that are much cheaper and thus force the local producers out of the market. This is because grain production costs are high in Lesotho due to poor production techniques, inadequate use of inputs such as fertilizers and the general benefits of large scale production that the farmers in South Africa have.

The maize market liberalisation policy of the Government of Lesotho has also affected major farmers in the zone because the main grain millers import maize that is sold in retail shops at prices lower than the local market prices. Informal trade in maize grain especially from South Africa is common in Butha – Buthe District and villages in Leribe district that are close to Butha – Buthe District.





Seasonal Calendar

| Northern Lowlands | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|---|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Rains | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Summer Planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Land Prep & planting Maize, sorghum, beans | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvesting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maize | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Beans | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sorghum | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Grain Harvest Sales | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Winter Planting (Peas & Wheat) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Land Preparation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sowing/planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvest | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vegetable Prod/Sales/trade | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Wealth Breakdown

Four wealth groups were identified in the zone. The 'very poor' households accounted for 18%, the 'poor' 25%, the 'middle' 40% and the 'better - off' 17%. Crop production and livestock are the main determinants of wealth in the zone. The 'middle' and 'better - off' are able to produce more than they need to consume and sell the rest for cash. They access about 55 - 60% of their annual food requirements from own crops. The 'very poor' and the 'poor' access about 45% and 40% respectively of their annual household requirements through own production. All four wealth groups purchase a significant percentage of their total food access ranging between 20% and 35%.

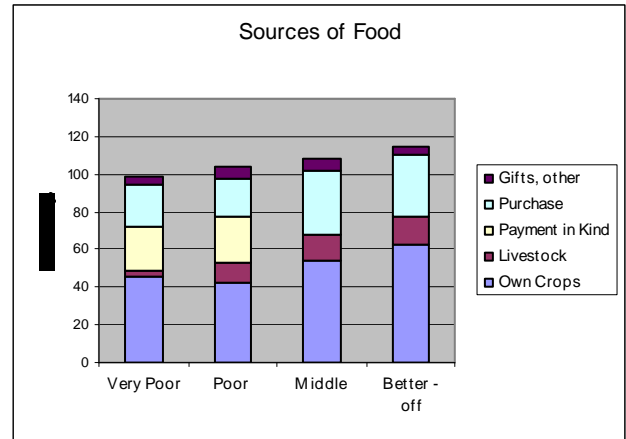
Lack of inputs and agricultural equipments is a main reason for the poorer households' failure to increase their production. While access to land is not a major problem, there are cases when the 'very poor' and the 'poor' do not engage in agricultural production due to lack of inputs and problems with land preparation. The problems with land preparation are mainly associated with lack of implements such as ploughs.

| | | Wealth Group Information | | |
|------------|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| | | H-Size | Area planted and how | Livestock |
| Very poor |  18% | 3-5 members | 0-3 acres | 5-15 chickens, 0-1 pig |
| Poor |  25% | 5-7 members | 0-3 acres | 2-6 cattle, 10-25 chickens, 1-2 pigs, 2-5 sheep |
| Middle |  40% | 5-8 members | 5-7 acres, manure, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 4-10 cattle, 10-30 sheep, 2-5 pigs |
| Better-off |  17% | 5-11 members | 5-11 acres, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 6-14 cattle, 20-30 sheep, 2-6 pigs |

The main income source for the 'poor' and the 'very poor' is casual work. This includes both agricultural labour and other labour such as washing, collecting water, house smearing etc. The main income sources for the 'middle' and 'better -off' are employment and remittances, followed by sale of crops and sale of livestock and livestock products.

Sources of Food

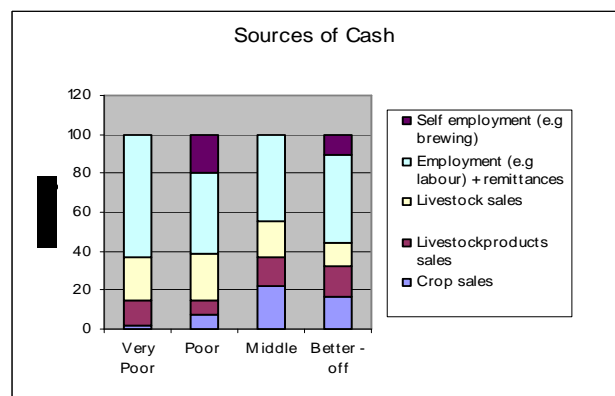
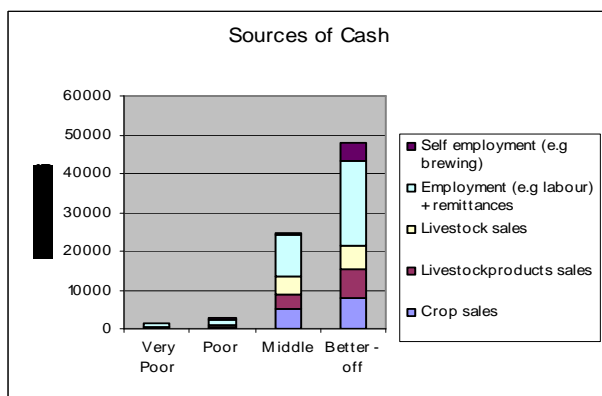
The main source of food for all wealth groups is own production that contributes about 40 – 60% of total food access in the baseline year. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households also acquire about 20 – 25% of their total food access through payment in Kind i.e. working to be paid with food and this work is usually in agricultural activities such as weeding. Food purchase is a significant source of food across all wealth groups contributing about 20 – 35 % of total food access. Other sources of food include livestock products which contribute about 10 – 15% of total access for the 'poor', 'middle' and 'better-off' and school feeding which contributes at least 5% for all wealth groups. Although the 'middle' and 'better – off' purchase a bigger percentage of their total food access than the poorer wealth groups, much of this consists of more expensive food items like wheat. In addition, the poorer households access much of their food from payment in kind as well and if added to purchase, the percentage contribution would be higher than for the middle and better –off. All wealth groups benefited from school feeding programmes that provided meals at school. This accounted for approximately 5% of total food access across the wealth groups.



