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## Exploring the Applicability of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and Entitlement Approach to Promoting Household Food Security in Mudzi Rural District, Zimbabwe

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### ABSTRACT

This paper emerges from a doctoral research study investigating the potential of investing in Productive Assets (PA) as a strategic intervention to combat household food insecurity in Mudzi Rural District, Zimbabwe. The study arose against a background of persistent food insecurity in Mudzi Rural District, which is exacerbated by climate change and poses severe challenges to rural households, limiting their access to stable and productive resources and livelihoods for food security. Over the years between 2019 and 2024, climate change impact has exacerbated food insecurity in rural communities of Zimbabwe, with Mudzi rural communities experiencing recurrent and severe climate shocks in the form of droughts, flash-floods, storms, extreme temperatures and disease outbreaks that affected both crops and livestock-based livelihoods. These events heightened community vulnerabilities, destabilised livelihoods, and threatened food availability, access and stability, forcing many households to rely on humanitarian assistance. Against this backdrop, the objective of the study was to examine the impact of investing in Productive Assets (PA) on household food security in Mudzi Rural District, investigating the impact of PA investments and strategies for improving household food security outcomes; and informing the development of a household food security promotion model in rural communities. Having been grounded in the Entitlements Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the study intended both to find affirmation on the foundational importance of productive assets in achieving (household) food security and to confirm whether these two frameworks were applicable in the study. In this regard, this paper presents the findings for the discussion and analysis conducted on the applicability of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and Entitlement Approach to the promotion of household food security in Mudzi Rural District. The literature on the two frameworks was examined in light of their applicability, providing a theoretical framework for examining household food security through investments in productive assets. Overall, this paper makes the case that, despite the two theories' limitations in terms of fully applying to the study's scope, they offer important frameworks and guidance to position PA investments as essential to enhancing household food security by improving access to entitlements, enhancing various aspects of community food production processes, and taking into account important risks and institutional requirements that result in improved food accessibility, availability, utilization, and stability.

### INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), developed by the British Department for International Development (DFID, 1999 & 2000) as an extension of Robert Chambers' (1991) groundbreaking work (Chambers & Conway, 1991), and Amartya Sen's Entitlements Approach served as the foundation for a study that focused on the capability of productive assets (PAs) to promote rural household food security in Mudzi Rural District following the World Food Programme (WFP) (2017) and Metange's (2019) assertion that PAs promote sustainable livelihoods, and lead to positive food security outcomes. The SLF emphasises asset-based livelihoods, focusing on strengthening productive assets (e.g., land, tools, livestock) to enhance food production and income through diversification strategies, capacity building, social capital development, risk management, and policy support. Specifically, the SLF promotes diversification of livelihood strategies, including on-

farm and off-farm activities to reduce dependence on a single asset. Simultaneously, Amartya Sen's Entitlements Approach emphasizes how crucial it is to have access to resources, products, and services to achieve food security, stressing how people or households can use their entitlements to meet their food demands. Through the integration of these frameworks, this paper offers a thorough understanding on the applicability of the two frameworks to the intricate connections among food security, livelihood strategies, and productive assets, and helps to analyse their applicability to the promotion of household food security in rural areas context such as that of Mudzi Rural District in Zimbabwe.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a comprehensive literature review, discussing and analysing the two theoretical frameworks, i.e, the Entitlements Approach (EA) and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), and their applicability

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to promotion of household food security through investment in productive assets.

### **The Entitlement Approach (EA)**

Amartya Sen developed the Entitlement Approach, a paradigm for understanding poverty and food security. The approach makes the assumption that access to resources, skills, and liberties that allow people and households to obtain and consume food is just as important to food security as food availability. The ability of rural households to access resources, services, and productive assets that promote food security is the main focus of Sen Amartya's Entitlements Approach (da Corta, 2017). This paper also examined the social, economic, and political aspects of households' entitlements to productive assets and food security, as well as the effects of the different development initiatives or policy interventions on these entitlements (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2010). To inform future and strategic approaches to dealing with livelihood and food security challenges in rural areas, this paper has concentrated on taking a more prescriptive approach. The advantages of the entitlements approach to problems with food security and livelihood in rural communities were put into perspective. Sen's (1984) definition of entitlements served as the basis for this paper and emphasises the role that productive assets play in sustaining communal livelihoods and ensuring food security. Sen (1984) defined entitlements as predetermined sets of various commodity bundles that communities can demand within a specified time frame utilising their own skills endowed in the rights and opportunities available to them. This definition forms the basis of Sen's Entitlements Approach.

Muzerengi, Khalema *et al.*, (2021) noted that Sen's (1984: 497) articulation of entitlements means that all the food and other resources that a person needs to survive are their rightful possessions. In this regard, Sen posited that communities have a wide array of options to produce or gain food commodities, and assets are one of the several options at the disposal of communities for food security. Accordingly, Sen (1981) went on to postulate that entitlements for a community or individual persons mean full access to sets of various goods and services that can be acquired and converted to form livelihoods for the community or individual persons. This often means accessing labour power, resources and also assets through entitlement mappings. This position seems to dovetail with the idea that productive assets can be a vehicle for food insecure households in Mudzi and other rural communities (Chikodzi & Munyaradzi, 2020).

Sen (1984) argued that in the context of food insecurity caused by poverty and famine (including famine caused by climate change and droughts), the entitlement approach helps to pinpoint possible legal sources of food that communities may resort to and/or maximise on through different initiatives. Sen (1981) separated the legal sources of food into four categories: production-based entitlement (producing food), inheritance and

transfer entitlement (receiving food from others), own-labor entitlement (working for food), and trade-based entitlement (buying food). These four sources all support the idea that productive assets like land and other resources can be good options for food production in the rural communities. According to Sen (1984), people starve when their entitlements cannot sustain their livelihoods and food. WFP's FFA projects in Mudzi Rural District are asset creating interventions meant to generate Sen's entitlement approach to legal food sources (WFP, 2017). The challenges of climate change are causing problems for Mudzi's rural community, including damage to agriculture, which is the base of people's livelihoods (Chirisa *et al.*, 2017; Chikodzi & Munyaradzi, 2020). This is leading to a decline in people's entitlements as people sell their individual or co-owned assets. These challenges are also exposing people to perpetual cycles of food insecurity through depleted livelihood opportunities. Sen (1984) observed that the problems of food insecurity increase during famines, which are typified by droughts in Mudzi district. As a result, groups of people who are geographically or occupationally related to starvation risk also suffer catastrophic reductions in their entitlements. Mudzi district has been affected by droughts and other climate-related calamities for a long time, leading to decreased food production (WFP, 2021). Food insecurity is the result, which is partly because many people in the area rely on rain-fed agriculture as articulated by Sen (1984). However, the entitlements approach is important in the face of food security challenges stemming from climate change because it considers the productive assets of rural households as entitlements.

