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**Revisiting the role of vending as an alternative food security measure and a tool for alleviating poverty among women. The case of Bindura urban in Zimbabwe.**

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### **Abstract**

*The study sought to explore vending as a strategy for food security and poverty alleviation for women in Bindura urban of Zimbabwe. The study used (Scoones, 1998)'s theory of sustainable livelihood and poverty alleviation. The major findings of this research were that vending is very instrumental in poverty alleviation among women in Bindura urban, since it is being used as a supplementary measure to support the salaries of their husbands. Vending is used as a source of self-employment and is helping women in paying their rents, rates as well as catering for family and house hold needs. Data were collected through questionnaire survey, key informant interviews, and documentary reviews so as to triangulate the evidence. Seven key informants were interviewed and sixty semi-structured questionnaires were administered to collect socio-economic and technical data pertaining to vending as a strategy of poverty alleviation. The study showed that vending, far from being a hindrance to progress and a stumbling block to service delivery, is in fact the basis of an alternative sustainable livelihood which is people friendly and with the necessary institutional and infrastructural support could be sustainable in Bindura.*

***Key words Poverty, Vending, Alleviation and sustainable livelihoods***

**Introduction**

Though there are numerous definitions of poverty, a common thread which runs through these conceptualizations is the view that poverty is evidently a multidimensional phenomenon with complex linkages. Muzaale (1986) describes poverty as more than just a physiological phenomenon denoting a lack of basic necessities like food, health, shelter and clothing. Poverty is also a state of deprivation and powerlessness. Where the poor are exploited and denied participation in decision-making in matters that intimately affect them. Muzaale's definition is consistent with that of the 1997 Human Development Report quoted in Kaliyati (1998) which articulates three perspectives of poverty. That is social, economic and psychological perspectives of poverty in urban areas. These findings by Muzaale have some gaps on urban poverty especially on youths in urban areas as well a school drop outs in urban set ups of developing countries like Zimbabwe. It is in the interest of this study to explore more about vending as a mechanism of alleviating poverty in Bindura urban.

**Background**

Economic downturn, rapid urban population growth, upsurge in HIV and AIDS epidemic, political instability, rising unemployment and lower take-home pay drove some urban residents into the informal sector as food vendors (Chakuezi, 2010). Moreover, Njaya (2014) pointed out that, the rapid urbanization in the past decades has led urban services to be stretched beyond their limits, resulting in inadequate supplies of potable water, sewage disposal and other necessary services. Food legislation, regulation and enforcement have constantly failed to reflect the changing circumstances and incorporate them into town planning to ensure sustainability of street food vending and hence its contribution to sustainable development. The informal sector covers two groups of labour market activities. It is formed by the coping behavior of individuals during economic downturn and rising unemployment as noted by Dewa, Dziva and Mukwashi (2014). In Zimbabwe, vending has become the largest employer and about 68% residents in urban areas are in the trade of vending chiefly due to economic downturn (Jonga, 2014:7). Vendors in the informal sector earn less income, have unstable income, and do not have access to basic protections and services (Beneria and Floro, 2006).

More so, vendors do not comply with government regulations on the business activities. Lack of compliance to government regulations by vendors pose a challenge to local authorities and this has often led to continuous feud between urban councils and vendors. Since urban

councils will be in a bid to ensure protection of the environment and the set-up of urban areas as noted by Chakaipa (2010). Informal employment makes up 48 percent of non-agricultural employment in North Africa, 51 percent in Latin America, 65 percent in Asia and 72 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa (International Labor Organization 2002). Furthermore, about 65% of women dominate the informal sector in most Sub-Saharan African countries, where they are found in the fields of trading, agriculture and food processing (UNECA) (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2008). Chakuezi (2010) postulates that, there is increasing recognition that street vending plays an important socio-economic role in terms of poverty alleviation, employment potential, providing special income particularly for women and provision of food at affordable costs to mainly the lower income groups in the cities (Chakuezi, 2010). Street vending employs on average 37.8 percent of the women, and contributes about 38 percent to total gross domestic product in Africa (Charmes, 1998). However, these women are vulnerable to abuse and harassment by urban councils' authorities.

Concerns of cleanliness and freshness often discourage some people from consuming street products. Njaya (2014:3) notes that, with the increasing pace of globalization and tourism, the safety of vendors' operations has become one of the major concerns of public health and a focus for local councils and governments and scientists to raise public awareness (Mukhola, 2007). An assessment of some street foods widely consumed in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso showed that vendors did not respect hygienic practices (WHO, 2006). In Accra, Ghana, a study to evaluate the role of street food vendors in the transmission of diarrhoeal pathogens showed that in 35 percent of the vending sites food was exposed to flies while 17.1 percent of the vendors handled food at ground level (WHO, 2006).

Moreover, in the United Kingdom, the Food Standards Agency provides comprehensive rule of food safety for the vendors, traders and retailers of the street food sector. (WHO, 2006) highlighted that, in Mumbai, India, the Food Safety Act, (2011) requires hawkers, food vendors including vegetable and fruit vendors to follow basic hygiene rules such as wearing an apron and gloves and using clean utensils and potable water. Other effective ways of enhancing the safety of street foods are through mystery shopping programs, training and rewarding programs to vendors, as well as regulatory governing and membership management programs, or through technical testing programs.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Sustainable livelihood approach**

This research borrowed much from the sustainable livelihood theory. Since this approach has been very instrumental in emancipating women vendors in urban areas of Zimbabwe. According to (DFID, 1999) there are three insights into poverty which underpin this new approach. The first is the realization that while economic growth may be essential for poverty reduction, there is not an automatic relationship between the two since it all depends on the capabilities of the poor to take advantage of expanding economic opportunities. Secondly, there is the realization that poverty as conceived by the poor themselves is not just a question of low income, but also includes other dimensions such as bad health, illiteracy, lack of social services, poor standards of living., as well as a state of vulnerability and feelings of powerlessness in general. Finally, it is now recognized that the poor themselves often know their situation and needs best and must therefore be involved in the design of policies and project intended to better their lot. Thus, policy makers cannot impose policies and solutions on people without consulting them.