Sources of Cash

Sources of cash income in the zone vary greatly between the poorer and better off households. Total cash incomes for the 'very poor' and the 'poor' are extremely low compared to the 'middle' and 'better – off'. The average annual cash income for the 'very poor' is about M1500, for the 'poor' about M2700, M24000 for the 'middle' and M48000 for the 'better –off'.

The main source of cash income for the 'very poor' and the 'poor' is casual labour which contributes 60% of total cash income for the 'very poor' and 40% for the 'poor'. Other income sources for the 'very poor' and 'poor' include sale of crop, brewing, sale of livestock and livestock products. The common livestock for the poorer households are chickens, pigs and sheep in a few cases



For the middle and better – off, employment and remittances is the most important source of income followed by sale of crop, sale of livestock and livestock product. The key livestock product sold is wool and mohair.

Although employment is a main source of income for the 'poor' and the wealthier households, the key differentiating factor is the type of employment. The poorer households mainly depend on agricultural and other casual labour while the wealthier households are employed in factories, mines and government/ private institutions.

The employment opportunities for the 'very poor' and the 'poor' also depend on factors like weather for availability of agricultural labour and is also seasonal e.g. smearing of houses. This makes their source of income quite unreliable unlike the wealthier groups who are in more formal employment.

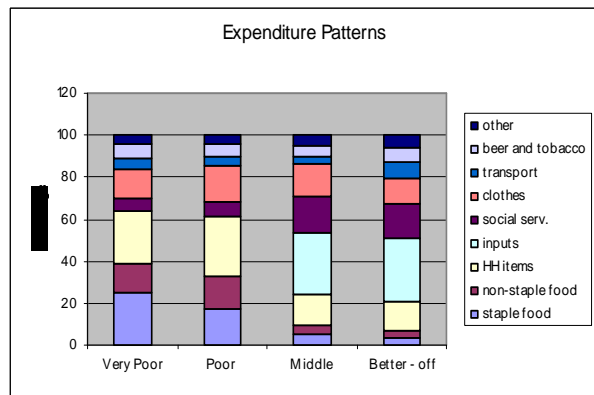
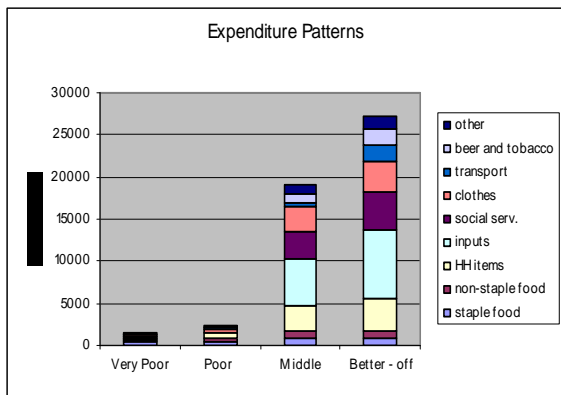
Expenditure Patterns

Similar to sources of cash income, expenditure patterns in this zone show huge differences between the poorer and wealthier households. Total expenditure for the 'very poor' and the 'poor' is about M1400 and M2300 respectively while for the 'middle' and 'better -off', total expenditure is M19000 and M27000 respectively.

For 'very poor' and the 'poor' expenditure on staple food is 25% and 17% respectively and in cash terms this amounts to M350 and M400 respectively. On the other hand, expenditure on staple food by the 'middle' and 'better- off', accounts for 5% and 3% respectively. Another notable difference is on expenditure on social services such as health and education. While the 'Very poor' and 'poor' spend M200 and M400 respectively on social services, the 'middle' and 'better -off' spend M3000 and M3500 respectively. The 'middle' household expenditure on social services is 15 times higher than expenditure by 'very poor'. Expenditure on social services by the 'better - off' is higher than total expenditure for the 'very poor', 'poor' and 'middle' combined.

The 'very poor' and 'poor' spend very little on health services mainly due to lack of adequate cash to meet such expenditure. For that reason, they depend more on local treatment and government clinics which unfortunately do not always have the necessary drugs.

The 'very poor' and 'poor' expenditure on non staple is also very high constituting about 15% of total expenditure as compared to 3 -4% for the 'middle' and 'better -off'. The non staple expenditure includes basic items such as beans, vegetables, sugar and cooking oil. When one combines staple and no staple expenditure there fore, the 'very poor' and 'poor' expenditure on food items amounts to 30 - 40% of total expenditure. This is still very high given that this zone is the food basket for Lesotho.



Hazards

The following hazards impact on food security in this livelihood zone:
 Drought is a common hazard in the zone. People often plant late due to late start of rains at the beginning of the season and as a result many fields are left uncultivated and hence low production. There are times when it would rain in the beginning of the season and dry spells come during the growing season and destroy the crops. Drought/erratic weather is probably the most common hazard that the zone experiences.

Pests and crop diseases are another hazard in the zone. Elegant grasshopper is troublesome on most crops inclusive of fruit trees. Birds are also reported to be destructive on sorghum, wheat and maize eating the complete heads and cobs.

Hail storms are a common problem in the zone and are widespread in the entire zone. This causes delay in plant growth and maturity of most crops. In situations of severe hailstorm, especially during tender stages of crop growth, massive destruction is experienced.

Livestock diseases such as anthrax and black quarter in cattle and sheep are common. Routine vaccination programmes are implemented to control livestock diseases. New Castle disease was reported to have wiped most of the poultry in the zone. This has had a major impact on poorer households who depend on 'small livestock' as a source of income.

Stock theft is a major problem like is the case in most of the other livelihood zones. The communities have established the Community Policing groups but this has not yet controlled the stock thieves who often are well armed.