Sen's work has added value to this paper by helping to theorise the research problem and by clarifying the different levels at which households in rural communities lack the means for a living, which explains their food security situations. The approach helped to conceive the context in which to apply the productive asset disposition, which has helped to look at the usual food assistance (general food distribution that is done under donor assisted programmes (WFP, 2017)) from a different perspective, focusing on the factors that affect the ability of groups of people to acquire food and determine their own options in desperate situations such as those placed on the communities by climate change. When Sen deviated from 'the Malthusian logic of too many people, too little food' that is based on the taxonomy of food supplies, this paper benefited from the analysis and looked at community abilities to redeem themselves from the challenges affecting them. Sen stated that food insecurity affects people regardless of food availability (Sabates-Wheeler & Devereux, 2010). In this case, the paper found that there are many factors that are leading to people's limited abilities to access and maintain sustainable livelihoods, which is leading to poverty of livelihoods in Mudzi. The research interrogated how the productive assets are providing solutions to catastrophes affecting the Mudzi society, and how these link to food

opportunities and people's potential to rise above their problems.

According to Muzerengi *et al.* (2021), "Food security is a human entitlement, which can be achieved through ensuring stable and sustainable availability, accessibility and utilization of food". In this regard, the crucial aspect about this paper is the question of whether productive assets can improve any of the key dimensions of household food security? Moreso, could there be any complementary benefits of vouching for productive assets by rural communities apart from the well documented four dimensions of food security? According to Muzerengi *et al.* (2021), the main idea behind Sen's entitlement theory is to see entitlements as a collection of commodity bundles that can be used to address household or community food security. Accordingly, systems that include people as well as other essential resources and structures ought to be created since they reinforce one another in every community, fostering synergies for long-term food security. The entitlement theory examines how, with attention to food access, communities might achieve food security.

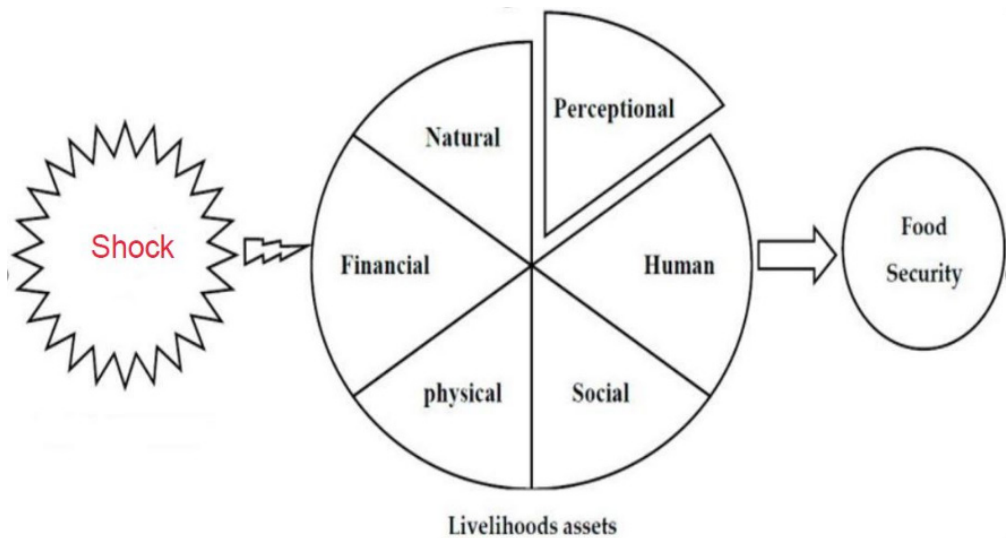
This paper provides the benefits of the relationship between people and their markets, as articulated by Sen (1984). Despite the fact that there is no moral or legal reason for markets to meet people's subsistence needs, the approach acknowledges that different legal systems should allow people to access the markets. This means that if people's endeavours and determination do not penetrate the limitations of the market, they remain in wretched poverty, and their survival needs to be made sustainable through their initiative and self-determination. When Sen (1984) defined entitlements as "the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he or she faces," he meant that communities can also benefit from anything to become food secure. This encompasses a lot of different things for people living in different societies. Do productive assets mean anything with regards to household food security in Mudzi Rural District? One important finding is that a decline in opportunities can be caused by a decline in the value of resources provided by the community such as falling assets, incomes, or livestock prices. Additionally, it can be caused by a decline in the availability of food supplies, such as due to drought. This critically helped to unpack the situation in Mudzi district due to droughts and other factors leading to continuous livelihoods and food insecurity. The entitlement analysis, which is based on the implicit premise that entitlement restrictions cause an automatic behavioral response, specifically, the conversion of endowments into resources for survival, has served as a crucial point of discussion in this paper, noting that, a person's hunger is triggered by those endowment bundles of resources that do not include any bundles meeting their minimal survival needs, including

the trade entitlement sets that correspond to them (Sen, 1981).

Nayak (2000) states that the endowment set, which refers to the three conceptual categories of the entitlements approach, is the sum of all of a person's legal resources that are in accordance with accepted community norms and practices. This paper defines productive assets as a combination of the aforementioned resources that comprise both intangibles, like labour power, knowledge and skill development, or community membership, and tangible assets, such as land, machinery, gardens, water sources, livestock and others. If these are combined, they can be able to provide vehicles for food security in Mudzi district. In confirmation with the norms and processes in which the productive assets were implemented, this paper argued that the use of resources to get food security for individual households or community can be either in the form of production, exchange between members and transfer from one person to another or from one group to another.

Various scholars have concluded that turbulent community situations have always resulted in livelihood disruptions. In turbulent situations, the need for access to a livelihood is indispensable (Jackson, 2020). Several evaluations, such as the yearly Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee (ZIMVAC) reports, have consistently shown that individuals in Zimbabwe rely on a collection of assets and capital that generally demonstrate how they generate income and guarantee their food security. Assets can assist the poor households to better handle shocks, such as climate shocks, as well as the long-term consequences of extreme weather and infectious livestock diseases (Guillotreau *et al.*, 2012). Mudzi Rural District has been affected by the shocks and stresses mentioned by the above scholars, and assets investments can help these communities to specifically manage their food security situation.

Complementary to the entitlement theory, the link between assets and food security cannot be underestimated, especially in circumstances involving various types of shocks. The approach has given hope to this paper that in the face of shocks in Mudzi district, investing in different types of assets can be an antidote to food insecurity. Many researchers in the realm of shocks argue that the response to threats is a two-step process that includes understanding the risk (perception) and responding to it (Guillotreau *et al.*, 2012). Based on this argument, the critical question that this paper relied on was whether the communities in Mudzi Rural District perceived productive assets as a set of commodity bundles to help them deal with their contextual issues. Inspired by Yazdanpanah *et al.*'s (2021) conceptualisation of the relationship between shocks, livelihood assets and food security, below (Figure 1) is an illustration of how the Mudzi communities can perceive their fate in light of productive assets.