However, Turton (2000) notes that there is no unified approach to applying the sustainable livelihood concept. Depending on the agency it can be used primarily as an analytical framework (or tool) for program planning and assessment or as a program in itself. There are, however, three basic features common to most approaches. The first is that the focus is on the livelihoods of the poor. The second is that the approach rejects the standard procedure of conventional approaches of taking as an entry point a specific sector such as agriculture, water, or health. And finally, the SL approach places great emphasis on involving people in both the identification and the implementation of activities where appropriate. Sustainable livelihood approach doesnot necessarily aim to address all aspects of the livelihoods of the poor. The intention is rather to employ a holistic perspective in the analysis of livelihoods to identify those issues of subject areas where an intervention could be strategically importantfor effective poverty reduction, either at the local level or at the policy level.

### **Critique of sustainable livelihood approach**

The sustainable livelihood approach produces a moreholistic view on what resources, or combination of resources, are important to the poor, including not only physical and natural resources, but also their social and human capital UNDP (1997). Thus, the holistic nature of this approach makes it contextually relevant and effective at all levels of the society.

The approach also facilitates an understanding of the underlying causes of poverty by focusing on the variety of factors, at different levels, that directly or indirectly determine or constrain poor people's access to resources or assets of different kinds, and thus their

livelihoods (Chambers, 1995). It provides a more realistic framework for assessing the direct and indirect effects on people's living conditions than, for example, one dimensional productivity or income criteria. This approach is inclusive and it offers comprehensive and people driven initiatives to the poor. Thus, the fact that sustainable livelihood approach focuses on the root causes of poverty makes it more applicable in alleviating poverty amongst the women in urban areas through using vending as a strategy which is sustainable in reducing poverty and unemployment. Moreover, (Chambers, 1995) pointed out that, sustainable livelihood approach is relevant and applicable in urban poverty because most of the residents are not employed and economic challenges makes sustainable approaches such as vending in alleviating poverty as a strategy which provide long term solutions to urban challenges and poverty.

Nevertheless, (Frankenberger, Timothy and Drinkwater, 2000) argued that none of the sustainable livelihood approaches discussed here really deal with the issue of how to identify the poor that you are trying to assist. Also, the way resources and other livelihood opportunities are distributed locally is often influenced by informal structures of social dominance and power within the communities themselves. More so, Gender is an aspect of social relations and to the extent that relations between men and women are characterized by marked inequality and social domination, they obviously form part of the problem. All three agencies give at least some consideration to gender, but the difficulties of genuinely giving the appropriate time and space to women is not really addressed. (Turton, 2000) notes that, the basic idea of the sustainable livelihood approach is to start with a broad and open-ended analysis, but this requires a highly flexible planning situation which rarely exists. The best hope is to ensure that already identified/decided sector development initiatives fit with people's livelihood strategies and make them better at responding to the constraints and opportunities affecting the poor. The sustainable livelihood approach, or elements of it, could usefully be employed to that end.

### **An overview of informal sector in Zimbabwe**

The informal sector in Zimbabwe is characterized by a diverse range of small-scale and micro-activities, usually with no corresponding institutions such as banks and with none of opportunities for growth and accumulation, which typify formal small-scale enterprises (Kolstee, 1994; Matsebula, 1996). Paradza (1999) defines Informal Sector Operations (ISOs) as all enterprises not registered under the Companies Act or the Co-operatives' Act and those which are not assessed for taxation by central government. Legally speaking, the implication

is that no tax payments are made to the governing authorities. Specifically, the sector is marked by easy entry of operators, reliance on indigenous resources, family ownership of enterprises, labor-intensive and adapted technology, skills required outside the formal school system, smallness of operations (micro entrepreneurialism), and, unregulated and competitive markets (Matse-bula, 1996).

Faced with dwindling prospects for formal employment, and increasing urban poverty the majority of Zimbabwean households turned to informal sector in most urban areas, selling a wide range of goods from vegetables, recharge cards commonly known as airtime, food, second hand clothes to back yard manufacturing supporting of thousands of households. In response the government showed its desire to promote the informal sector through Statutory Instrument 216 of 1994 which amended the Regional Town and Country Planning Act (Chapter 29:12), thus allowing for the development of non-residential activities in residential areas commonly known as of home industries. However, with the deteriorating economic activities, deepening poverty and rising unemployment in the late 1990s and early 2000, the informal sector effectively became the mainstay for the majority of Zimbabweans, much to the dismay of the government and local authorities who in 2003 enacted the Hawkers Act, which mandated the police to clear all unlicensed street vendors operating in urban areas. Thus, in the year 2005 in line with the Hawkers Act of 2003, the government of Zimbabwe launched Operation Murambatsvina or Restore Order, a countrywide clean up exercise which resulted in a crackdown on the informal market activities. Vendors were chased off the streets and flea markets were closed down, with bulldozers razing down market stalls.