Response strategies

People usually employ a number of strategies in order to try and cope with a hazard and some of the key response strategies in the zone include;

Switching expenditure from non essential commodities such as beer, clothes etc to staple food. This is a common initial response in the event of a hazard that affects food access. All wealth groups spend considerable amounts on beer and other 'luxury' items, which they reduce in order to buy staple food.

Reduction in number of meals eaten per day is the most common strategy that is employed by all wealth groups in difficult situations. Some of the households reduce the number of meals or quantity of food eaten per day for their food stocks to last longer than would otherwise be the case. This is especially common among the 'very poor' and 'poor' households.

Kinship support is a common strategy though not very reliable. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households receive significant amounts of food from the wealthier households in the zone. This is a common community support mechanism that happens even in normal times. The very poor and the poor will seek for more assistance from the middle and better – off during a bad year.

Increased sale of livestock and livestock products is common strategy especially for the wealthier households. The middle and better-off households do increase the number of livestock sold in order to obtain cash to buy food when faced by a shortage.

Increased seeking of casual labour opportunities is mostly done by the poorer households who even in normal times do a lot of casual labour to obtain cash or food. . The availability of casual labour opportunities in the zone is limited especially given that majority of the poorer households depend on it as a main source of income. However, during bad years, there is increased search for casual labour and often this involves travelling longer distances than would normally be the case. The zone usually has reliable employment opportunities but when the situation gets worse people move into neighbouring zones and South Africa in search of additional casual employment.

6 Southern Lowlands Livelihood Profile

Main Conclusion and Implications

The Southern Lowlands livelihoods zone is one of the most disadvantaged zones in terms of agricultural production as well as opportunities for income generation. Rainfall patterns are more erratic in this zone than anywhere else and this affects both agricultural production and livestock keeping.

In spite of the erratic weather patterns in the zone, agricultural production and income generation from agricultural activities remain main elements of the livelihood strategies in the zone. Introduction of drought resistant crop varieties and water harvesting techniques would benefit the community and help maintain agriculture as a main source of livelihood.

Land degradation due to poor conservation methods has greatly reduced arable land in the Zone. Although it is much easier for the wealthier households to manage their land, the poorer households are losing arable land at a very high rate. This impacts on their ability to maintain access to food through own production. Efforts towards better soil conservation and reforestation need to be stepped up to reserve the current trend.

Poor access to agricultural inputs especially seed and fertilizer is another major problem in the zone. Whenever inputs are available, the price is too high for the poorer households and this often results into reduction in cultivated area. The input supply systems should be reviewed to ensure that adequate, timely and affordable supply is provided to households to boost production.

The main income sources for the 'very poor' and 'poor' who constitute approximately 55% of the population are casual employment, remittances and self employment. Casual employment includes activities such as weeding, house smearing, construction work and household activities such as washing while the activity under self employment is brewing. All these employment activities are not easily accessed and the poorer households that depend on them live very precarious lives. Programmes aimed at increasing employment opportunities in the zone need to be established and these could include public works programmes targeted to the 'very poor' and 'poor' households.

Zone description

The Southern Lowlands covers extensive parts of Maseru, Mafeteng and Mphahle's Hoek districts supporting the biggest population compared to other livelihood zones estimated at 597,175. At the same time, this is one of the most food insecure zones and in the past has shown signs of chronic food insecurity.

Southern Lowlands is one of driest regions of Lesotho and even in years of good rains, the zone always experiences late start of rainy season, uneven spread of rains with some places receiving a lot while others receive extremely low rainfall. It is quite common to find some areas in the zone experiencing floods while others are going through dry spells.

As stated, agriculture is a main source of livelihood for majority of the population across all wealth groups. The main crops grown are maize, sorghum and beans during summer and wheat is a main winter crop that is planted mainly by the wealthier households. The main livestock kept are cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and chickens. Most of the livestock are owned by the 'middle' and 'better – off' while the 'poor' own some pigs. Although most households own chickens, the numbers are quite insignificant mainly due to recurrent diseases. The most common types of casual labour are weeding, herding, washing and house smearing.

Markets

Like is the case in most parts of Lesotho, markets are basically village shops and main supermarkets around the major towns. There are no formal livestock markets and traders have to directly contact sellers when they come to buy livestock. The only organised market system is for wool and mohair though this is not a major income generation activity in the zone.

The major crops that get sold are beans, maize, sorghum wheat and vegetables. Vegetable gardening is a very common activity and in the past few years more households are engaging in the activity to raise cash. This has been boosted by recently introduced gardening techniques such as 'key-hole' gardening. Programmes such as Livelihood Recovery through Agriculture programme (LRAP) that have supported vegetable gardening also helped organise common marketing arrangements to enable producers sell to some of the major shopping centres in main towns.

Through out the zone food markets function well and one would be able to find maize meal (staple) in almost every small village shop. Grain is not sold in shops but directly from farmer to trader. Prices of maize meal fluctuate a bit depending on production levels but it can be judged that prices are fairly stable for most of the year. There are several routes to South Africa and it appears informal trade in food items is happening and this may partly explain why the price of maize does not fluctuate much in a season.

Seasonal Calendar

| Southern Lowlands | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|-----------------------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Rains | ■ | | | | | | ■ | | | | | |
| Summer Planting | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Land Prep & planting Maize, beans | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sorghum | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weeding | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvesting | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Maize | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | |
| Beans | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | |
| Sorghum | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | |
| Winter Planting (Peas & Wheat) | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Land Preparation | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | |
| Sowing/Seeding | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | |
| Harvest | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| Vegetable Prod & sales | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brewing | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |

Wealth Break Down

In this zone the 'very poor' constitute 20% of the population while the 'poor' make 33% the 'middle' 27% and the 'better - off' 20%.

In the zone land ownership is not a major issue but rather land cultivated creates the difference between poorer and wealthier households. Due to factors such as lack of inputs, labour and draught power, the 'very poor' and 'poor' are unable to cultivate much of their land and instead resort to renting it out to the better off household or use it for sharecropping. Land cultivated therefore becomes a major wealth defining characteristic in this zone. The poorer households cultivated about 2 - 3 acres while the wealthier households cultivate 4 - 5 acres.