**Figure 1:** Relationship Between Shocks, Livelihood Assets and Food Security

Source: Yazdanpanah et al. (2021)

### The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

This paper reviewed the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, building on the assertions of World Food Programme (WFP, 2017) and Metange (2019) that Productive Assets (PAs) foster sustainable livelihoods. PAs constitute a crucial component of livelihood resilience, encompassing community-owned assets, infrastructure, and resources that enhance food productivity, mitigate food security shocks, and reduce dependence on external aid (WFP, 2018; World Vision, 2017). Specifically, PAs comprise a range of community assets, including water, health and hygiene facilities, crops, livestock, and business resources which collectively enable communities to generate income, access nutritious food, and build resilience to climate-related shocks and seasonal vulnerabilities (WFP, 2017). By focusing on PA development, this approach recognises the agency of communities in creating and managing their own livelihood opportunities, thereby promoting sustainable food security and resilience.

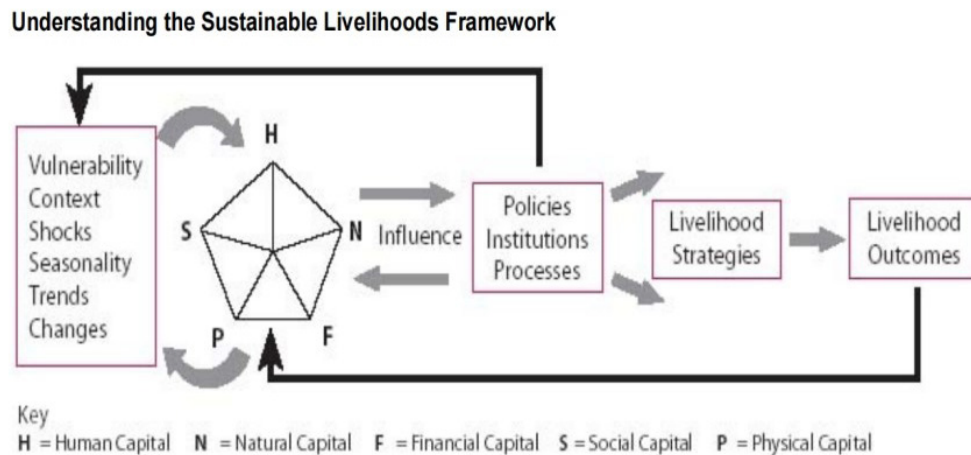
According to Kollmair and Juli (2002), the concept of livelihood originated in the mid-1980s with Robert Chambers' work which recognised the limitations of traditional development approaches in addressing global challenges. Chambers responded to this gap by developing the idea of "Sustainable Livelihoods" to increase the effectiveness of development cooperation. This idea served as the foundation for the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which was expanded upon by the British Department for International Development. The formal integration of the SLF into DFID's development cooperation initiatives in 1997 marked a significant shift in development policy (Kollmair & Juli, 2002). In order to examine household food security among rural households in Zimbabwe's Mudzi Rural District, this paper used the SLF. By focusing on sustainable livelihoods, this research contributed to the ongoing discourses on effective development cooperation and poverty reduction which,

in more than one way, encompasses the issues of food security especially for rural and marginalised communities. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), as adopted by the Department for International Development (DFID), aims to end poverty in underdeveloped countries. By incorporating this framework, DFID aimed to offer an organized method of comprehending poverty that was influenced by the viewpoints and experiences of those living in poverty. The SLF serves as a versatile tool that enables policymakers and practitioners to contextualise poverty within specific local settings and adapt solutions to meet community-defined objectives (Cannon et al., 2002). This participatory approach acknowledges the dynamic nature of poverty and the importance of community-led initiatives in addressing its root causes. Notably, the SLF's flexibility allows for tailored applications, ensuring interventions are responsive to diverse socio-economic contexts and the unique challenges faced by vulnerable populations (Cannon et al., 2002).

According to Chambers and Conway (1992), "a livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base." Scoones (1998) defined livelihood as "the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources), and activities required for a means of living" This paper focuses on the persistent challenges faced by Mudzi district, particularly the endemic household food insecurity that pervades the area. This insecurity can be attributed to the lack of sustainable livelihoods, which is a critical concern for achieving household food security. The Productive Assets Approach, as advocated by the World Food Programme (2017), aims to empower impoverished households in rural Mudzi by enabling them to own, manage, and benefit from productive assets. This enables households to produce sufficient food,

accumulate income, and access quality food for their families. In this context, sustainable livelihoods become a key tool for ensuring household food security. Community-based initiatives like community gardens have been implemented to promote sustainable rural livelihoods and enhance food security in Mudzi district, where smallholder farmers face significant challenges due to limited access to productive assets, markets, and credit. Research has shown that household food security is a complex issue influenced by various factors such as livelihood options, food systems, and coping strategies (Nicol, 2000). Furthermore, programmes like Food Assistance for Assets or Productive Assets have been successful in enhancing household livelihood options and food security in similar contexts. By examining the intersection of productive assets, sustainable livelihoods, and household food security, this paper contributes to the development of effective solutions to address the perpetual challenges faced by Mudzi district. According to Chambers and Conway (1992), the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) provides an encompassing framework for discerning the complex dynamics of poverty and vulnerability. By organising livelihood opportunities constraints or enhancements, the SLF facilitates a nuanced analysis of the relationships between various components, enabling informed planning and

evaluation of development interventions. This approach empowers communities to develop effective livelihood strategies, adapt to emerging trends, and mitigate risks associated with climate change, disasters, and other external factors. By enhancing livelihood resilience, SLF contributes to sustainable development outcomes, including improved food security, reduced poverty, and enhanced well-being. The Asian Development Bank (2017) emphasises the need for adaptive development strategies to address the complexities of a rapidly changing world, particularly in the face of disasters and food security challenges. Prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable groups of people is essential to reducing these problems. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) provides a flexible framework for reconsidering the goals, parameters, and priorities of development in this regard. The SLF acknowledges the crucial role that institutions and policies play in influencing development outcomes, and it is based on a growing understanding of the livelihood strategies used by vulnerable households and communities. As shown in Figure 2 below, by using this strategy, development initiatives can be customized to improve resilience, encourage sustainable livelihoods, and guarantee that interventions are sensitive to the various requirements of vulnerable groups.



**Figure 2:** The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)  
 Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

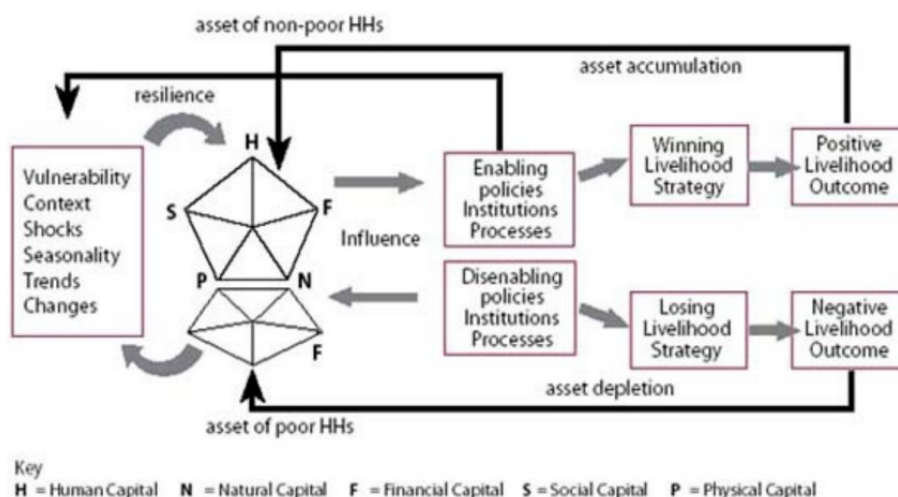
The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) offers a valuable framework for identifying practical priorities that align with the needs and interests of rural households, thereby enhancing household food security. By leveraging this approach, productive assets can be recognised as essential components of sustainable livelihoods that enable rural communities to better cope with challenges. Notably, the World Food Programme (WFP) in 2017 revealed that many rural communities in Zimbabwe face significant obstacles in securing sustainable livelihoods and food security due to their location in low-rainfall areas. To address this, WFP advocates tailored community assets to promote self-sufficiency. This strategy is