These acts by the government were a direct challenge to the lives of vendors who operated in urban areas of Zimbabwe. Moreover, in the year 2010 the government of Zimbabwe enacted the Indigenization and Economic Empowerment Act (Chapter 14:33), which among other things promoted and enhanced the growth of indigenous entrepreneurs/ small to medium enterprises reserving certain sectors of the economy to indigenous people, especially the retail sector which is mainly dominated by the informal sector. In other words, vendors were given more opportunities and chances to operate in urban areas. According to the FinScope (2012) survey on Small to Medium Enterprises, there are over 2 million individual entrepreneurs and 800,000 SMEs with employees and these are estimated to be employing over 2.9 million people. Vendors fall in this category of small to medium enterprises, thus they are an essential component which must not be looked by the government in ensuring poverty alleviation in urban areas.

### **Methodological outline**

The approach followed in this study is qualitative descriptive research methodology as it enabled the narration and interpretation of role of vending as a food security measure and a tool in alleviating poverty among women in Bindura. This approach was appropriate to this study as it enabled to establish the nature and even the extent of the importance of vending as a solution to food security and poverty amelioration among women through studying the context/setting in which people talk and also the voices of the participants as emotions can be observed through peeped voices to show appreciation which cannot be heard in quantitative descriptive research methodology, (Creswell, 2014). A total of 67 participants took part in the study. Secondary data as well as questionnaire and an interview schedule were used to collect data from female vendors and key informants. The collected data were presented in graphical forms (graphs and pie charts) and in tabular form. Verbatim responses from open-ended questions were captured by themes and qualitatively interpreted. Data from the questionnaire were presented first, followed by data from the interview schedule.

**Section A: Biographical Data of female vendors**

The age distribution of the sample highlighted that respondents came from different age groups. The study highlighted that 26 (43.3%) of the respondents were between the age of 15-25. The second highest number of respondents were 17 (28.3%) were between the age of 26-35. Followed by those between the ages of 36-45 being 11 (18.3%). Moreover, those between the age of 46-55 were quite few being 5 (8.3%) and only 1(1.6%). The dominating age group is between the ages of 15-45 because they are young and energetic and they have many responsibilities since the majority of them are households. The active and young groups form the bedrock of the economy but due to high levels of unemployment, they are the most vulnerable group to poverty, early marriages as well as divorces. Therefore, their involvement in vending shows that they are trying to emancipate themselves from poverty. However, these young women often have abuse from municipal police as well as sexual harassment from male vendors because most of them were desperately in need of capital. Generally, those above the age of fifty were very few because most of them prefer to stay in rural areas than in urban set up and some of them are being financially supported by their children who are employed.

**Table 1 Age: Female vendors**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
15-25	26	43.3
26-35	17	28.3
36-45	11	18.3

46-55	5	8.3
66+	1	1.6
Total	60	100.0

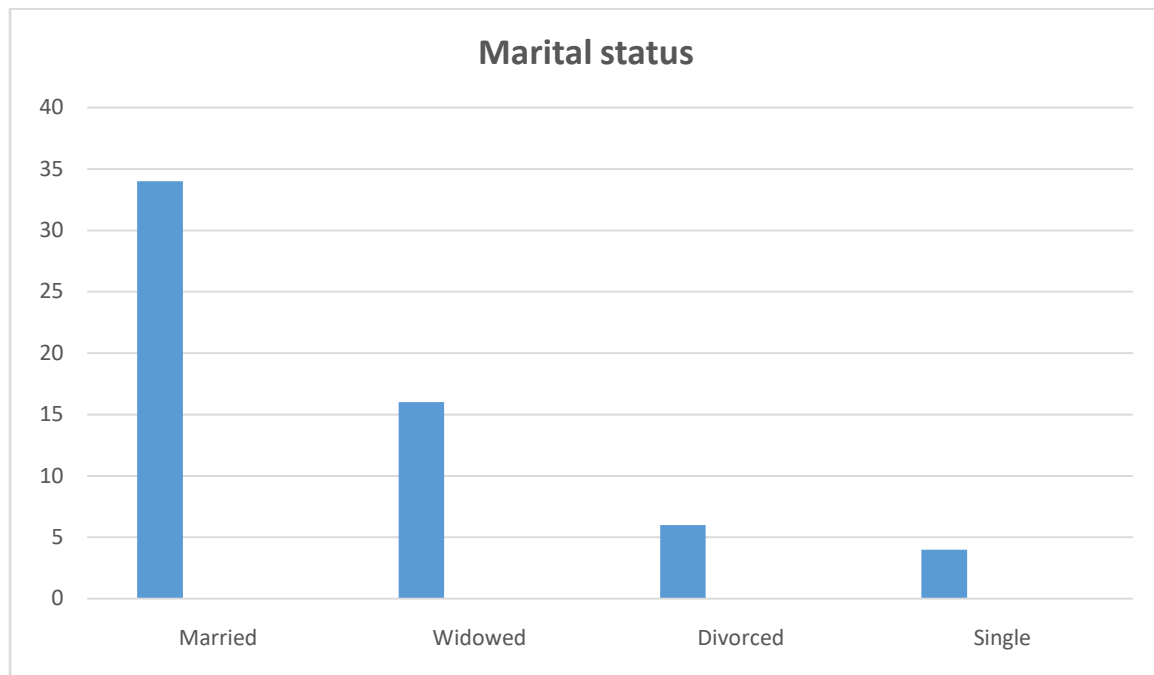
### Marital status of the respondents

Most respondents 34 (56.6%) showed that, they were married and 16 (26.6%) highlighted that they were widowed. More so, 6 (10%) constituted the divorced and 4 (6.6%) were single. In most cases a person’s marital status determines the standard of living especially among the women. Single women parents are more vulnerable to poverty and social injustices while those who are married enjoy protection as well as support from their husbands. Therefore, they use vending as a supplementary measure to the salaries of their husbands as noted by (Njaya, 2015). Moreover, Kurebwa (2014) pointed out that, marriage is a source of pride and security for women in Zimbabwe and it creates a sense of companionship as well as social gratification which reduce inferiority complex and enhance social belonging.