In share cropping arrangements, the poorer households contribute land while the wealthier households contribute inputs and draught power. It appears this arrangement does not benefit the 'poor' much because the wealthier would have to recover all their costs before sharing out the remaining harvest with the 'poor'. In some ways share cropping seems to benefit the wealthier households.

The other problem facing the poorer households is that they lack draught power and this leads to delays in planting because they have to wait for the owners of draught power to finish own fields then borrow the draught power. In the end this late planting coupled with no inputs results in low production.

The 'middle' and 'better-off' have access to more land as they have their own and share-crop with the poorer groups. This enables them to produce enough food to meet 60- 75% of their annual food requirements as well as sell some for cash income.

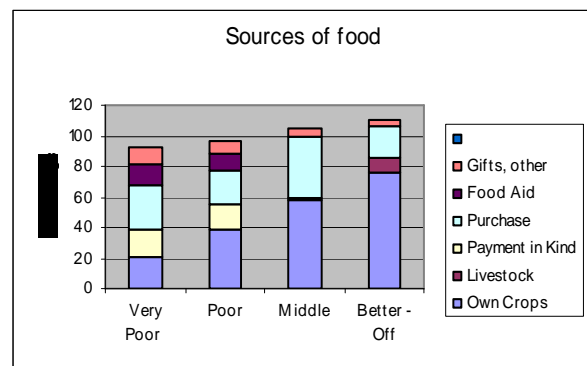
In terms of education levels for children, the 'very poor' and the 'poor' can only afford primary school education while the 'middle' and 'better - off' can afford higher levels as well as private schools. Since primary education is free, the 'very poor' and 'poor' have to find money to cater for uniform and other related costs only.

Livestock ownership is a major determinant of wealth in the zone. The main livestock kept are cattle, goats, sheep pigs and chickens. Most of the livestock are owned by the 'middle' and 'better - off' while the 'poor' own some pigs. Although most households own chickens, the numbers are quite insignificant mainly due to recurrent diseases.

| | | Wealth Group Information | | |
|------------|-----|--------------------------|---|--|
| | | H/size | Area planted and how | Livestock |
| Very poor | 20% | 46 members | 1-3 acres | No livestock |
| Poor | 38% | 57 members | 2-3 acres | 0-3 cattle, 0-4 goats |
| Middle | 27% | 57 members | 4-7 acres, manure, plough | 2-5 cattle, 7-12 sheep, 3-10 goats, 0-2 pigs |
| Better-off | 20% | 69 members | 5-7 acres, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 8-10 cattle, 12-20 sheep, 5-20 goats, 0-2 pigs |

Sources of food

All wealth groups have own crop production as a major source of food though its contribution to total household requirements increases with wealth. The 'very poor' access 20% of annual consumption from own crop, the 'poor' access close to 40%, the 'middle' close to 60% and the 'better -off' about 75%. The reason for a high access through on own crops by the wealthier households is the good production they are able to have as a result of using inputs and the additional production from crop sharing arrangements.



For the 'very poor' and 'poor', payment in kind is a major source of food contributing close to 20% of total food access. This is payment with

food for agricultural labour especially during weeding time. This in kind payment is almost as important as own crop production for the 'very poor' and highlights the high reliance of this wealth group on labour to be able to meet their annual food requirements.

Purchase is main source of food for all wealth groups though for the 'very poor' it is significantly high at almost 30% of total food access. The 'poor' access about 20% of their food through purchase while the 'middle' about 40%, and the 'better-off' 20%. The high reliance on purchase for the 'middle' could be explained by the fact that there are hardly any other sources of food unlike the 'poor' and 'very poor' who access food through in kind payment and received food aid in addition to own crop and purchase.

The 'very poor' and the 'poor' received food aid in the baseline year that contributed about 10 - 15% of their total food access. This was mainly in the form of food for work and targeted distributions. Although this support benefited the community, there were questions around the choice of work these people had to do to be given food.

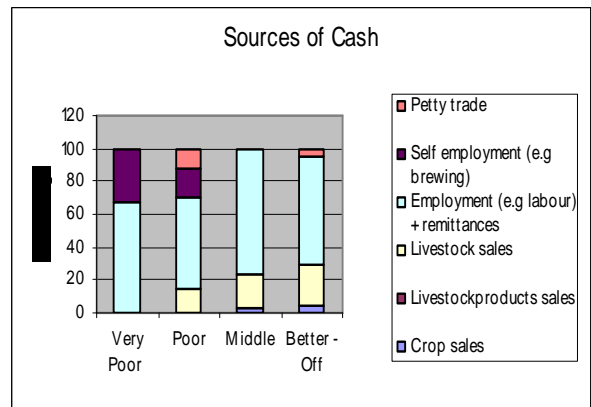
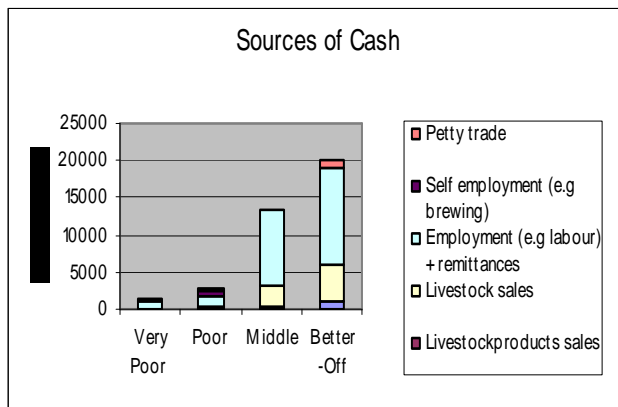
All wealth groups benefited from school feeding programmes that provided meals at school. This accounted for approximately 5% of total food access across the wealth groups. In addition, the 'very poor' and 'poor' received gifts from wealthier households and this helped them get very close to the 100% annual food requirements.