replicated in initiatives such as Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) to address immediate food needs while fostering long-term resilience. By adopting this holistic approach, development interventions can effectively support rural households to achieve sustainable livelihoods and improved food security. The World Food Programme (WFP) further advocates community-led resource mobilisation to develop context-specific sustainable livelihood initiatives tailored for rural settings. Building on this concept, this paper adapts the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to examine how community productive assets promote rural food security. The Asian Development Bank notes that

the SLF complements existing tools, highlighting the interplay between individuals' skills, social networks, resource access, and institutional influence in shaping livelihood outcomes. By emphasising local potential, SLF empowers communities to define their pathways to productivity and household food security. A critically useful lens for understanding the intricate connections between household food security and productive assets is the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). Natural, physical, financial, human, and social capital are examples of productive assets that are essential to household livelihoods, according to the SLF. These assets can be leveraged to enhance food security through various pathways, including increased agricultural productivity, improved market access, and enhanced resilience to shocks and stresses. By examining the relationships between productive assets, livelihood strategies, and food security outcomes, researchers and practitioners can gain

a deeper understanding of how to support sustainable livelihoods and improve household food security, particularly in vulnerable rural communities.

Figure 3 below illustrates the dynamic process of falling into or escaping poverty as conceptualised in the modified Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (FAO, 2001). This framework highlights the stark contrast in asset endowments between poor and non-poor households which is largely attributed to restrictive policies, institutions, and processes. The limited access to essential assets such as land, water, and natural resources severely constrains the livelihood options available to poor households. Furthermore, the absence of a robust asset base renders these households highly vulnerable to exogenous shocks which can precipitate negative livelihood outcomes and exacerbate asset depletion, ultimately perpetuating a downward spiral of deepening poverty.



**Figure 3:** The Process of Falling into or Getting Out of Poverty

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2001)

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) conceptualises vulnerable populations operating within a complex Context of Vulnerability where access to different assets enables livelihood strategies. Consistent with the Productive Assets Approach, this framework recognises that every household or community possesses unique assets that can be leveraged for productivity. As shown in Figure 3 above, the dominant social, institutional, and organisational environment (Transforming Structures and Processes) mediates the value and usefulness of these assets and has a major impact on livelihood strategies and results. SLF provides a holistic framework that highlights key issues, relationships, and core influences that shape livelihood trajectories. Crucially, context plays a pivotal role in determining the effectiveness of productive assets in achieving household food security.

- According to Kollmair and Juli (2002), productive assets are facilitated by various forms of capital available to communities, irrespective of their vulnerability or circumstances. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework provides a valuable framework for analysing the complex

interplay between factors that constrain or enhance livelihood opportunities. A key premise of the SLF is that households must have disparate access to livelihood assets, which this approach seeks to expand and strengthen. Specifically, livelihood assets encompass five primary categories:

- Human capital, such as knowledge and abilities, ability to work, health, nutrition, education, and adaptability
- Social capital, with examples including, formal and informal groups, relationships of trust, mutual understanding, and support, networks and connections (such as kinship, neighborhoods, and patronage), shared values and behaviors, common rules and sanctions, collective representation, and procedures for leadership and decision-making participation.
- Natural capital, e.g., biodiversity, wildlife, wild foods and fibers, trees and forest products, land and produce, water and aquatic resources, and environmental services.
- Physical capital, for example, infrastructure (roads, vehicles, safe housing and buildings, electricity, communications, water supply and sanitation), tools,

and technology (production tools and equipment, seed, fertilizer, pesticides, and traditional technology).

- Financial capital, such as earnings, pensions, remittances, savings, loans, and debt (formal and informal). Financial capital is typically the least available livelihood asset for the poor, claim Kollmair and Juli (2002). Although it is also highly essential to the poor, they do not have as much of it as they have other forms of capital.

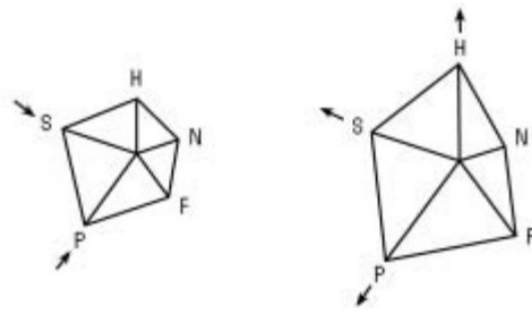
### Livelihood Assets

According to Bebbington (1999), the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework highlights the significance of people in livelihood analysis and the value of understanding their “capital” and “assets” in order to promote favourable livelihood outcomes. A wide variety of assets are necessary for effective livelihood strategies because self-defined goals cannot be achieved with a single capital endowment. The Food for Assets (FFA)/ Productive Assets (PA) program of the World Food Programme (WFP) builds on this idea by providing rural communities with access to a range of household and community-owned assets (WFP, 2017). This enables communities to produce diverse commodities for consumption, sale, and entrepreneurial ventures, ultimately enhancing their livelihood resilience.

The underlying premise of the Food for Assets initiative is that enhanced agricultural production would enable households to achieve food security and generate income through sales of surplus commodities. However, recognising that the significance of various asset categories fluctuates depending on local contexts, Kollmair and Juli’s (2002). Asset Pentagon framework (Figure 4 below) provides a valuable tool for visualising and analysing these dynamic relationships. This conceptual framework comprises five interconnected asset categories including human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital which interact and influence each other. The Asset Pentagon illustrates the shifting priorities and adaptive strategies employed by households and communities over time, facilitating the increased importance of understanding livelihood resilience for food security in rural communities.

According to Kollmair and Juli (2002), assets play a crucial role in empirical research on poverty alleviation, particularly in identifying the specific combinations of capital that enable households to transcend poverty. Investigating these asset configurations can reveal whether successful poverty alleviation strategies are replicable across diverse livelihood contexts. Moreover, examining the substitutability between different forms of capital such as compensating for financial capital deficiencies with robust social capital offers valuable insights into the adaptive strategies employed by resource-constrained households. This line of inquiry can inform targeted interventions aimed at leveraging existing asset strengths to address weaknesses, ultimately enhancing livelihood resilience and sustainability. Figure 4 below shows the

different shaped pentagons reflecting the changes in access to various assets.