**Table 2 Marital status of the respondents**

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	34	56.6
Single	4	6.6
Divorced	6	10
Widowed	16	26.6
Total	60	100.0



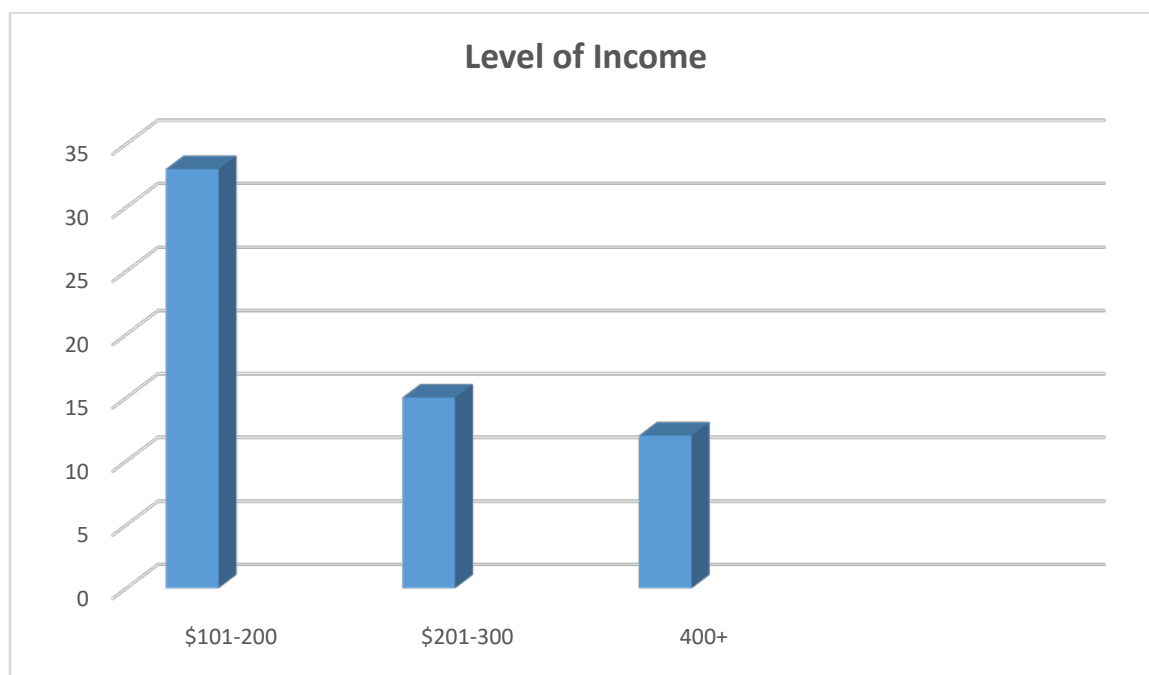


### Female vendor's income per month

The highest number of respondents 33 (55%) highlighted that they earn between USD \$101 and \$200 per month, while 15 (25%) indicated that they earn between \$201-300. Only 12 (20%) earn \$400 and above per month from vending. Income is a very important yard stick which can measure the standard of living of a person that is the personal, social and economic status of an individual. In this case those who earn less than \$400 per month face a lot of challenges, since they need to pay for the school fees of their children as well as rentals and bills. Most of the women in Bindura urban survive on vending and mining.

### Female vendor's income per month

Fig 1



### Number of dependents per each house hold

The study found that about 30 (50%) of the respondents have dependents between 0-2. This is significant especially among the widowed and divorced vendors who look after their own children and they use vending as a strategy of earning income for their families. 22 (36.6%) indicated that, they also have dependence 3-5, followed by 7 (11.6%) respondents who highlighted that they look after dependence 6-8. Only 1 (1.6%) have more than 8 dependences. The high level of dependence ratio increase poverty among women because it exacerbates the number of responsibilities in each and every house hold. (Chirisa, 2007) pointed out that, those who live in rural areas rely on those family relatives in urban areas for financial support and traditionally in Zimbabwe it is the duty of those who are in urban areas to help and support their rural counter parts. This, has however, increased the number or the dependence ratio among female vendors in Zimbabwe.