Sources of Cash

Cash income levels in the zone are generally low though this is the typical picture in all livelihood zones. The main income sources for the 'very poor' are casual labour in agricultural and domestic activities, and brewing. They also get some remittances from relatives working in other towns and the capital. The main income sources for the 'poor' are same as the 'very poor' but in addition, they get income from sale of livestock (piglets) and petty trade activities such as sale of groceries in the village. Total cash incomes for the 'very poor' and 'poor' are M1470 and M2675 respectively as compared to M13350 and M20170 for the 'middle' and 'better-off' respectively.

The main sources of income for the 'middle' and 'better-off' are salaried employment, remittances, livestock and some small amount from crop sales. In addition, the 'better-off' households in this zone engage in petty trade which is not the case in other livelihood zones. This is probably due to the constrained opportunities for income generation in the whole zone that forces even the better off into such small scale business activities.

In this zone it is quite common for 'poor' households to move outside the zone in search of income opportunities and in some cases this involves crossing the border into South Africa. Unauthorised employment in South Africa is illegal and this underlines the difficulty amongst poor households in accessing income and thus the need to generate local employment to discourage this kind of risky activities.



Expenditure patterns

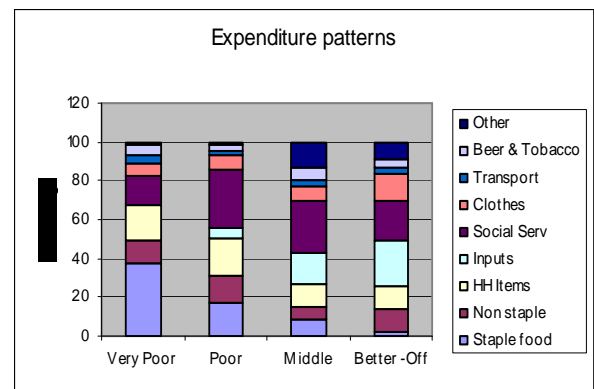
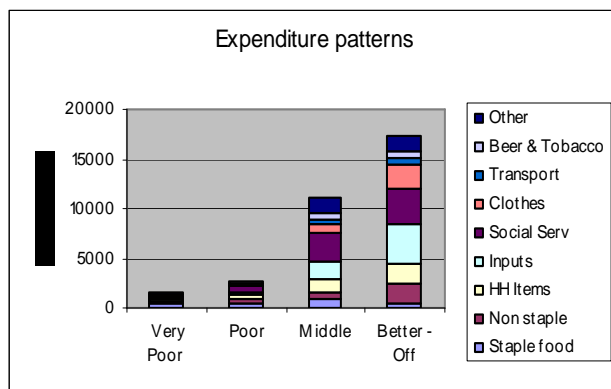
Similar to income patterns, the expenditure patterns in the zone depict very low expenditure by the 'poor' and 'very poor' households and no element of potential savings that we see in the middle and better –off.

The 'very poor' expenditure patterns show a really high expenditure on staple food at 37% and this highlights their vulnerability to food price changes. For the poor the percentage expenditure on staple food is 17% while for the middle and better of it is at 9% and 3% respectively. It should be noted that in this zone the 'very poor' households purchase more food than what they get from own crop production. This very high expenditure on food means very little cash is left for other essential expenditure such as health, clothes and education.

Expenditure on non staple food is quite high as well at 12% and 14% for the 'very poor' and 'poor' respectively. This means that for the 'very poor' the combined expenditure on staple and non staple food is about 50% of total annual expenditure. The total expenditure on staple and non staple for the 'poor' is about 30% of total expenditure while for the 'middle' and 'better - off' it is at about 15% of total annual expenditure.

The 'middle' and 'better- off' spend significantly on inputs and this explains the fairly high level of production they get as compared to the 'very poor' households who do not use inputs.

Other areas on which households spend cash are household items, social services, clothes, transport and beer and tobacco.



Hazards

Drought Conditions have affected this zone every year in the last 5 years or so. As a consequence, crop production has been declining and households especially the poorer ones struggle to meet their annual food requirements. The drought hazard is particularly serious for the poor and the 'very poor' because it affects them from different angles namely; reduced crop production, reduced casual labour opportunities for both cash and in kind payment and reduced gifts from better –off households. In addition, when the drought hazard extends to larger parts of the Southern African region, this translates into increased price of staple food thus reducing the amount of food households can access through purchase.

The Zone occasionally experiences flooding that causes massive water logging and crop destruction. In addition, flooding usually disrupts movements within the zone that involves crossing rivers and this has an impact on other food access strategies such as casual labour.

Land degradation is a major hazard in the zone. Widespread soil erosion results in deep gullies and soil erosion also results in diminishing soil quality and lower yields. This increasingly means that crop production as a livelihood strategy is being reduced and households have to look for alternative strategies though options are limited.

Hailstorms are frequent and they completely destroy crops especially maize. This usually results in heavy losses for those who will have invested in crop production and usually discourages further investments in agricultural production.

Livestock theft has been a major problem in this zone as is the case in other zones. This has discouraged livestock ownership and investment and partly affected land cultivation due to reduced draught power.

Response strategies

People usually employ a number of strategies in order to try and cope with a hazard and some of the key response strategies in the zone include;

Switching expenditure from non essential commodities such as beer, clothes etc to staple food. This is a common initial response in the event of a hazard that affects food access. All wealth groups spend considerable amounts on beer and other 'luxury' items, which they reduce in order to buy staple food.

Reduction in number of meals eaten per day is a major response strategy. Some of the households reduce the number of meals or quantity of food eaten per day for their food stocks to last longer than would otherwise be the case. This is especially common among the 'very poor' and 'poor' households.

Kinship support is a fairly common strategy though it depends on the situation of the wealthier households in a particular year. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households receive significant amounts of food from the wealthier households in the zone. This is a common community support mechanism that happens even in normal times. The 'very poor' and the 'poor' will seek for more assistance from the 'middle' and 'better - off' during a bad year.