**Figure 4:** Differently Shaped Asset Pentagons and Changes in Access to Assets

*Source: Kollmair and Juli (2002)*

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Productive Assets interventions or the Food Assistance for Assets programs were implemented in Mudzi district and other districts between 2016 and 2022, with a goal to improve the productivity of the climate-change-impacted rural households (WFP, 2017). The program aimed at improving the livelihoods and resilience of rural vulnerable populations against the impacts of climate change-related shocks especially droughts, heat waves, crops and livestock diseases, and to sustain their food security situations through adopting the solutions based on productive assets approach (WFP 2017 and 2020). In this regard, analysing the applicability of the Entitlement Approach and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to the investigation of household food security promotion through productive assets was done using an interpretivism philosophy, thus a qualitative approach. The analysis was done through literature review, focusing on understanding and interpreting the meaning and experiences of direct and indirect beneficiaries of the Productive Asset Disposition in Mudzi Rural District in relation to the two frameworks and as well in a bid to ascertain the impacts of productive assets on household food security. This approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the social and cultural context in which people live and interact (Lincoln, 2000). According to Lincoln (2000), the interpretivism paradigm, which is rooted in interpretive inquiry, seeks to understand the ways in which individuals and groups make sense of their experiences and the ways in which those experiences are shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which they occur. Denzin (1994) also echoed the same sentiments, noting that, “Interpretive research is a search for meaning, a search that is always already embedded in the social and cultural contexts of everyday life.” By grounding the study in Amartya Sen’s Entitlements Theory and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, the idea was to affirm the foundational importance of productive assets in achieving (household) food security, which was done in a qualitative approach of literature review. The paper employed a mixed analysis methodology, however, maintaining an interpretive enquiry, with the

structural development of the work mainly a function of qualitative secondary data and previous publications (Joel, 2025). Existing literature on both SLF and EA were analysed, linking them to food security issues in Mudzi Rural District, and also juxtaposing them to previous applications by other researchers. By using a case study of Mudzi Rural District, the analysis was specifically for a rural context, looking at specific issues around vulnerability, livelihood and entitlement options, and factors affecting food security. The analysis was qualitative, majorly based on experiences and perceptions of rural populations on issues of entitlements, livelihoods and food security.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the results of the analysis that was conducted on each framework, touching on their applicability to providing an assured foundation for investigating household food security through investment in productive assets. A critical analysis of both the Entitlements Approach and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework is provided, discussing the limitations and merits of each approach to this paper, leading to the crucial aspects of the approaches that were picked and relied on, also also a discussion of their limitations. This further helps the paper to develop an approach for this analysis that emanates from combining the weaknesses and strengths of each of the two approaches.

### Strengths of The Entitlement Approach

As noted in the literature review section, this paper noted that the Entitlement Approach provides a strong foundation for considering entitlements for food security as it is grounded in three main principles. These are discussed below, showcasing their applicability:

#### Entitlements

Entitlements refer to the resources, capabilities, and freedoms that individuals and households have access to, which enable them to acquire food and other essential items.

#### Exchange Entitlements

These represent the ability to exchange resources such as labour or goods for food or other essential items.

#### Utilisation Entitlements

These refer to the ability to utilise resources and food to achieve nutrition and well-being.

Accordingly, this paper comes to the conclusion that the following pillars could help to apply the Entitlement Approach in the context of household food security in Mudzi Rural District, Zimbabwe, by investing in Productive Assets (PA). This can be done through the following:

#### Pillar 1- Access to Productive Assets

Investment in PAs such as weir dams/irrigation systems, crop and livestock assets, and conservation agriculture enhances households' entitlements to resources, enabling them to produce and access food.

#### Pillar 2- Exchange Entitlements

Households' ability to exchange labour, goods, or services for food or other essential items is strengthened through PA investments and thus improving their exchange entitlements. Apart from individuals or households working and producing at their productive assets, there are opportunities for employment creation and involvement of more people from the community in the production processes at each asset.

#### Pillar 3- Utilisation Entitlements

PA investments improve households' utilisation entitlements by enhancing their ability to utilise resources and food to achieve nutrition and well-being. Because of enhanced production, utilisation is also improved and that is crucial for household food security.

#### Pillar 4- Empowerment and Capacities

Investment in PA empowers households, particularly women, by building their capacities and enhancing their decision-making power, thereby strengthening their entitlements.

#### Pillar 5- Contextual Factors

The paper considers contextual factors such as climate change, markets, and social norms which affect households' entitlements and ability to achieve food security.

### Limitations of the Entitlements Approach

The Entitlements Approach, developed by Amartya Sen, is a framework for analyzing food security and poverty. While this paper has shown that the approach can be applied to the study "Towards household food security through an investment in Productive Assets (PA) in Mudzi Rural District, in Zimbabwe," it is critical to note that the approach has some limitations that the researcher took into consideration to inform a sustainable future use of the approach on issues of household food security and related subjects, and also to ensure that the study remained credible and produced dependable results. The study argues that the Entitlements approach oversimplifies complex relationships between households, communities, and institutions, and neglects power dynamics, social norms, and cultural factors influencing food security at community and household level as has been noted by Chinthakindi and Katherasala (2025). Additionally, the static nature of the approach fails to capture the dynamic

aspects of food security and poverty, especially the expanded definition of food security at community and household levels. Contextually, the study's focus on rural Zimbabwe may not account for rural-urban differences, cultural and social contexts, and institutional and policy environments. Methodologically, data limitations, sampling bias, and challenges in measuring entitlements may affect the accuracy of findings. Practically, the approach may not provide clear guidance on designing effective interventions, scalability, and sustainability, and may require additional analysis for policy and programmatic implications.

Regarding conceptual limitations, this paper noted that the Entitlements Approach oversimplifies complex relationships between households, communities, institutions and neglects issues of power imbalances, social norms and cultural factors that influence both household and community food security. The approach focuses on individual or household entitlements which might oversimplify the complex relationships between households, communities, and institutions. The productive asset approach, however, covers those disparities because in as much as they also look at household entitlements, they also delve into the productive assets at a community level and the influence of community relations, dynamics, laws and opportunities. The fact that the approach has limited consideration of power dynamics is cause for concern because issues of food in Mudzi rural community are directly linked to power dynamics. The allocation of assets and access to community resources is largely influenced by the power that is vested in community leaders such as village heads, political leaders, headmen and chiefs.

Economic entitlements are the main focus of the strategy, which ignores the influence of power dynamics, social norms, and cultural elements on food security. Cultural variables have a big impact on how resources are distributed and how food insecurity is addressed in Mudzi Rural District. This has an impact on household and community assets and rights. Although the Zunderamambo initiative has lost momentum over time, it serves as a reminder of the importance of cultural considerations in mobilising resources such as chief-managed food banks and assets. However, this approach can also have unintended consequences such as limiting individual households' ability to produce food directly for their own consumption. This highlights the limitations of the Entitlements Approach in capturing the complex interplay of factors that influence both community and household food security in Mudzi Rural District.