**Table 3 Number of dependence**

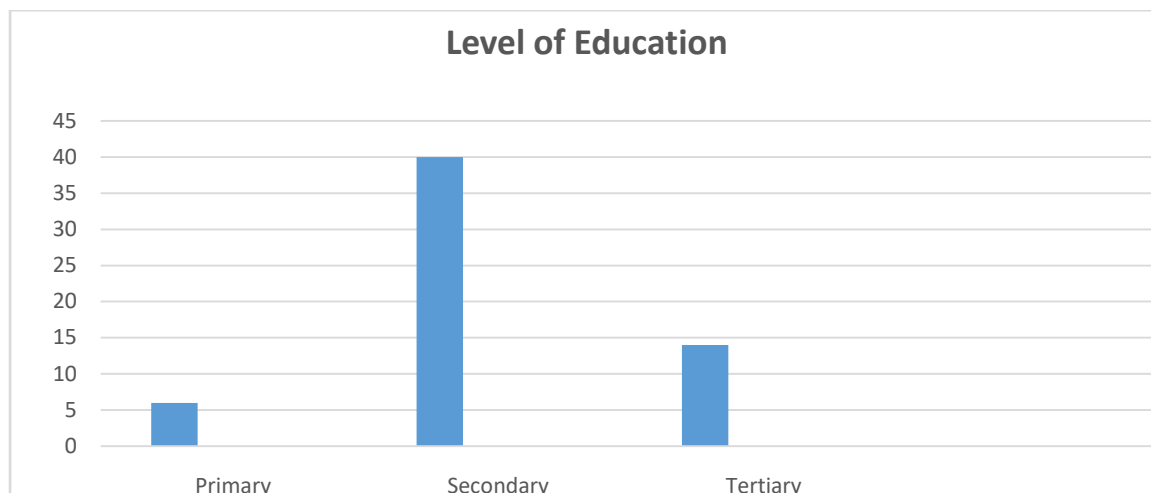
Category	Frequency	Percentage
0-2	30	50
3-5	22	36.6
6-8	7	11.6
8+	1	1.6
Total	60	100.0

### level of education

A significant number of the women vendors never went through formal education. Although some of the women went through formal education, only 6 (10%) had primary school education. The other 30 (50%) left school after completing their “O” Levels and only 14 (%) indicated that, they have attained tertiary education. The main reason behind low educational levels was poor family background where parents could not afford the fees, a reason cited by most respondents of the sample. Another reason, given for the low level of education attained by most vendors, especially women, was related to societal discrimination based on traditional beliefs.

Moreover, the father would claim that he could no longer afford to send a girl child to school because they were not a valuable asset in the family since they would eventually marry and leave home. The patriarchal culture therefore, promoted gender bias and gave preferential treatment to sons. Others were forced into early marriages so as to provide for their poor families, while a few failed to proceed with their studies because of early pregnancies which affected their academic and social lives. Therefore, most of the respondents dropped out of school because their poor performance in school did not warrant further allocation of limited financial resources. This was the dominant reason for those female vendors who dropped out at primary level. The overall impression that emerged was that parents used this excuse to wriggle out of their responsibility and obligation.

**Fig 2 Level of education of female vendors**



## **Section B: Challenges being faced by female vendors**

The majority of the respondents 27 (45%) indicated that, they are facing harassment from municipal police. While 13 (21.6%) pointed out that, there is lack of ablution facilities at their vending areas, 6 (10%) highlighted that, unfavourable weather conditions like wind and heavy rains often affect their day to day business negatively. 14 (23.3%) indicated that they do not have capital and technical know-how on how to manage and calculate their daily profits. Respondents highlighted that, they face a lot of harassment and exploitation from municipal police authorities who collect one dollar (\$1) on daily basis from vendors as a revenue. Vendors of airtime and second hand clothes noted that paying a dollar to the municipal authorities is a very big disadvantage to them because they have a very small profit margin.

They further pointed out that, municipal authorities often harass them especially when they carry out operations together with the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP). Since most of the vendors sell their products on undesignated areas. Female vendors are all over in busy roads which link the high density locations with Town in ward 3 and 4 they are not systematically coordinated which makes the Bindura municipality to regard such clusters of street vendors as impediments to urban planning and hazards to public health and prone to accidents. For example in ward 3 most vendors are congested at the rail line commonly known as *panjanji* (Rail way line) and this area is prone to accidents due to the activities of vendors because they operate at a busy road which link the light industrial site with the town as well as Chipindura Park with town. So in most cases vendors are often chased from this area by municipal authorities.

Moreover, these operations hinder their day to day sales so much so that their products end up being confiscated at the town house and to collect their products, vendors are supposed to pay a fine of \$20 to the municipality. (Njaya, 2014:27) notes that, the major problem is that the urban councils' master plan (designed during the colonial period) does not allocate space to vendors as town planners blindly replicate the western concept of marketing which ignores the Zimbabwean traditions. The modern development approach is oriented towards shopping malls which are not built on the concept of a public that cannot afford to live expensive lifestyles. Therefore, Njaya's argument shows that vendors will continue to face challenges in their operations until the local authorities plan urban areas in a way which is not western and which fully accommodate vendors and their activities in urban areas of Zimbabwe.

Most of the vending areas lacked potable water and proper facilities for waste disposal. In ward 3, 4 and 5 respondents indicated that, there are no facilities for taped water and vendors bring their own drinking water. Most of the public toilets are not in working order forcing vendors to use toilets in shops and bars and open spaces at night. Thus, lack of ablutions is a real challenge which is being faced by vendors in Bindura urban and there is a need for this challenge to be addressed by the municipality of Bindura so as to prevent health related diseases such as cholera, typhoid and diahorrea in the area. Moreover, most of the female vendors attributed lack of capital as a challenge which affect them on their daily vending activities. Those who are involved in clothing business highlighted that lack of capital has led to poor sales and increased hardships since they rely on vending to pay rents and bills and in catering for their families. These findings are different from previous studies by (Manyanhaire, Chibisa, Svtowa, Murenje and Munasirei, 2007). This study highlighted that 85% of vendors in Zimbabwe are women because vending does not require a lot of capital and most women are involved in vending so as to sustain the salaries of their husbands. This study's findings however highlighted that vending is being used as a source of full time employment by women in Bindura urban.