Increased sale of livestock and livestock products is another normal response strategy. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households in this zone do not own livestock. The 'middle' and 'better-off' households do increase the number of livestock sold in order to obtain cash to buy food when faced by a shortage.

Increased seeking of casual labour opportunities is commonly practiced by the poorer households. The availability of casual labour opportunities in the zone is limited especially given that majority of the poorer households depend on it as a main source of income. However, during bad years, there is increased search for casual labour and often this involves travelling longer distances than would normally be the case. The younger members of households are even able to move into South Africa in search of labour opportunities. Due to the limited labour opportunities both within the zone and in South Africa, it is difficult to estimate how much extra income this option may provide.

7 Senqu River Valley Livelihood Profile

Main Conclusions and Implications

The Senqu River Valley Livelihood zone forms a narrow strip that flanks the Senqu River and penetrates deep into the highlands, reaching the lower parts of the main tributaries of this river. The zone supports a population of 122,680 people is one of the zone with highest vulnerability levels. The zone spreads across Mohale's Hoek, Quthing, Qacha's Nek and Thaba Tseka.

The soils of this zone vary from rich to very poor making this area the most agriculturally unproductive in the Country. However, for the 'middle' and 'better -off' households who are able to access the more productive land and inputs, agricultural production is a main contributor to household food access. The 'very poor' and the 'poor' also access approximately 10 – 20% of their annual food consumption from own crops. These poorer households are not able to afford inputs such as fertilizers and they do attend to their own fields late because they have to work for cash or food first at the fields of the wealthier households. This often results in late planting and poor yields. These households could be supported with well targeted inputs including seeds to help improve productivity.

In the baseline year, the poorer households relied a lot on food aid amounting to about 30% of their total annual consumption. The food aid was given in the form of food for work as well as relief food aid programmes. This is an extremely high level and could have negative implications on local coping strategies as well as food markets. To reduce this reliance, it may be prudent to consider other safety – net programmes that target the chronically food insecure who are heavily dependent on food handouts. Often these poor households face food shortages because of big increases in the price of staple and given that they purchase about 25 – 30% of their total food requirement, this is very significant. It would be appropriate to address such a problem with cash transfers rather than food aid. In some cases, however, food aid will be necessary and this calls for strict targeting mechanisms to separate households with acute food insecurity from the cases of chronic vulnerability.

Livestock keeping is a major activity in the zone and with the exception of the 'very poor', livestock sales is a major source of income in the zone. However, stock theft is a major problem facing the zone especially in the Qacha's Nek and Quthing areas where stock theft in both sides of South Africa and Lesotho is very common. Efforts to contain stock theft by improving security and other control measures such as livestock branding should be stepped up to protect livelihoods in the zone.

Successive drought conditions in the area coupled with poor soils, crop pests and lack of inputs has resulted in both declining crop production over time as well as constrained agricultural labour opportunities for the poorer households. In spite of the destruction maize crop suffers due to erratic weather patterns, most households continue to plant maize at the expense of Sorghum for instance which is more resistant to drier conditions. Efforts should be made to promote sorghum growing alongside other drought resistant crops to reduce over reliance maize.

Zone description

The Senqu River valley is the most vulnerable zone in the country that has over the past year shown real signs of chronic vulnerability. Nutrition surveys in the zone rank as having the highest levels of stunting in the Country an indication of high levels of food insecurity, poverty and vulnerability.

The poor road infrastructure in the zone has added to this complex situation because delivery of inputs is delayed and in some cases just not possible for private traders to provide the necessary inputs. Poor market access also has an impact on food markets and results in high food prices as compared to other zones with better road infrastructure.

Maize is the most important crop grown in the area and other key crops include sorghum and beans. Although some households do plant wheat, it is generally not a typical crop in the zone. There are no specific cash crops and food crops are sold for cash especially by the wealthier households.

Livestock keeping is a key activity in the zone and all wealth groups except the very poor sell livestock and livestock products to get cash income. Goat rearing is more common than Sheep rearing and this is unique to this zone. Other livestock kept include cattle, sheep, chickens and pigs.

Markets

Similar to most parts of Lesotho, markets are basically village shops and main supermarkets around the major towns. There are no formal livestock markets and traders have to directly contact sellers when they come to buy livestock. The only organised market system is for wool and mohair.

The major crops sold are beans, maize, sorghum wheat and vegetables. Vegetable gardening is a very common activity and of recent increasing numbers of households engaging in the activity. Marketing of the vegetables however, remains problematic mainly due to poor road infrastructure.

In spite of the difficult road infrastructure, food markets in the zone function fairly well and one would be able to find maize meal (staple) in almost every small village shop. Grain is not sold in shops but directly from farmer to trader. Prices of maize meal fluctuate a bit depending on production levels but it can be judged that prices are fairly stable for most of the year. There are a few routes to South Africa and it appears informal trade in food items is happening and this may partly explain why the price of maize does not fluctuate much in a season. However, the price of maize in this zone is normally higher than other zones mainly due to the poor road infrastructure that forces traders to raise the price.


Seasonal calendar

| Senqu River Valley | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul |
|----------------------------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Rains | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Summer Planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Land Preparation | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Planting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maize, sorghum, beans | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Wheat | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Potatoes | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Weeding | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Harvesting | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Maize, Beans , Sorghum | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Vegetable Prod/Sales/trade | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Brewing | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fishing | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Wealth breakdown

Four wealth categories were identified in the zone. The 'very poor' households accounted for 15% of the households in the zone, the 'poor' (35%), the 'middle' (40%) and the 'better-off' (10%). Employment and livestock holding are major determinants of wealth in this zone. The poorer households are mainly engaged in agricultural related employment while the wealthier households are in more formal employment. Remittances are a key source of income amongst all wealth groups.