Instead of capturing the dynamic nature of poverty and food security, the Entitlement Approach primarily offers a static examination of entitlement-related concerns, creating a snapshot of entitlements at a specific moment in time. This is an inaccurate representation of Mudzi District's dynamic conditions, where the economy, food fortunes, asset status, climate change, and other important aspects are constantly changing. Even when looking at

the productive assets strategy, this paper emphasizes how crucial it is to take into account the changing circumstances of communities in Mudzi Rural District. To address this need, this paper proposed a contextualised model for the deployment and implementation of productive assets, incorporating government support and adaptive mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability. Furthermore, through interactions with field participants, this paper investigated the sustainability mechanisms underlying the created assets thereby assessing the adaptability and effectiveness of the productive asset approach in enhancing household food security.

In terms of contextual limitations, the Entitlements Approach fails to pinpoint the rural-urban differences. The paper focuses on rural Zimbabwe where entitlements and food security challenges might differ significantly from urban areas. This is an important aspect when it comes to the discussion on food security and the disparities in applicability of strategies must be distinguished between urban and rural contexts. Nonetheless, the approach is used in this paper in light of the delimitation the study focused on and its applicability in guiding people's entitlements in relation to the idea of household food security. Despite the contextual limitations, the paper picked the aspects of the approach that apply to Mudzi Rural District and in connection with the productive assets approach for household food security.

The approach also lacks some institutional and policy environment considerations; the approach assumes a relatively stable institutional and policy environment which may not be the case in Zimbabwe in general, and in Mudzi Rural District in particular, where policies and institutions can be subject to change. In Zimbabwe, the government is well-known for making abrupt changes to monetary policies and other key policies, with implications on food security. However, this paper has also factored in issues of food insecurity emanating from poor performance of the economy because of institutional and policy changes. The proposed model for deploying and implementing productive assets takes into consideration an environment scan in the form of a rural appraisal approach that informs the community into account institutional and policy factors in their planning. On methodological limitations, this paper believes that the Entitlements Approach poses a challenge in measuring entitlements; the approach does not clearly do that. Quantifying and measuring entitlements can be challenging, particularly in contexts with limited data or complex social relationships. This paper relied heavily on responses from study participants on the quantity, quality and reliability of their assets to establish entitlements for the households. This has also been helped by some established methods of determining household food security, including analysis of the four pillars of food security and other key determinants.

In terms of practical limitations there are issues of intervention design which are not clearly addressed in the approach. The Entitlements Approach does not provide

clear guidance on designing effective interventions to improve food security through productive assets. Nevertheless, this paper, through the Mudzi Rural District case study, tried to address this gap by providing what has been done in Mudzi District through the FFA programme, and this will be important in addressing this gap by future researchers who will align their studies along the lines of informing productive assets using the Entitlements Approach. Apart from not providing guidance on designing effective interventions, the approach does not also address the scalability and sustainability of interventions which are critical for long-term impact. This paper, however, sought to establish measures that could be put in place to make sure that productive assets interventions are sustainable.

### **Strengths of The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

In Mudzi Rural District, Zimbabwe, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) offers a theoretical framework for understanding the intricate connections between investment in Productive Assets (PA) and household food security. The asset-based approach of the SLF acknowledges that households have a variety of assets, including financial, natural, social, human, and physical assets, all of which interact to affect livelihood outcomes. By examining how PA investments affect these asset categories, this paper identified pathways to enhanced food security. For instance, PA investments may increase financial assets through improved agricultural productivity while also strengthening social assets through community-led initiatives.

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework's vulnerability context dimension is particularly relevant to this paper, as it acknowledges the role of external factors in shaping household livelihoods. In Mudzi Rural District, factors such as climate change, market fluctuations, and limited access to credit can exacerbate household vulnerability. By investing in PA, households can build resilience to these shocks, thereby enhancing food security. Furthermore, the SLF's focus on transformative processes and structures highlights the importance of policy and institutional support in facilitating PA investments. This paper can inform policy interventions aimed at promoting PA initiatives, improving market access, and strengthening community institutions.

This paper evaluated how PA investments affect household food security outcomes, such as improved food availability, access, use, and stability, using the SLF as a lens. Through an analysis of the impact of PA investments on vulnerability settings and household asset portfolios, this study shed light on how well PA-based interventions work to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The paper's conclusions ultimately support the creation of evidence-based policies and initiatives that will improve household food security in rural Zimbabwe by investing in productive assets, which is consistent with the SLF's focus on poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods. The observable and tangible results of successfully applied

livelihood solutions are known as livelihood outcomes. These outcomes encompass a range of benefits, including enhanced economic stability through increased income which enables the procurement of essential commodities such as food and other necessities. Beyond material gains, livelihood outcomes also encompass improvements in non-material well-being, including heightened self-esteem, enhanced health status, expanded access to services, and a strengthened sense of social inclusion. Additionally, successful livelihood strategies mitigate vulnerability by fostering resilience through asset accumulation, thereby ensuring improved food security and facilitating a more sustainable utilisation of natural resources. This is achieved through measures such as securing property rights, responsible resource management, and adaptive capacities that safeguard against external shocks.

Livelihood outcomes provide valuable insights into the efficacy of the existing configuration of factors within the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, revealing the motivations and priorities of stakeholders. By examining these outcomes, researchers and practitioners can better understand the drivers of stakeholder behaviour and anticipate how individuals and households may respond to emerging opportunities. Moreover, livelihood outcomes inform the selection of relevant performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of support interventions. Notably, livelihood outcomes dynamically influence the asset base, reshaping the Asset Pentagon's configuration and creating a new starting point for subsequent strategies and outcomes. This iterative process underscores the interconnected and adaptive nature of livelihood systems.

### **A People-Centered Framework**

According to Kollmair and Juli (2002), the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) places more emphasis on people's action and skills than on the resources they use. This people-centered approach recognizes that long-standing institutional impediments that cannot be removed by asset creation alone frequently cause development difficulties. Therefore, a sophisticated grasp of the intricate interactions among livelihood options, social settings, and adaptive capacities is necessary for effective poverty alleviation. To achieve sustainable outcomes, development agencies must collaborate with communities in a manner that resonates with their existing livelihood practices, social environments, and adaptive capabilities, thereby fostering empowerment and resilience. At a practical level, this entails a rigorous and longitudinal analysis of livelihood dynamics, commencing with an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and aspirations. This people-centred approach necessitates exploring the diverse strategies that households and communities employ to sustain their livelihoods, including their adaptive responses to external pressures and shocks. By examining these complex dynamics, this study and practitioners can uncover the nuanced relationships between livelihood assets, vulnerabilities, and resilience,

ultimately informing context-specific interventions that support sustainable livelihood outcomes and the relationship between successful asset programmes and household food security.