#### **Period as vendors**

Overall, 33 (55%) of the respondents pointed out that, they have been in vending for 0-5 years, followed by 16 (26.6) who indicated that they have been into vending for 6-10 years. More so, 7 (11.6%) highlighted that they have been into vending for 11-15 years. Only 4 (6.6%) indicated that, they have been into vending for more than 20 years. These findings from the study however, shows that vending is not a relatively new phenomenon among women in Bindura urban. Most of them turned to vending because employment prospects within the formal job market were and are still severely limited.

Most of the respondents were mainly the victims of 2008 hyperinflation and stiff economic challenges and retrenchments. In contrast only 6.6 % of the women have been involved in vending for more than a decade and they reiterated that vending has become their source of living since they are managing to pay rents and fees for their children through vending. The greater number of women who had spent more years in the vending business supports the notion that women's employment is concentrated in the informal sector as noted by (Mitullah, 2003; ILO, 2002). This trend emanates from the lack of opportunities by women to be employed in the formal sector, largely because they have little education which further marginalises them.

#### **Table 4 Period as vendors**

Period (Years)	Frequency	Percentage
0-5	33	55.0
6-10	16	26.6
11-15	7	11.6
20+	4	6.6
Total	60	100.0

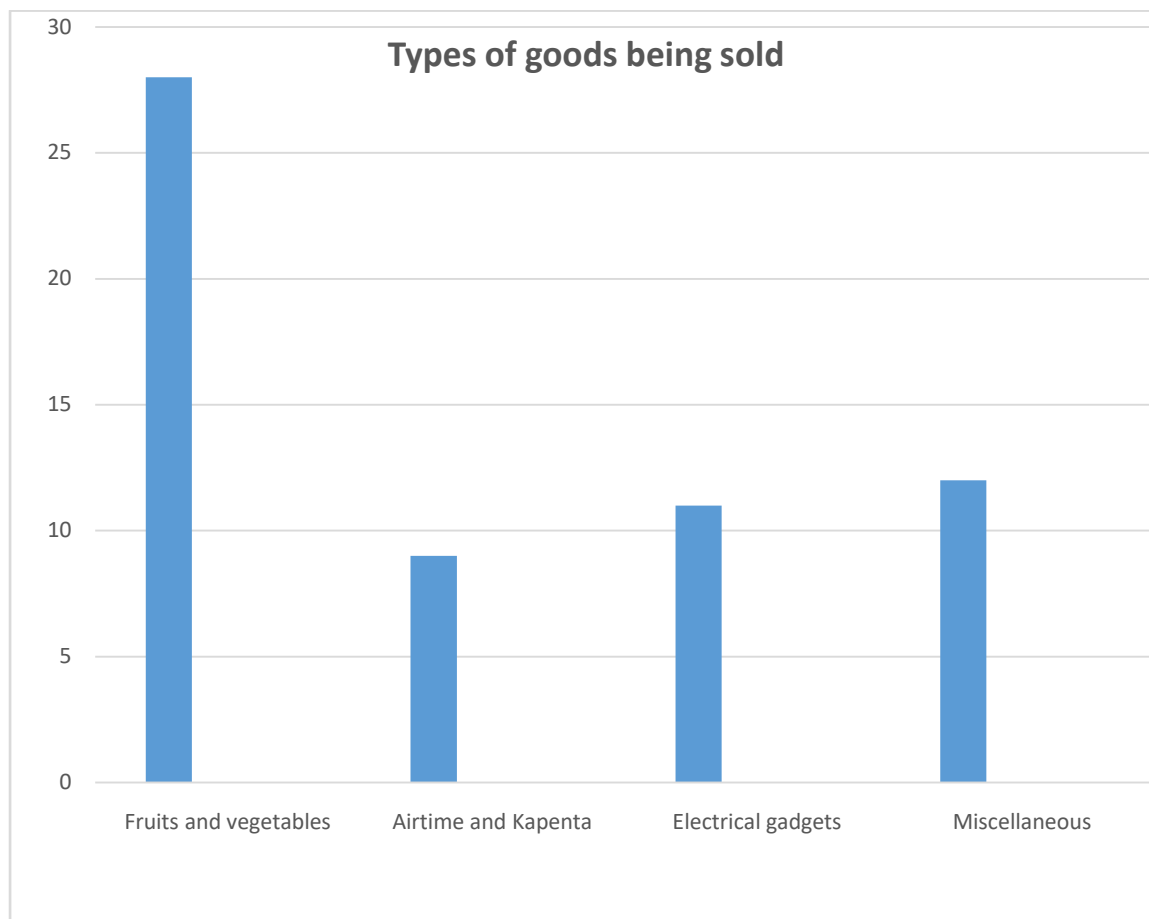
### Types of goods being sold by female vendors

The majority of the respondents 28 (46.6%) of the respondents indicated that they were selling fruits and vegetables, followed by 11 (18.3%) highlighted that, they were selling cell phone accessories and electrical gadgets. Nine (15%) were in the business of selling airtime or recharge cards and food stuffs. The remaining 12 (20%) indicated that, they were selling any product on demand depending with the season and time. Vendors in the four wards of Bindura urban Markets sell different types of goods. These products range from tomatoes, mangoes, bananas, apples and plums, potatoes, spinach, cabbages, butternuts to corn. Most of these commodities are seasonal and thus are subject to availability and demand. Moreover, vendors complained facing challenges such as rotting of products during periods of low demand, when demand is low for perishables, prices will be reduced or they take the products and use them at home for family consumption. This leads to great losses. Other goods that are being sold by vendors include second hand clothes. These items are often found at flea markets. These ranged from shoes, belts, caps, T-shirts, shorts, skirts to jeans. Most of these are purchased from as far as Mozambique, Harare and South Africa. The reasons given for trading in these items was that demand is high and so were the profits.