Crop production is mainly dependent on area planted and yield. Land ownership in the zone does not vary much across wealth groups in the zone, averaging about 2 acres across the wealth groups. This is because most of the land is acquired through inheritance. However the actual land cultivated increases with the wealthier groups and this is where the difference comes in for example the 'very poor' and the 'poor' cultivate 1 – 2 acres while the 'middle' and 'better- off' cultivate 4 – 6 acres in spite of land ownership being similar at around 2 acres across the wealth groups.

| | | Wealth Group Information | | |
|------------|---|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| | | H/size | Area planted and how | Livestock |
| Very poor |  | 46 members | 1-3 acres | 1-5 chickens |
| Poor |  | 58 members | 2-3 acres | 0-2 sheep, 0-4 goats, 5-15 chickens |
| Middle |  | 68 members | 4-5 acres, manure, plough | 3-8 cattle, 5-10 sheep, 10-30 goats |
| Better-off |  | 7-9 members | 4-6 acres, plough, fertilizer, hired labour | 7-15 cattle, 20-50 sheep, 30-80 goats |

Share cropping is a key production strategy in the zone and the 'poor' often contribute land in this arrangement while the wealthier households contribute seed and other inputs.

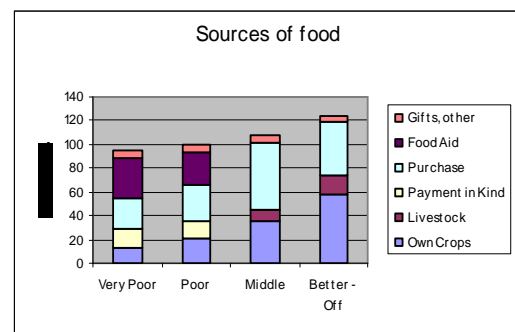
Livestock rearing is a major source of income especially for the 'poor', 'middle' and 'better- off' households. The 'poor' mainly keep pigs, chicken, sheep and goats while the 'middle' and 'better -off' keep cattle, sheep and goats. The 'better- off' also earn income from sale of wool and mohair.

Across all wealth group consumption of wild vegetable is common. The consumption of wild vegetable is because they are delicious so there is no difference between wealth groups in terms of consumption patterns.

Sources of Food

The main sources of food in this zone are crop production, purchase, payment in form of food and livestock products. Food aid was a main source of food in the baseline year for the 'very poor' and the 'poor'. This was mainly in the form of targeted food distributions and food for work/assets programmes by Government and humanitarian agencies.

Own crop production for the 'very poor' and the 'poor' contributes 10% and 20% of total food consumed respectively. This compared to own crop contribution of 35% and 55% for the middle and better off, means the 'very poor' and 'poor' rely less on own crop production and have to access the bigger proportion from other sources.



Payment in form of food is a major source of food for the 'very poor' and the 'poor' contributing about 15 – 20% of total food consumption in the baseline year. These poorer households mainly engage in agricultural labour activities for the middle and better off and receive payment in kind. This source brings in more food for the 'very poor' than their own crop production and just about the same proportion for the 'poor' households.

Food purchase is a key source of food for all wealth groups. The 'very poor' obtain about 25% of their total food access through purchase while the 'poor' obtain 30%, the 'middle' 57% and the 'better-off' 45%. Although the 'middle' and 'better-off' purchase bigger proportions of total food access than the poorer households, the difference is that the wealthier households purchase more of expensive food items such as wheat, meat, oil and sugar. The poorer households on the other hand mainly purchase maize meal.

Livestock products contribute 10 – 15% to total food access of the 'middle' and 'better-off'. This is mainly in the form of milk and meat. All wealth groups benefited from the school feeding programme which contributes about 5% of total food access across the wealth groups.

Sources of Cash

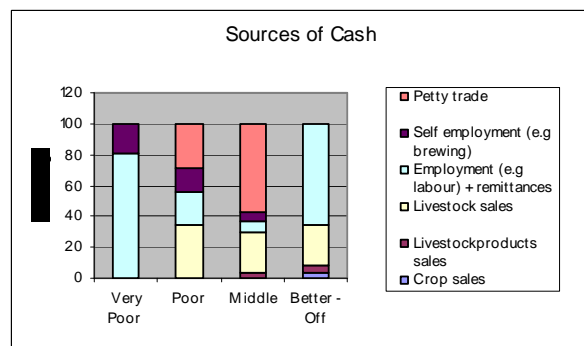
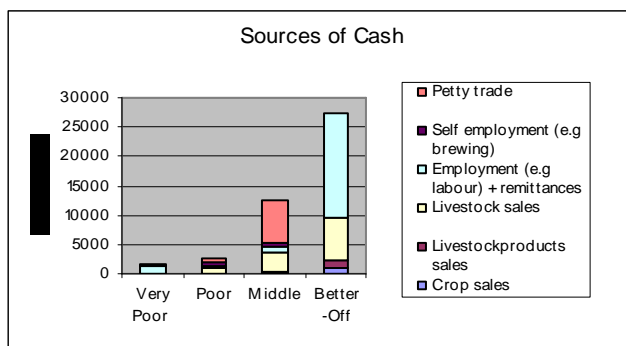
The two main sources of cash income in this zone are livestock sale and employment. With the exception of the 'very poor' that have no livestock, the other wealth groups obtain significant proportion of annual income from sale of livestock. The 'poor' get 35% of total income from livestock sales while the 'middle' and 'better-off' get about 25% each. In addition, the 'middle' and 'better-off' obtain income from sale of livestock products such as milk, meat, wool and mohair.

Employment and remittances is the major source of income for all wealth groups. For the 'very poor' employment contributes about 80% of total annual income. The 'poor' get about 20% while the 'middle' get about 6% percent and the 'better-off' 66% of total annual income from employment. The main employment activities for the 'very poor' and 'poor' are agricultural labour especially weeding and land preparation. Casual labour activities include domestic work, house smearing and cattle herding.