### **Sustainability of Livelihoods**

The sustainability of livelihood strategies is a critical consideration, as underscored by Devereux (2001) and Chambers and Conway (1992). If a livelihood is resilient to shocks and stresses from the external environment, autonomous without the need for external assistance, maintains the long-term productivity of natural resources, and fosters inter-generational equity by not jeopardizing the livelihood options of others, it can be considered sustainable. This multifaceted framework emphasises the importance of self-reliance, environmental stewardship, and social equity in achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes. The World Food Programme (WFP, 2017) emphasises that sustaining livelihoods requires a synergistic combination of people's investments in livelihood strategies and their comprehension of sustainability principles. The specific strategies adopted by individuals and communities significantly influence livelihood outcomes, particularly regarding productive assets. Effective livelihood sustainability relies on the alignment of these strategies with contextual realities, leveraging local knowledge and capacities to foster resilience and long-term productivity. This integrative approach recognises the interdependence of human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital in achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Kollmair and Juli's (2002) conceptualisation of livelihood strategies is a key component of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF). The wide range of actions and decisions that people and households take to achieve their livelihood goals is referred to as livelihood strategies. These strategies constitute a dynamic and adaptive process wherein people combine and reconfigure activities to address their varying needs across different temporal, spatial, and economic contexts. Notably, livelihood strategies exhibit intra-household diversity, reflecting the unique priorities and agency of individual household members. The intricate relationship between livelihood strategies and asset status is underscored by their positioning within the Sustainable Livelihoods framework. Specifically, an individual or household's asset profile directly influences their vulnerability or resilience to structural transformations and processes. Moreover, changes in asset status can either facilitate or constrain the effectiveness of livelihood strategies, contingent upon the prevailing policy and institutional contexts. This dynamic interplay highlights the critical role of external factors such as governance structures, market conditions, and social norms in mediating the asset-strategy nexus and ultimately shaping livelihood outcomes.

When examining livelihood strategies and issues within the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) framework, it is crucial to acknowledge the inherent competitive

dynamics at play. Individuals and households vie for limited resources, including employment opportunities, market access, and natural resources, rendering simultaneous livelihood improvements challenging. Furthermore, the poor constitute a diverse and heterogeneous group, with varying priorities and needs, navigating a finite and contested environment. This complexity necessitates compromise and trade-offs. The SLF offers a nuanced and context-sensitive approach that recognises these intricacies and accommodates diverse perspectives. By acknowledging the heterogeneity of the poor and the competitive nature of resource allocation, the SLF enables policymakers and practitioners to develop targeted interventions that balance competing interests and prioritise sustainable livelihood outcomes.

### **Limitations of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is a popular framework for understanding and analysing the livelihoods of people, households, and communities, as this paper has pointed out. Even though the framework has been applied in various contexts, including poverty reduction, sustainable development, and disaster risk reduction, this paper has noted that there are several limitations to its applicability to this study. The limitations, however, have not only impacted this study negatively, but some of them have also been avenues for improved research. One of the primary limitations that has been noted by this study is that SLF overemphasises economic assets such as income, savings, and physical assets. While economic assets are crucial for livelihoods, the SLF neglects the importance of social, cultural, and human assets which are critical resources in Mudzi Rural District, especially when it comes to making economic assets work. Social assets, such as social networks and relationships, can provide critical support and protection during times of crisis, enabling the productive assets to function and be productive. Cultural assets such as traditional knowledge and practices can also contribute to livelihoods and well-being. In Mudzi Rural District, there are some areas culturally reserved for burial sites, traditional sites for Zunderamambo (chiefs place for community-wide agricultural activities), grazing areas and others. These are crucial considerations even in discussing productive assets and household food security. Human assets, such as education, skills, and health, are also essential for livelihoods but are often overlooked in the SLF. The productive asset disposition, however, included these key factors, especially considering local expertise, able-bodied and non-able-bodied people in the distribution of work at different productive assets activities.

Just like the Entitlements Approach, another limitation of the SLF is its failure to account for power dynamics and social inequalities. The framework assumes that all individuals and households have equal access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes. However, in Mudzi District, power imbalances and

social inequalities, including land ownership powers, significantly affect livelihoods and well-being. For example, women do not own most of the assets and means of production, and other vulnerable groups like the old and those not related to community leaders face discrimination, exclusion, and limited access to resources and opportunities. The SLF's failure to account for these power dynamics can lead to incomplete and inaccurate analyses of livelihoods and the relevance of some of the productive assets in dealing with issues of food insecurity. However, this paper considered these factors as some key considerations for the productive assets disposition under the WFP FFA manual.

The SLF represents livelihoods as a static and linear process where individuals and households progress from one stage to another in a predictable and sequential manner. However, livelihoods are often dynamic and non-linear, with individuals and households facing multiple and different shocks, stresses, and uncertainties. The SLF's static and linear representation of livelihoods can oversimplify the complexities of real-life livelihoods and fail to capture the adaptability and resilience of individuals and households. This misrepresents the dynamic circumstances of Mudzi Rural District where climate change, food fortunes, asset situation, the economy and other crucial factors make it fluid. These changes show that even when discussing the productive assets approach, the changing realities of the communities of Mudzi Rural District are also considered. This paper closed that gap by proposing a model for the deployment and implementation of productive assets with government backing and crucial adaptations that will survive time changes.

The paper realised that the SLF does not pay attention to environmental sustainability. While the framework acknowledges the importance of natural capital, it does not provide sufficient guidance on how to integrate environmental sustainability into livelihoods analysis and programming. This limitation can lead to the neglect of environmental concerns and the promotion of unsustainable livelihoods practices. This paper, however, closes this gap because this is a key aspect in the productive asset disposition, especially through watershed management. The findings of the paper show that a lot of activities were conducted and attached to each asset to sustain the environment.

#### **Way Forward - The Asset-Based Livelihoods and Entitlements for Food Security (ABALEFS)**

A new framework that this paper believes could assist communities and households in investing in productive assets, developing sustainable livelihoods, improving their rights, access, and ownership of entitlements, and achieving food security is informed by key elements of the two approaches. Following the discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of the two strategies (the

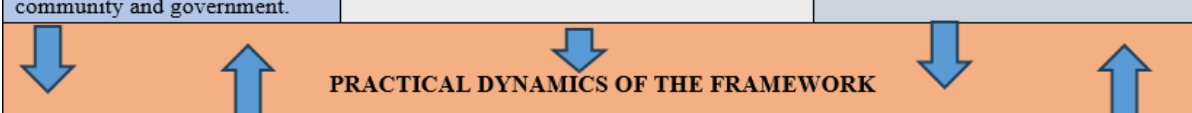
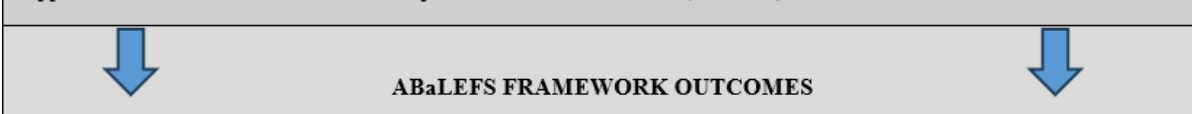
Entitlements Approach and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework), this paper argues that a new framework known as the Asset-Based Livelihoods and Entitlements for Food Security (ABALEFS) may be a more simpler and straightforward option despite that both strategies currently provide a strong foundation for investing in productive assets.