**Table 5 Types of goods being sold**

Types of goods	Frequency	Total
Fruits and vegetables	28	46.6
Airtime and kapenta	9	15
Electrical gadgets	11	18.3
Miscellaneous	12	20
Total	60	100.0

**Fig 3**



### Benefits derived from vending

Many respondents 31(51%) indicated that, they have managed to play rounds (society or mukando), fifteen (25%) highlighted that vending has and is alleviating poverty among them since they are managing to pay rents, rates and school fees for their families. More so, 8 (13.3%) reiterate that through vending they are managing to sustain and supplement their husbands' salaries and 6 (10%) pointed out that, vending have improved their standards of living since they can afford to cater for their households needs and support as well as help their extended families in both rural and urban areas.

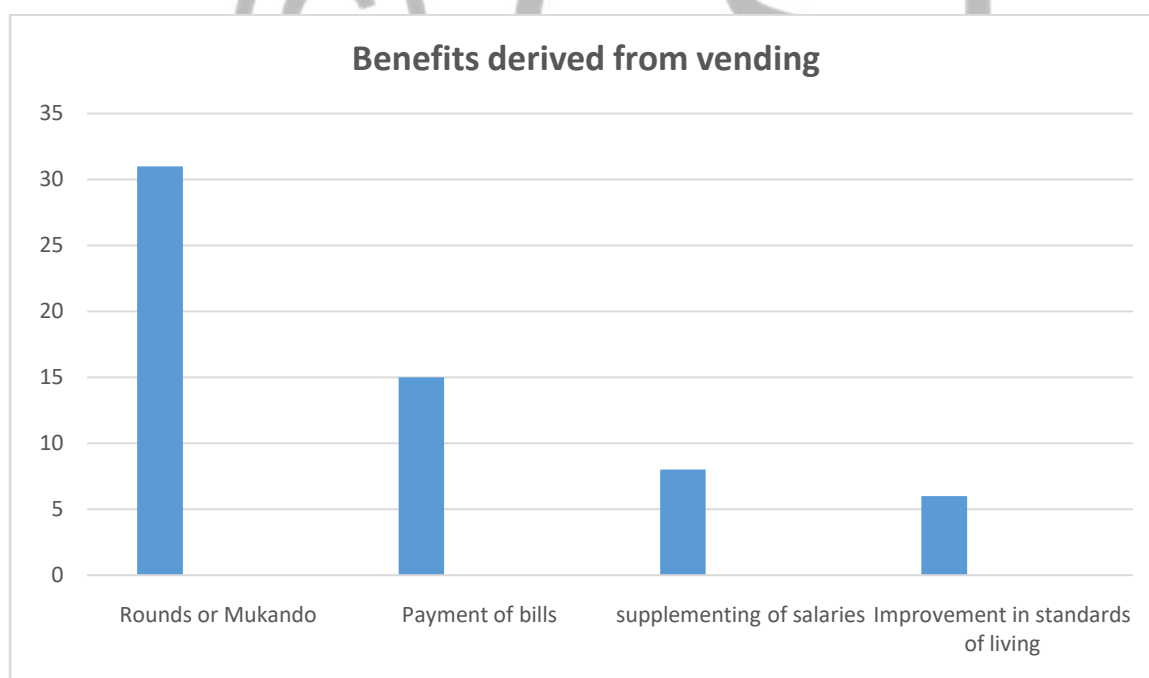
In light of the above findings, it can be deduced that vending has helped female vendors to emancipate themselves from poverty and it has improved their standards of living, since through vending they can afford to pay rentals and school fees for their children. These findings concur with the previous studies which highlighted that, the informal sector provides jobs, bolsters entrepreneurial activity and helps alleviate poverty. In Zimbabwe, the informal sector has become the largest employer due to economic downturn. Workers in the informal sector earn less income, have unstable income, and do not have access to basic protections and services (Beneria and Floro, 2006). In some instances, vendors however, pointed out that

they earn profits which are more than the salaries of those in the formal sector (civil servants). In light of the above findings, one can opine that vending has and is being used as a copying mechanism by women in order to curb unemployment and cater for family needs.

**Table 6 Benefits derived from vending**

Benefits	Frequency	Percentage
Rounds or mukando	31	55
Payment of bills	15	25
Supplementing of salaries	8	13.3
Better living standards	6	10
Total	60	100.0

**Fig 4**



**Measures being taken to address the challenges of vendors**

Most respondents highlighted that, the municipality is very adamant in addressing their day to day challenges regarding their area of operation as well as lack of ablution facilities and piped water in their vending areas. Female vendors of ward 3 for instance pointed out that, their vending sites are not legal and designated by the municipality. They have tried to raise



concerns to the local authority but the municipality is not reacting to their grievances. This lack of attention by the municipality is due to lack of funds to construct the desired facilities since most of the vendors are not capable to pay a dollar a day to the council. More so female vendors in ward 4 and the chairperson of Bindura vendor's association who operate at TM flea markets highlighted that, the municipality takes a lot of time to react and attend to the problems such as renovation of flea market shades and as a result affected vendors end up renovating the shades using their own hardly earned money.