Remittances are received by all wealth groups but they are more significant amongst the wealthier households who have family members in more formal employment in South African mines, farms and other employment.

In this zone, the 'very poor' and 'poor' engage in brewing to raise income and this activity contributes 20% and 15% of annual incomes respectively. The 'poor' and the 'middle' also engage in petty trade and this involves activities like running village kiosks and trade within the zone. This activity is most significant for the 'middle' households and contributes about 55% of annual income, while it contributes close to 30% of annual income for the 'poor'.

The 'very poor' and the 'poor' have very low cash incomes amounting to M1700 and M2600 respectively. The 'middle' and 'better-off' on the other hand earn M12600 and M27500 respectively. For the 'very poor' and 'poor' who access about 25 -30% of annual food consumed through purchases, this low cash income poses serious challenges for these households.

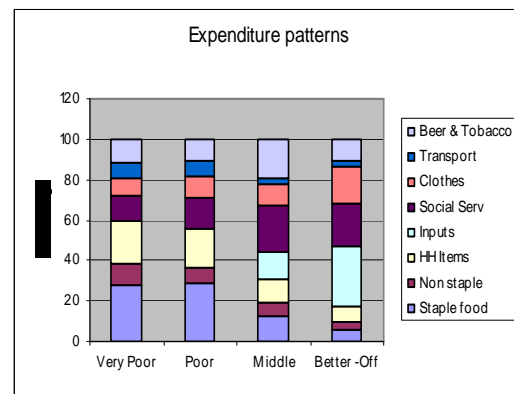
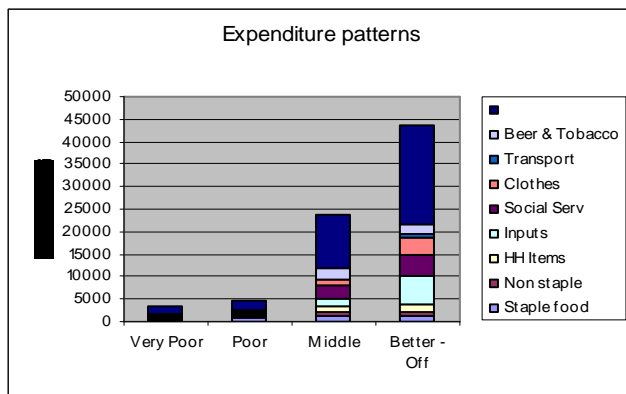


Expenditure Patterns

Close to 40% of total annual expenditure of the 'very poor' and 'poor' is on food items and this highlights the importance of cash income generation for these wealth groups. If the price of food items like maize goes up and given their low cash income, food security status of these households could decline drastically. This is a serious situation especially when compared with 'middle' and 'better-off' expenditure on food at 20% and 6% respectively.

The 'poor' and 'very poor' do not purchase inputs while the 'middle' and 'better-off' expenditure on inputs constitutes about 15 – 30% of total expenditure. The high expenditure on inputs is reflected in the higher production they get.

The 'very poor' and 'poor' expenditure on social services such as health and education amounts to about 15% of total expenditure while that for the 'middle' and 'better-off' amounts to about 23%. The comparatively lower expenditure of the poorer households is due to two main factors. The poorer households cannot afford health care in private facilities so they utilise only government provided services and in many cases use herbs for treatment. In addition, the poorer households typically cannot afford education costs beyond standard 7 and typically access only government schools unlike the wealthier groups who can afford to take their children to high school and even access private schools.



Hazards

Persistent drought Conditions have affected this zone for the past 5 years. As a consequence, crop production has been declining and the poorer households have struggled to meet their food requirements. The drought hazard is particularly serious for the poor and the very poor because it affects them from different angles namely; reduced crop production, reduced casual labour opportunities for both cash and in kind payment and reduced gifts from better-off households.

Land degradation and poor soil management is common in the zone. Widespread soil erosion results in deep gullies and soil erosion also results in diminishing soil quality and lower yields. This increasingly means that crop production as a livelihood strategy is being reduced and households have to look for alternative strategies though options are limited.

Hailstorms are frequent and they completely destroy crops especially maize. This usually results in heavy losses for those who will have invested in crop production and usually discourage further investment in agricultural production.

Livestock theft has been a major problem in this zone as is the case in other zones. This has discouraged livestock ownership and investment and partly affected land cultivation due to reduced lack of draught power.

Response strategies

People usually employ a number of strategies in order to try and cope with a hazard and some of the key response strategies in the zone include;

Switching expenditure from non essential commodities such as beer, clothes etc to staple food. This is a common initial response in the event of a hazard that affects food access. All wealth groups spend considerable amounts on beer and other 'luxury' items, which they reduce in order to buy staple food.

Reduction in number of meals eaten per day is the most common response strategy. Some of the households reduce the number of meals or quantity of food eaten per day for their food stocks to last longer than would otherwise be the case. This is especially common among the 'very poor' and 'poor' households.

Kinship support is another strategy that is employed in times of hardship though it is not a reliable strategy. The 'very poor' and 'poor' households receive significant amounts of food from the wealthier households in the zone. This is a common community support mechanism that that happens even in normal times. The 'very poor' and the 'poor' will seek for more assistance from the 'middle' and 'better – off' during a bad year.

Increased sale of livestock and livestock products is a common strategy in zone. The 'very poor' households in this zone do not own livestock but the 'poor', 'middle' and 'better-off' households do own varying types and numbers of livestock and do increase the number of livestock sold in order to obtain cash to buy food when faced by a shortage.

Increased seeking of casual labour opportunities is commonly practised by the poorer households and this is their most employed strategy. The availability of casual labour opportunities in the zone is limited especially given that majority of the poorer households depend on it as a main source of income. However, during bad years, there is increased search for casual labour and often this involves travelling longer distances than would normally be the case. The younger members of households are even able to move into South Africa in search of labour opportunities. Due to the limited labour opportunities both within the zone and even in South Africa, it is difficult to estimate how much extra income this option may provide.