The framework highlights the importance of asset-based livelihoods and entitlements in attaining food security for households and/or communities in Mudzi Rural District. To directly achieve the goals of food security, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods, this paper contends that the new framework could be used in conjunction with the two existing approaches, helping the latter to fill in their gaps and offering a simple means of combining the essential elements and dynamics of the former. The ABALEFS framework, which integrates the Sustainable Livelihood Framework with the Entitlements Approach to enhance household food security through investment in productive assets, is displayed in a table format in Table 1 below.

To address the shortcomings of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and the Entitlements Approach, as well as to promote household food security by combining their advantages and resolving their shortcomings, the Asset-Based Livelihoods and Entitlements for Food Security (ABALEFS) framework offers a more thorough approach for promoting household food security through investment in productive assets. The ABALEFS may assist communities in organising essential elements and dynamics of investing in productive assets to directly achieve food security and other benefits, but it does not seek to replicate the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework or the Entitlements Approach in terms of form, framework process flow, or what factors to include or not. In this sense, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework and the Entitlements Approach already offer a solid basis upon which the ABALEFS might be implemented. The ABALEFS framework acknowledges that food security encompasses more than just having access to food; it also involves being able to manage resources sustainably, develop resilience, and support equitable livelihoods. The ABALEFS offers a thorough lens for comprehending and resolving the intricate issues that households in Mudzi Rural District and other vulnerable contexts like this one face by emphasising the interaction between entitlements, capital accumulation, and productive assets.

The purpose of the ABALEFS is to assist communities, practitioners, and policymakers in creating context-specific plans that advance sustainable livelihoods, lessen poverty, and improve food security. The ABALEFS promotes a proactive and inclusive strategy to addressing food insecurity and development that gives priority to the interests and goals of rural marginalised and vulnerable households by highlighting the significance of institutional assistance, risk management, and capital accumulation.

**Table 1:** Components, Dynamics and Outcomes of the Asset-Based Livelihoods and Entitlements for Food Security (ABaLEFS) Framework

COMPONENTS OF THE ASSET-BASED LIVELIHOODS AND ENTITLEMENTS FOR FOOD SECURITY FRAMEWORK		
Entitlements	Sustainable Livelihoods	Productive Assets
<p><b>Entitlements:</b> The framework focuses on the rights, access and ownership of resources, including:</p> <p><b>Endowments:</b> Initial resources and assets (e.g., land, labor, capital, different starter packs).</p> <p><b>Exchange Entitlements:</b> Ability to exchange endowments for food or other essential goods</p> <p><b>Transfer Entitlements:</b> Access to social transfers, aid, or other forms of support from the community and government.</p>	<p>The framework emphasizes on five types of capital including:</p> <p><b>Human Capital:</b> Skills, knowledge, and health of community members.</p> <p><b>Social Capital:</b> Networks, relationships, and social support.</p> <p><b>Natural Capital:</b> Environmental resources and ecosystem services.</p> <p><b>Physical Capital:</b> Infrastructure, technology, and equipment.</p> <p><b>Financial Capital:</b> Savings, credit, and other financial resources.</p>	<p>The framework focuses on investment in assets that enhance livelihoods and food security including:</p> <p><b>Agricultural assets:</b> Water assets, irrigation systems, arable land, tools, and equipment and others.</p> <p><b>Livestock assets:</b> Animals, feed, and veterinary care and services.</p> <p><b>Non-agricultural assets:</b> Small businesses, skills training, and other income-generating activities.</p>
 <p><b>PRACTICAL DYNAMICS OF THE FRAMEWORK</b></p>		
<p><b>Asset-Based Entitlements:</b> Households and communities invest in productive assets to enhance entitlements (endowments, exchange, and transfer), improve their right, access to and ownership of entitlements.</p>		
<p><b>Livelihood Diversification:</b> Using different forms of asset-based assets, households and communities diversify livelihood strategies and reduce dependence on a single source of income or food.</p>		
<p><b>Capital Accumulation:</b> When households and communities invest in productive assets and diversify their livelihood strategies, they build and accumulate different types of capital to strengthen livelihoods and food security.</p>		
<p><b>Risk Management:</b> With improved investments, livelihood strategies and capital, households and communities must develop strategies to manage risks and shocks, such as climate change, market fluctuations, and conflict.</p>		
<p><b>Institutional Support:</b> Their investments, livelihood strategies and security, households and communities require supportive institutional environments that promote access to resources, markets, and social services</p>		
 <p><b>ABaLEFS FRAMEWORK OUTCOMES</b></p>		
<b>Improved Food Security</b>	Enhanced access to sufficient, nutritious, and sustainable food (or food products).	
<b>Increased Resilience</b>	Strengthened ability for households/communities to cope with shocks and stresses.	
<b>Sustainable Livelihoods</b>	Improved livelihoods that are environmentally sustainable, socially just, and economically viable.	

Source: Authors' Creation

Ultimately, the framework helps communities create and contribute to more sustainable and equitable food systems that benefit all rural communities.

## CONCLUSION

The paper analysed two foundational theories: the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), which was developed by the British Department for International Development (DFID) as an expansion of Robert Chambers' groundbreaking work, and Amartya Sen's Entitlement Approach. The paper provided an in-depth

analysis of the conceptual foundations, key principles, and relevance of these theories to rural household food security, contextualising their application within the Zimbabwean setting. Accordingly this paper demonstrates how the Entitlement Approach and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework are used to analyse the interrelated functions of owned or shared assets and their sustainability in order to investigate the relationship between investment in productive assets and household food security in Mudzi Rural District, Zimbabwe. The Entitlement Approach highlights the

importance of access to and control over productive assets in promoting food security. The Sustainable Livelihood Framework recognizes how different assets in a household or community, including human, social, natural, physical, and financial, interact with one another. PA investments can enhance food security by increasing financial assets through improved agricultural productivity and strengthening social assets through community-led initiatives. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is used to examine how productive assets, aided by vulnerability assessments and local governance support, can promote sustainable livelihoods, income generation, food security, and resilience. The SLF provides a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between productive assets, livelihood sustainability, and vulnerability. It emphasises contextual analysis and institutional support, making it an ideal theoretical lens for examining the transformative potential of productive assets in promoting rural food security and resilience. The paper highlights the synergistic relationships between asset access and control, exchange mechanisms, utilisation strategies, empowerment, capacity-building initiatives, contextual factors, and asset sustainability to ensure food security. Due to the limitations and gaps in both the Entitlement Approach and the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, this paper contends that since both approaches already offer a solid basis for investing in productive assets, a new framework called the Asset-Based Livelihoods and Entitlements for Food Security (ABaLEFS) could be a simpler option. The ABaLEFS focuses on the importance of asset-based livelihoods and entitlements in attaining food security for households and/or communities. To directly achieve the goals of food security, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods, this paper contends that this new framework could be used in conjunction with the two existing approaches, helping the latter to fill in their gaps and offering a simple means of combining the essential elements and dynamics of the former.

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