However, contrary to the findings derived from female vendors, key informants such as ward councilors and housing director pointed out that, the municipality is making frantic efforts to ensure safe working environment for vendors in Bindura urban. This is through the payment of a dollar by each vendor so as to cater for their welfare and construction of public toilets at their market places. Moreover, there is a vending site which is being constructed near Chipadze bus terminus in ward 3 and this market place will provide a better operating environment for vendors and a place to store their products after work and during rainy seasons. In light of the above, one can deduce that the Municipality of Bindura is making some practical efforts to address the challenges which are being faced by female vendors in Bindura urban. Thus, addressing these challenges is a way of promoting vending as a sustainable way of alleviating poverty which can be juxtaposed with urban agriculture and women in mining in alleviating poverty.

## **Conclusion**

The research findings indicated that female vendors face a number of challenges. These challenges are chiefly caused by the failure of the local authority to address and attend to the pleas of vendors in Bindura urban. These challenges include lack of storage facilities for their goods. There is also lack of ablution facilities and piped water in all of the vending sites, lack of capital and technical know-how, unfavourable weather conditions and harassment from municipal police. The challenges which are being faced by vendors in Bindura urban concurs with those which have been indicated by Dewa, Dziva and Mukwashi (2014) who pointed out that vendors in Gweru city council are facing challenges which ranges from harassment by municipal police, sporadic weather conditions, inadequate capital to lack of ablution facilities.

This research concludes that in order to ensure comprehensive poverty alleviation among women the local authority of Bindura urban should enhance an enabling environment for female vendors. Furthermore, the research findings highlighted that, there are many benefits which are being derived from vending. These benefits are very instrumental in poverty alleviation, since through vending females are in a position to pay their rates and rents as well

as supplementing salaries of their husbands who are in both formal and informal sector. They are also managing to pay school fees for their children which is a positive development in as far as poverty alleviation is concerned in Bindura urban. Systematic rounds or (mukando) is also helping vendors to create their own ways of saving their daily profits and as a result urban poverty among women has and is being reduced through vending. These findings contradict with (Njaya, 2014)'s findings which indicated that, vending is a disgrace in almost all of Zimbabwe's urban areas because vending increase the rate of diseases such as cholera and typhoid, it also reduces the aesthetic sight and value of urban areas and it complicates the process of waste management in urban areas. Nevertheless, the aforementioned opportunities concur with Chakaipa (2010) who postulated that vending has and is acting as a contingency plan against food insecurity and unemployment in urban areas of Zimbabwe. Therefore, as highlighted by this study vending is very instrumental and necessary in alleviating urban poverty in Bindura.

Moreover, from the research findings it was shown that vending can be used as an empowerment tool to a greater extent. This can be only feasible if the government and the local authority (Bindura municipality) complement each other in providing the necessary requirements which are needed by vendors to make ends meet. This can be done through the provision of capital to female vendors who are already into business as well as construction of ablution facilities in vending sites of all the four wards. Moreover, the respondents highlighted that for this empowerment to be more feasible and practical, there is a need to juxtapose it with other empowerment initiatives such as urban mining as well as housing facilities and service delivery by the local authority. These findings are of the same dimension with Beneria and Floro's(2006) which pointed out that vending is a fundamental mechanism of emancipating poverty among poor African women. This study therefore concludes that, the feasibility of vending as an empowerment tool for women can be determined by the inclusion of female vendors so that they participate in decisions which affect them.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the use of vending as a strategy of poverty alleviation and food security in Bindura urban should be enhanced in such a way that women who are into vending can be and will be emancipated from poverty. There is a need for policies that involve empowering of female vendors and communities to develop strategies that combine the empowerment of communities and female vendors. In order to be able to identify the needs of the female vendors and to best promote social and economic development, Bindura

municipality needs the input of their ward councillors to be able to best identify those areas that need to be addressed. The proposed recommendations below, if adopted along with governance will and determination, will help developing capacity of female vendors and poverty alleviation.

### **Capacity building and emancipation of poverty among women**

Female vendors have high expectations and demands from the systems and institutions of government that is the Municipality of Bindura and their ward councilors. It is therefore prudent that any MB vendors' empowerment policy has an element of capacity building of all stakeholders to ensure that viable and sustainable links between the needs and perceived side of challenges from female vendors are effective. It is therefore recommended that all future initiatives should include a capacity-building program component as well as alleviating of poverty without gender discrimination.

### **Female Responsive budgets**

The budget of Bindura Municipality sets priorities for service delivery and development. Unless the concerns of women and men are considered during the budgetary process, budgets will not be responsive to their concerns. Failure to provide adequate funding for essential services increases the challenges which are being faced by women vendors in Bindura, resulting in their failure to adequately emancipate themselves from poverty. The budgeting process should therefore seek to address the day to day challenges which are being faced by female vendors. Special budgetary allocations should be made to female vendors to implement income-generating projects and ensuring that they are not marginalized or bypassed. It is recommended that future BM policies establish rules and regulations that make female vendors to be considered in budgets and in participating in decisions which affect them.

### **Creating of synergies**

Alliances must be established between actors in government, civil society, NGOs and the private sector to exchange information and discuss strategies on how poverty can be alleviated among women in Bindura urban. Therefore, networking should be undertaken with other groups working for poverty alleviation and social development. These networks could facilitate the exchange of experience and the development of strategies on how women can achieve greater poverty alleviation. In light of the above, one can opine that, creating synergies and building alliances will help in harnessing social support on key gender issues. Such alliances can also provide women with a common platform to organize themselves, share views and mobilize support as well as airing out their grievances to the concerned

institutions. These synergies will also go a long way in envisaging the empowerment of women through vending.

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